What are the Perceptions of Teachers in the Military about Empathy

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the perceptions of soldiers within a military education establishment on the subject of empathy. Perceptions were explored on a range of issues including the meaning of empathy, the advantages and disadvantages of empathic approaches in educational contexts and the specific opportunities and challenges connected with that approach.

This dissertation contains 5 chapters. Following a literature review there is a description and discussion of methods, a presentation of findings and data analyses and conclusions. In the introduction to the dissertation there is a description of the context of military education with consideration of new developments including a particular focus on the recent initiative of 'values based leadership' and reflections on the connections that this might have for empathic approaches to education. The literature review allowed for an exploration of key ideas and issues concerning empathy and discussions of approaches to education which rely on interpersonal understandings. The methods for the study were generated following a pilot study. The main study emerged from data collected through initial interviews about general understandings of and attitudes towards empathy, classroom-based observations and further interviews which allowed for reflections by participants on their perceptions of empathic approaches. There were nine participants from the same Army Training Regiments (ATR) who were required to implement values based leadership.

Empathy is a highly complex phenomenon, which is perceived to develop over time and with frequency of interaction and which is highly dependent on the teacher and the context of the interaction (Cooper, 2002). As such an exploration of teachers' views about empathy can be justified. The respondents in my sample felt that empathic approaches are part of positive interactions between students and teachers which allows for improvements in quality learning, engagement and behaviour. However, they feel that the constraints of class size, time, curriculum, policy and management contribute to teachers' difficulties in engaging and empathising with the individual or group.

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Thank you to my wife and children who kept me motivated for the last two years whilst working towards a Masters Degree in Education.

It has been a privilege to have been able to carry out this study at University of York, which will be beneficial to my future development as an individual and teacher.

Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation on the Perceptions of Teachers in the Military about Empathy is all my own work and I have not exceeded the word limit.

Signed:

Date:

Chapter One

Introduction and Context

The overall objective of my investigation is to understand a sample of military teachers' perceptions on empathy, whilst gaining a better understanding of this learner centred approach for my own development as well as that of the military teaching environment.

I established the following questions in which question two is more general and question three explores teachers' perceptions about how to proceed in the detail of their teaching.

- What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

- What do teachers in the military think are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathy?

- What do teachers in the military think are the opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathic?

This investigation draws inspiration from those writers who emphasise the humanistic view of learning or learner centred teaching. In such an approach the teacher acts as a facilitator, emphasising trust, and empathy with the aim of encouraging learners' motivation and self concept. In a changing context for military education I explore, principally through interviews, perceptions of teachers about the meaning, challenges and opportunities related to empathy.

Context

This dissertation was researched and written between 2009 and 2011, during a period of political and educational transformation in Britain and the British Army. The country was dealing with a worldwide recession. The government changed from a Labour Government to a Coalition Government, which had not been responsible for leading the country since the end of World War 2. Cutting the national debt would be the principal aims of the new coalition government with finance cuts in every sector of British society, including education and the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Attitudes to various educational approaches are undergoing change within society due to policy changes by the previous and new governments, which aim to improve education at all levels as well as saving money. Such change has and will impact on military training and educational establishments, in which there are aims to cut funding and still produce a well trained operationally effective educated soldier.

The pace of change in the military since 2002 is noticeably faster and more demanding on the soldier than at any time since World War 2 with technology, weaponry and tactics used by the enemy changing constantly. It is a requirement for the new military trainee to be better educated and more intelligent than in previous generations, able to deal with modern day technology and be able to have high moral core values and understanding of other people, societies and cultures on operations around the world. This emphasis on core values can be seen in the writing of key military figures:

> Core values are those values by which we lead our lives and which we aspire to develop in ourselves and others to raise educational, moral, and personal standards in order to improve operational effectiveness of the British armed forces (Dannatt, 2006a, p29).

General Dannatt publicised these views more widely through media statements. In 2006 (Dannatt 2006b, p39) he wrote: "Never have Phase One Training Establishments been under more scrutiny and pressure than at present. The Permanent Staff are under constant pressure to take raw recruits and in 42 weeks turn them into professional, highly trained and disciplined young soldiers ready for operational deployment to some of the most volatile environments". General Dannatt then goes on to describe the importance of an educational environment that is not only responsible for developing the recruits' education but their values, morals and understanding of different cultures. Student centred learning in the military is a relatively new concept in a traditional training environment, which is being evaluated constantly. It seems that the old fashioned traditions associated with behaviourist methods of teaching are weakening.

New methods are being developed to improve soldiers other than the traditional approaches of past centuries. During October 2010 the MOD was subject to a defence review which takes place every 10 - 15 years, or, if needed, at specific points of British political change.

This is done to save money and make changes that reflect military strategic threats across the various theatres of operations. The amount of changes in the military has had an impact on every area of and every soldier at some level and educational development is at the forefront of change.

Soldier Education from 1980 – 2010

In this next section I want to place my research in context by explaining the changes that have taken place in the military and its education over a 30 year period, and by referring to the significance of empathy in soldier education.

The following tables show statistics taken from Soldier Education in the British Army, 1920 – 2007 (Beach, 2008) to explain changes within the structure of the Education Corp also the structure of qualifications and curriculum.

Table 1. Size of soldier education organisation

Year's	Number of Army Educators	Size of Army	No of Soldiers per educator
1920	839	370, 000	441
1930	542	194, 000	358
1939	520	241, 000	463
1945	2,218	2,931,000	1,321
1950	3,024	418,000	138
1960	638	258,000	404
1970	774	174,000	238
1980	560	159,000	284
1990	494	152,000	308
2000	306	110,000	359

This table shows the comparisons of educator to soldier ratio with a significant reduction from 1980 – 2000 in the number of educators per soldier, with a reduction in the size of the army and more soldiers being educated and developed by fewer educational staff.

The worsening of the student to teacher ratio mean that humanistic approaches which rely on understanding the learners at the same time expecting and encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning will be more urgently required and more challenging to achieve.

The organization of the dissertation

Chapter Two is the Literature Review. I will be analysing the literature applicable to my subject, discussing the meaning of empathy and developments in military education.

This will allow for the key concepts and issues to be clarified and for my research project to be justified. I will argue that at a time of change in military education it is necessary to examine educators' perceptions of empathy.

Chapter Three contains a description and discussion of the pilot study and outlines the main study methodology. I will be looking at the research methods I have used to construct this study and methods used to analyse the data gathered from my interviews and observations. Chapter Four is the discussion in which I look at the key questions and subject areas I have researched for my main study plus areas for improvement of my method of research, at the same time discussing my sample. This chapter sets out the conceptual framework and findings of the main study in which I interviewed and observed military teachers in their current organisation and teaching environments. All the participants that took part in my research are involved in the same areas of development within the same military teaching environment. As part of their everyday teaching responsibilities they are formally required and encouraged to develop the following approaches to education and development.

- Cultural Awareness
- Military Values and Standards
- Values Based Leadership
- Coaching and Mentoring

Some of the findings overlap with the findings from my pilot study, which I conducted in a similar teaching environment during spring 2010. This enhanced my own empathy of the individuals and environment in which I used to gain research data for this study.

There were three main sections to this research examining the perceptions of soldiers on 'empathy' in which I asked the following questions:

- What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

- What do teachers in the military think are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathy?

- What do teachers in the military think are the opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathic?

From my analysis of the data gathered in which I used a system of coding to highlight the key factors raised from my interviews and observations, several themes were raised.

I will discuss my findings in more detail in this chapter giving reference to the literature and my data from the pilot study and main research project.

I have divided my research discussion into 3 main headings which are relevant to the interview structure of this study;

What military teachers said they understood about empathy

- Meaning
- Sympathy and Empathy
- Moral Development and Empathy
- Contextual factors

Different opinions from the teachers on the opportunities and challenges when focusing on empathy

- Leadership
- Responsibility
- Enhancing Knowledge
- Familiarisation

Varied understanding on the advantages and disadvantages, when implementing empathic approaches towards education.

- Teamwork
- Results
- Class size / Time
- Educational Damage

The nature of the complex human interactions in differing contexts involved in teaching and learning means that all factors have an effect on each other (Cooper, 2002).

The complexity of human feelings and emotions during the classroom interactions and the teaching styles that revealed themselves during the observations, relate to fundamental issues including behaviourism, cognitive and humanistic approaches. These interpersonal and interactive factors which I will argue from the literature I have researched in the context of my own perceptions and experience are central to the ability of the teacher to be empathic with the learners.

I have used quotations from the interviews and observations of the participants to show how the different teachers in this study perceive empathic teaching, in their current teaching positions. This will help describe their own feelings and emotions during the interviews and observations whilst I interviewed and observed them in their teaching environments.

Chapter Five is the Conclusion. This will include a summary of my research and what I have learnt and discovered from my investigation. Finally I will highlight any changes that I would make to my research, if I were to carry out a study of this subject again. The need to understand empathy and individuals' needs in the military is important.

Context

Table 2 shows the changes in curriculum and structure of the Education Corp. In light of the reduced numbers of teachers the syllabus is more condensed, in relation to operational roles. This trend may mean that there is pressure to cover the content in the military syllabus instead of adopting humanistic approaches to develop the soldier's full potential (although, as explained above, there may be other pressures which lead to the development of a more empathic approach).

Table 2. Soldier education syllabus and structure (1920 – 2010)

Title of Education Corp and Qualification delivered	Subjects studied
Army Education Corp Army Certificate of education (1920)	Arithmetic Army & Empire English Geography Map Reading
Royal Army Education Corp Army Certificate of Education (1949)	Current Affairs Citizenship English Geography History Mathematics Science Army and Nation (1960)
Royal Army Education Corp Education Promotion Certificate (1971)	Army in the Contemporary World Communication Skills Military Calculation Military Management
Education and Training Services Education for Promotion (1994)	Army and Defence Studies Core Skills Military Management Studies
Education and Training Services Command Leadership and Management (2004)	Command, Leadership and Management Communication Skills Defence Knowledge

I read literature relevant to the key ideas explored in this dissertation. Particular attention was paid to those themes and issues which would be directly relevant to the participants that I gathered data from for my pilot and main research study. I focused on that time period in which the respondents have been employed by the military.

My own perception of this period is also relevant to my research because I have experienced a multitude of teaching environments, and changes in the curriculum.

I have also witnessed various teaching practices that may have lacked the use of empathy for various reasons. This phase in military history saw the end of the cold war which was responsible for a myriad of changes tactical, logistically, and educationally over three decades.

At the beginning of 1980 the planning for a strategic downsizing of the army from 165000 to 100000 would be responsible for a dramatic change in how we would train and educate our soldiers for the next 30 years.

Most individuals of the 1980s joined the military with no school qualifications and the belief that education would be part of the past now that they were soldiers. These beliefs and attitudes would not change a great deal over the next 30 years, but the level of education attainment would rise in the military due to changing technology and equipment.

The significant changes have been manpower cuts over 30 years from 165000 to 70000 as a result of various strategic reviews and political, tactical and social change across the globe.

During 1980 – 1990 soldiers were required to study towards the Education For Promotions Certificate (EFP) this would give them knowledge of world affairs, Literacy, Numeracy, and service writing which is the military academic writing system. These subjects were delivered by the Royal Army Education Corp (RAEC) which in 1992 would change to Education and Training Services (ETS). Non–Commissioned Officers (NCOs) would attend a Basic Instructional Techniques (BIT) course which was taught over three days covering presentations using visuals aids, and lesson formats, these soldiers would also be responsible for education of recruits and soldiers across the Army Training Regiments.

From 2000 – 2010 there would be significant change in how soldiers were expected to conduct themselves as soldiers, educators and citizens, with the introduction of the approach titled 'Command, Leadership and Management', (CLM) being implemented into soldier education.

This vision which highlighted the significance of values by the Army Generals to encourage a change in how soldiers perceive life and situations that they may find themselves experiencing, would be developed further by education in values and standards with the implementation of 'Values Based Leadership'.

> Values that are functionally necessary to the military and those that are fundamental in social existence can serve as a moral anchor for its parent society (Hackett, 1962, p10).

Chief of Air Staff, Sir Douglas Drake states (2008) "It is important to develop a strong individual to serve the country not just physically but educationally, and emotionally".

Values Based Leadership

One of the key specific policies that have been introduced into the army in recent years is Values Based Leadership. This is relevant to my investigation into perceptions of empathy. This policy was justified by various high ranking officers:

> It is obvious that much needs to be done in determining what is the best approach to instilling the desired ethics in servicemen, and women, with the use of values training and development to raise standards, education, and morality (Major General Patrick Cordingley, 2007, p24).

This humanistic approach to education within the military became the subject of research and implementation after the Blake Report (2006) in which it is stated that:

> Recruits joining the Army are increasingly self-absorbed and undisciplined. They come from backgrounds that have suffered the decline of the traditional family and leave school without any set of moral values. Socially immature, lacking mutual respect having led self-indulgent materialistic lives they are all too easily shocked by the close confines of military life.

Evidence and research from the Blake Report advised that the old traditional behaviourist way of training and educating soldiers within the military had to make way for a more learner centred approach. This new concept of values based leadership was during the period of my research in an experimental phase with research being carried out by Military Officers and Non–Commissioned Officers (NCOs).

Although the program is now organised differently with greater civilian participation it was during the time of my research carried out wholly by military staff. Capt Puente (2006) suggests that in the end understanding people's values will enable them to gain insight of the needs of the individual, in the end raising standards for the organisation and the operation effectiveness of the MOD.

Their areas of investigation include attitudes, beliefs, citizenship, culture and other such areas that will develop the content of this program for future implementation.

This educational program is made up of 4 modules:

- Module One - Cultural Awareness
- Module Two - Military Values and Standards
- Module Three - Values Based Leadership
- Module Four - Coaching and Mentoring

Each module was delivered to the various rank and management structures within Training and Recruiting environments, they are as follows:

- Commissioned Officers
- Warrant Officers
- Senior Non Commissioned Officer (SNCOs)
- Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs) / Other Ranks (Ors)

Most soldiers have known inspiring, motivated, effective teachers and instructors within their military careers for their genuineness, empathic understanding, helpful sincere nature and competency. There is a sense of mystery that surrounds these types of educators who have the ability to motivate, excite, stimulate and bring students to realise their own potential, and what they really are capable of achieving. I wanted to investigate a sample of these individuals to explore their perceptions of empathy.

Methodology

I have used a small scale case study for this project to gain new knowledge and understanding in order to enhance teaching within my organisation, at the same time developing my own perceptions and understanding of empathy. In this qualitative research I am interested in studying perceptions of empathy using interviews and observations to gain a better understanding of this theory in practice and look at what military educators actually think and do regarding this concept.

I will carry out interviews before and after my observations to discuss their experiences, feelings and emotions during various situations of their teaching which I will witness as a non participant observer in the classroom.

For my main study I have created a conceptual framework using nine participants from the under 18s Army Training Regiment (ATR) who have the responsibility to educate and train young soldiers.

For my pilot study I used three participants from this environment gaining some interesting data, each participant came from a certain educational background with in this educational setting.

The main stimulus for choosing this sample is that they are all working towards the same objectives of developing Values Based Leadership and Recruit training.

Although all personnel within the army work towards the same goal and purpose it is important that I take into account the perceived meaning of empathy within my research methods and consider carefully how I structure my questions for my data collection.

Key Arguments

From my pilot and main study it was evident that educators suggest that humanistic approaches to teaching and learning and see these as a required feature of military education. In such an approach empathy is recognised and developed. There are advantages and disadvantages for a learner centred approach in the military, in this section I will briefly discuss these from the data gathered in my pilot study and main study.

Empathy was described during this study as a soft skill within military teaching and in Values Based Leadership. The teaching style conducted in relation to the achievement of empathy was felt to benefit both teachers and students.

Positive interaction with learners is very much a humanistic approach or soft skill, in which constructive relationships are forged between the teacher and learner.

This dissertation will argue from the perceptions and data gathered that empathy is another tool in the teacher's arsenal to teach, encourage and develop the potential of the learners to be successful in their careers.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

My research explores soldiers' perceptions of empathy and the role they feel empathic understanding plays in the teacher and student relationship in military contexts.

This chapter explores key ideas about empathy as revealed in the literature and justifies the need for my own research.

What is Empathy?

> **Empathy** – The state of perceiving the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meaning which pertain thereto as if one were the other person but without ever losing the as if condition (Rogers, 1977, p7).

Empathy is a concept that has been recognised explicitly relatively recently. The word 'empathy' did not exist in the English language till the early part of the twentieth century and as its origins in a translation from a German word. The New Oxford Shorter English Dictionary (1993 edition) suggests that empathy comes from the German word Einfühlung and describes it as: "the power of mentally identifying oneself with (and so fully comprehending) a person or object of contemplation" (p808). This does not mean that the idea of empathy was absent from our cultures but rather that is now considered in ways that did not used to apply. In particular we are more ready to acknowledge a distinction between empathy and sympathy (Slote, 2007). Empathy requires cognitive, affective, and behavioural components that teachers across society believe can be manifested through practice and experience (Jacobs, 1981).

Empathy is often used to understand a student's emotions and feelings towards his or her own experiences in or out of the classroom, not prescribe what he or she ought to do. Educators, philosophers and psychologists have described empathy as being the understanding of another person's world, perceptions, personality, and sense how they feel.

Wyatt (2001) explains that empathy is also entering into another person's experiences imaginatively being able to feel the spirit or atmosphere of a situation. Empathy is a way of being.

There are different types of empathy and many ways to be empathic; one such area I will research is whether being empathic as an educator serves a moral purpose in and out of the classroom. More recently, Noddings, who equates caring and ethical behaviour with an empathic approach, (Copper, 2007) finds the common ground and makes the distinction between caring about intellectual or artistic things and ideas and caring about people:

> We feel, perhaps rightly that the receptivity characteristic of aesthetic engagement is very like the receptivity of caring. Consciousness assumes a similar mode of being-one that attempts to grasp or receive a reality rather than impose it (Noddings, 1984, p22).

Aspy (1972) explains the difference between understanding empathy in a cognitive way and being able to show it, he explains that 'There is a great difference between 'knowing' and 'behaving' and the successful teacher cannot be content with producing mere changes in 'knowing'. Empathy can be developed and some feel that it helps to create a safe, secure and positive environment (Rogers, 1967). Cooper (2007, p38) explains that "Positive interaction produces a feeling throughout the body which leads to greater openness and willingness to engage in interaction". The student centred approach to teaching forms relationships from positive interaction, it is considered only to be effective if empathy is used more than just a technique, and the educator must be empathic in a profound way with the student (Cooper, 2007; Wyatt, 2001).

Empathy is very much personality driven and this makes it difficult to explore. Eisenberg & Strayer, (1990, p24) hypothesis that perceptions, assumptions, and ego are related to personality from both teacher and student stating that "space does not allow us to explore all of these variations, nor would that be a good idea because there were subtle differences of emphasis among them". For this reason alone we cannot assume that we ever truly understand a person's world, perceptions, and views.

Perhaps empathy can serve a variety many more purposes in the military classroom not all of which we will be able to document or understand. For example, viewing different situations and experiences within the classroom empathically, would this lead to a calmer approach which can influence the response of the teacher leading to better understanding of the students?

Significance of Empathy

During the 1960s and 1970s empathy was researched ardently due to its elusive nature, empathy has been described as a quality, ability and a state or concept (Cooper, 2007).

Carl Rogers had carried out much research on the role of empathy within counselling and the influence empathy can have in an educational context.

> The state of empathy or being empathic, is to perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person, but without ever losing the 'as if' condition. Thus it means to sense the hurt or pleasure of another as he senses it and to perceive the causes thereof as he perceives them, but without ever losing the recognition that it is 'as if' I were hurt or pleased or so forth. If this 'as if' quality is lost, then the state is one of identification (as cited in Vincent, S, 2005, p24).

In this quote from 1959 Rogers describes empathy as a state however later describes empathy as a process leading to a more productive process in helping or developing individuals.

> The way of being with another person, which is termed empathic has several facets. It means entering the private perceptual world of the other and becoming thoroughly at home in it. It involves being sensitive, moment by moment to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person, to the fear or rage or tenderness or confusion or whatever, that he/she is experiencing (as cited in Wilkins, 2009, p65).

These two quotations by Rogers explaining his views and perceptions of empathy at different times of his study and life, showing significance and importance of interaction between teacher and student and how empathy early in the relationship predicts later success.

Research carried out by (Aspy, 1973) looks at the use of language with phrasing such as 'I understand where you're coming from' and 'I am with you on this matter' possibly being used to describe connectivity between people (Cooper, 2007).

Such an approach by a person showing empathy can be sensed in the moment by others resulting in an unseen connection between the student and the teacher.

Empathy and Sympathy

The definition of sympathy is similar but distinct from that of empathy, in which clarification between the two must be made due to possible misunderstanding of empathy to mean the same as sympathy. The New Oxford Shorter Dictionary, (1993) describes sympathy as "Concordance or harmony of inclinations or temperament, making people congenial to one another, mutuality or community of feeling"

Sympathy has more in common with pity, compassion, commiseration and condolence than with empathic understanding (Egan, 2002) however it is a feeling than links us to another person's emotional situation.

> Sympathy refers to the heightened awareness of suffering of another person as something to be alleviated...sympathy intensifies both the representation and the internal reaction to the others predicament (Wispe, 1986, p186).

It is the power of another human to sense or feel all their emotions that give us the interaction required to empathise with humans in an education environment.

There is a perception that empathy and sympathy are the same and the importance of defining the difference between the two different concepts is necessary if we are to internally reflect on ourselves and others.

Sympathy is an emotional response to people's feelings, or events that are sad, life changing to a degree of unhappiness or stressful situations that may arise.

Any expression of sympathy is important in life's social, educational, and interpersonal situations which can lead to empathic communication between individuals or situations.

> A compassionate person, seeing a butterfly struggling to free itself from its cocoon, and wanting to help, very gently loosened the filaments to form an opening. The butterfly was freed, emerged from the cocoon, and fluttered about -- but could not fly.

> What the compassionate person did not know was that only through the birth struggle can the wings grow strong enough for flight. Its shortened life was spent on the ground; it never knew freedom, never really lived (Sanford, 2002, p1).

Although sympathy triggers an emotional feeling in the mind and body that inspires us to help an individual, Egan (2002) explains that sympathy denotes agreement whilst empathy promotes understanding.

This significance between empathy and sympathy is important in understanding one's own emotions when dealing with learners which in turn may assist in teaching..

Empathic Intelligence

Many experts (Rogers, 1967; Vincent, 2005; Egan, 2002) consider the development of empathy to be a lifelong process depending on the length of contact we have with the person or situation we are empathizing with.

However there is research to suggest that empathic intelligence is not a new hypothesis but one that has always been present in the learning enviroment, but understanding its influence on education is a relativly new concept.

Empathic intelligence can be said to have a moral base but not always a moral outcome, (Arnold, 2000) due to the levels of communication and perceptions between teacher and student.

Empathic intelligence can create a higher order of cognitive ability and development, however this needs to be linked with enthusiasm, personality and a capacity to engage by the educator (Arnold, 2000).

It is my perception that soldiers in the learning enviroments have what they know ignored due to the operant behaviourist structure that soldiers are trained, educators in the military therefore have insufficient time to reflect or understand the ability or experiencies of others.

Arnold (2000) sugestss that our knowlegde gives us motivation and shapes the way we feel, reflect, and make sense of our own experiencies.

Moral Development and Empathy

The subject of empathy is closely associated with moral development and the link between the two different concepts has been researched by such scholars such as Hoffman (1967), Rogers (1975) and Koseki & Berghammer (1992). These studies have considered how empathy can be developed in teachers but have looked less at how school environments affect the ability to show empathy.

Cooper (2007) and Aspy (1972) distinguished between understanding the concept of empathy in a cognitive sense and being able put it into practice.

According to Rogers (1980) "it is impossible to accurately sense the perceptual world of another person unless you value that person and his world – unless you in some sense care" (as cited in Vincent, 2005, p167).

To be empathic in any educational environment demands a strong, yet gentle approach, (Vincent, 2005) which in the army is not always considered as best practice due to the nature of the job. My research will look at to see whether respondents feel that such an organisation has a need for empathic soldiers.

Empathy requires patience, interpersonal skills and being a person that is respected and trusted by the students; however it is argued that educators have a moral duty to understand and develop our learners.

> Moral or adaptive empathy is always long-lasting, is directed towards some goals in the future and transforms the situation by finding and executing a adequate solution to it for the people concerned (Koseki and Berghammer, 1992, p202).

From from my own experience of teaching in the military the level of empathy shown, as well as moral development encouraged (Cooper, 2007) are tempered not only by the teacher's own individual experiences, understanding and personality, but also by the conditions and environment in which the teacher works with students.

Types of Empathy used in an educational context

Positive teacher interaction develops high levels of engagement in the teacher learner relationship which has significant implications for all kinds of learning including personal development. In positive relationships teachers constantly assess the learners but notably the learning contexts affect the degree of empathy which could be shown by teachers.

The relevance of these types of empathy and how empathy reveals itself is significant when understanding the perceptions and issues in the educational environment. This is based on the teacher's interaction with the students which can be in the following forms.

Fundamental Empathy

This is the natural ability to communicate and form human relationships with others. When forming relationships educators should be non – judgemental, pay attention to attitudes, beliefs, feelings and listen to conversation engaging with enthusiasm whilst at the same time being open to what they say.

Body language plays a significant part in communication such as eye contact, smiles, nods and body posture, looking the students in the face at all times shows attention and understanding. (Arnold, 2005) explains eye contact as an important part of empathic communication highlighting its change in social situations so to avoid eye contact being aggressive. Also the use of voice and movement around the classroom again indicates the teacher's awareness, but with the size of class the teacher will not always able to do this (Cooper, 2002).

Profound Empathy

During a period of time the relationships in these environments have the potential to become profound if the teachers can gain one to one interaction, or have an understanding of human feelings and interaction.

Profound empathy can lead to a positive, happy facilitating environment where constructive criticism becomes more effective under these conditions.

Functional Empathy

Functional Empathy is possibly the most frequently used form of empathy in the military classroom. This may occur when teachers and perhaps students see the need for some sort of connection between people in order to help achieve certain goals. In this context the understanding between individuals is relatively shallow (Cooper, 2002). If badly handled functional empathy could create stereotyping, low self esteem and rejection leading to low confidence of students. But it may be used frequently if conditions (such as class size) make it difficult to allow for in-depth understandings to develop.

Feigned empathy

This is a very immoral superficial approach towards empathy in which there is the pretence of understanding. At times that pretence may be intended to allow for coping in difficult situations in which valid educational goals are targeted (and as such this would be close to functional empathy) but at others it would merely be an attempt to deceive: one pretends that the other is understood

The Role of Empathy in Soldier Education

One of Rogers (1961; 1971) most basic philosophical assumptions was that people have the capacity for self-actualization and to reach their full potential, and that under the right circumstances will find their own way to develop and grow, unless these potentials are hindered. At a time of change and increasing pressure on the military there is a perceived need for a new approach to education.

Values based leadership relies on empathic approaches but was being introduced within a very traditional organisation structured around obedience and behaviourism. My dissertation explores the perceptions of key individuals in this context.

The need for my investigation can be seen in the contrasting views of the nature and role of military education. Some may feel that the army has (and should have) a very traditional way of instructing: the didactic, behaviourist approach is favoured and they see the modernist and progressive approach as weak and unconstructive. This is asserted due to the perception of the nature of recruits:

> Socially immature, lacking mutual respect having led self-indulgent materialistic lives they are all to easily shocked by the close confines of military life (An MOD report entitled, The Blake Report, April 2006, p24).

The above gives credence to my intention to research perceptions about empathy and in its suggestion for change and the need to adapt a modern humanistic approach, to how we educate and develop our soldiers in a modern day society.

Conclusion and Issues related to the literature

Rogers (1967) explains that people have a capacity to reach their full potential and that under the right circumstances will find their own way to develop and grow, unless these potentials are hindered. There are areas that affect the ability of an educator to show empathy in the learning environment suggests (Aspy,1972; Cooper, 2002).

The literature on empathy strongly identifies its significance and indicates its meaning and different perspectives with teaching and learning environments. In a context in which the nature of military education is changing with some advocating values based leadership and others seeming to reject the need for understanding others there is some value in researching the perception of military educators about empathy and its role in educational contexts. The literature on empathy also suggests that humans have the capacity to display empathy and this quality can be nurtured to develop the teachers and the learner's potential.

These types of teachers who are empathic towards the learners may create an environment that encourages other learners to understand themselves and others within the classroom.

> There are many ways in which teachers can encourage students to empathise with classmates; beginning with teachers themselves modelling this kind of behaviour they wish students to follow (Berman, 2004, p110).

Cooper (2002) explains that people around us who model this quality, including teachers, seems to support positive interaction and allows us to be valued and enable us to value others. However, like the development of moral values, the concept of empathy is problematic. The literature suggests that empathy reveals itself in different forms and how with the use of gestures and teaching styles the teacher and learner relationship develops. I will not be evaluating the precise nature and impact of empathic approaches in the classroom. Rather, I will be seeking to explore perceptions of teachers in the military.

Chapter Three

Methodology

In this chapter I explain the research methods I have used to construct this dissertation. I will explain the reason for the type of interviews and observations I used to gather data from my participants in this research and the process used to analyse the data, also why I chose the sample and the relevance of the environments in which they teach. Whilst I have shown my awareness of the limitations of the methods I have used to research this topic, I will argue that I have been able to conduct an appropriately framed project.

During the research process there were various obstacles that I had to overcome which I had not anticipated before I started, these will be explained in this chapter.

I will firstly describe the researcher's perspective regarding the motivation for the qualitative study that I have conducted.

Researcher's Perspective

I was interested to study the perceptions of empathy in the form of interviews and observations to gain a better understanding of what military educators really think and say they actually do regarding this concept of empathy. The data gathered from my observations would be used to probe their perceptions of empathy, examining their feelings and emotions.

Research within my current educational organization could be developmental, because it looks at policy, techniques, and strategies, giving me an understanding of why, how, and what changes may need to be implemented.

I am hoping to use my findings to contribute to various teaching and learning strategies within my organisation, as I feel as an educator this is one of my responsibilities. I was aware of the need to try to reduce my own bias, to be aware of the things that I might miss due to my own knowledge of the context and to keep the focus on my research questions and not be distracted onto related issues. I will explain below how I have attempted to achieve these goals.

The Pilot project

This section will discuss summarized key findings from my earlier research and pilot study which influenced my direction for the main study and research questions. An explanation of how I conducted my pilot study research is important to understand some of the changes that were made prior to the implementation of my main study.

All the participants that took part in my research are involved in the same areas of development within the same military teaching environment. My purpose was to gather information, so description and analysis of the perceptions of empathy can be made.

For the pilot study I interviewed three educators who were responsible for Values Based Leadership, Teacher Training and Career Development within the same military training and educational organisation. The learner centred approaches in education amongst teachers is very important and encouraged in all departments of military education and training (Bourne & Atkinson, 1995).

As part of their everyday teaching responsibilities they are formally required and encouraged to develop the following approaches to education and development.

- Cultural Awareness
- Military Values and Standards
- Values Based Leadership
- Coaching and Mentoring

I conducted a small scale case study in this environment in which the following four questions were used to gather data for the pilot study;

- How do soldiers understand the concept of empathy in educational contexts?
- How do military teachers and instructors understand the concept of empathy and its relationship in their interactions with students?
- What issues might enhance or diminish the ability of military teachers and instructors to be empathic?
- Would the implementation of empathy in Values Based Leadership create a holistic understanding within soldier education?

These questions helped me to gain and understand the What, Why, and How for my study into the perceptions of soldiers on empathy.

These questions also gave me some interesting perceptions from my samples raising issues and challenges amongst educators on the subject of empathy in their areas of teaching and development.

The complexity of empathy in teaching environments gave me the stimulus to understand how teachers in the military felt about empathy; I gained some understanding of their perceptions from the issues raised during my pilot study.

Pseudonyms were used for all my particapants for confidentiality both ethically and for military security.

I have presented longer extracts from teachers and instructors in my dissertation in italics beginning each section with the participants' pseudonyms, observations are presented in narrative account and referred to by pseudonyms and numbered, at the same time the boundaries of the case study were thought through before the research commenced.

Pilot Study Interviews

All the interviews were semi – structured using open ended questions as I felt this gave the participants a better chance to be open and respond in depth to the questions. I went with a guideline of questions to steer me, but I allowed for flexibility, I wanted to be able to encourage my participants to explore and expand the subject I was researching. (French, Reynolds, Swain, 2005). An advantage of this technique is that the interviewer alters the structure of the interview to the individual nature of the interviewee (Gilbert, 2005).

The pilot study was beneficial in giving me experience in interview techniques and areas for improvement for my main study.

I became aware of my style of questioning during the interviews and the changes I would need to make to my research questions. In this type of interview the interviewer knows all the questions to be asked but is free to change the wording and structure throughout the whole process.

These questions gave me some interesting perceptions from my samples raising issues and challenges amongst educators to be empathic in their areas of teaching and development. The complexity of empathy in teaching environments gave me the stimulus to understand how teachers in the military felt about empathy.

I gained some understanding of their perceptions from the issues raised during my pilot study from these research questions; however I restructured my questions completely to focus on three main areas:

- Meaning
- Advantages and Disadvantages
- Opportunity and Challenges when focusing on empathy

These changes were a result of the pilot study which revealed that I needed to focus on areas that were more relevant to my research. These matters were discussed with my research supervisor. A typical example of the interview format from the pilot study can be seen in Appendix A.

The sample group I used was pertinent to my study and were chosen to give me a holistic view on empathy in the military for my pilot study; they have different backgrounds, views and perceptions on educational progress within the military.

Observations

It was imperative that the data gathered from my observations for the pilot study allowed me to understand more about their perceptions about ideas and issues regarding empathy. I was interested in the use of empathy in the classroom environment in their teachings, communication and general personas of the teachers themselves. Observations took the form of field notes over a period of three hours observing as a non participant, observing the lesson content and the following educational topics;

Meaning of empathy - (Focusing on Personalised interaction)
- Teaching Styles towards individuals and the group
- Body Language
- Interaction (Intrinsic and extrinsic questioning and praise)
- Methods of dealing with classroom issues and behaviour

The observer is always in danger of accusations of bias or misinterpretation and particularly if he or she is researching in your own particular area which was the case for this study (Bell, 2005). This I had to take into consideration due to my experience of working and developing my own curriculum within this environment. And when carrying out analysis of my data I had to have a neutral perception of the data gathered which was hard at times due to 22 years of socialisation in this environment.

I found that working away from this environment in the Lake District teaching outdoor education gave me the ability to try to achieve a neutral outlook during my research, as during this period I did not feel part of this organisational structure.

In a topic such as empathy it is impossible to observe the minds of others and how they perceive their teaching styles and methods being used in their surroundings.

I observed three separate lessons to gather my data for this pilot study which raised some interesting areas for discussion; if a second set of interviews had been conducted.

My reason for not doing this second round of interviews was due to the practicalities of access and availability of individuals become issues which affected my final choices whilst carrying out the research (Robson, 1993).

For the main study these practicalities were taken into consideration and the teachers were interviewed on subjects regarding findings from the observations, in order to give validity to my study and my own understanding. However the issue of access would again become a problem for my research due to the size of my sample, access and time.

However I was able to observe their teaching giving me topics for discussion during my interviews, observing such areas as:

- Teaching Styles towards individuals and the group
- Interaction and learning centred approaches
- Time spent on each activity
- Class layout relevant to the size

I used exploratory observations to discover what is happening in the different situations I am researching, ensuring to stay a non-participant throughout my presence.

> Beside the competencies of everyday speaking and listening used in interviews, observing is another everyday skill, which is methodologically systematised and applied in qualitative research (Flick, 2009, p222).

A disadvantage that I must be aware of is "those observations are likely to alter unwittingly the behaviour of the people they are observing" (French, 2005, p 168).

The observations were successful in clarifying the answers that I received during my interviews and gave me new knowledge on the subject of empathy and learner centred education.

Analysis

For my analysis I used content analysis a search for patterns and categories that emerge, or recur, within the data (French, Reynolds, Swain, 2001, p214). I was looking for points, issues or views that go together as well as any discrepancies that occur.

Breaking my findings down into key ideas, whilst not distorting what I was hearing, was more complicated then I first expected, due to the amount of taped and written data and my lack of experience in research.

> All data has a manifest content and a latent content, the manifest content is the visible top layer of the content but the latent content is the unsaid, underlying content. 'Manifest content is the most objective but the latent content is often more revealing (French, Reynolds, Swain 2005 p216).

I transcribed the content from the observation; I used the key themes that stood out to develop the questions for the interviews. I broke down all of the information I received from the interviews and observation using different coloured highlights for the discrete points, this coding then highlighted different headings, which allowed me to put my data back together seeing new connections.

Findings from the Pilot Study

This section represents issues relating to complexities of empathy in teaching that were identified during my pilot study in spring 2010. I was aware of some of these issues within the military teaching environment; however during this research I became more aware of the different issues effecting learner centred approaches such as empathy.

The military teachers had strong beliefs about what helped and was needed to meet the needs of the soldiers, even if they were not able to achieve it. An area that was highlighted by my sample was issues that affect empathy; interestingly the main issue included the subjects of time restraints, curriculum pressures, educational ability and class size.

My pilot study identified such issues within the military and discovered that soldier education is affected by the same or similar issues.

Class Size

The participants stated that the most influential aspect of reducing the achievement of empathy is the size of the class, which can be anything from 35 – 48 in size, within the Army Training Regiments. This amount of students in a class means less interaction between teacher and student plus the issue is aggravated with the constant change of classrooms, facilities and resources.

One participant stated that with the amount of students it takes a long time to even portray basic empathy such as knowing their names and the breakdown of barriers, or interaction with inaccessible individuals or groups of students.

Time Constraints

The class size and time allocated to deliver the military curriculum seemed significantly problematic for both teacher and student. The 40 minutes allocated to a class of 48 students who have had some very bad experiences with education in the past, is not sufficient if one is to empathise towards the individual needs.
There is even less time for profound empathy out of class with the parents, students and other welfare agencies due to the amount of preparation and marking for future lessons that are scrutinised by the military validation teams.

Curriculum Problem

The curriculum which the soldiers experience is so busy and demanding which is a problem linked to the classroom size and time restraints, because dependant on the type of lessons being delivered, classroom change is frequent for most lessons.
Instructors dominate the environment with their personas, and experiences making dialogue between teacher and student difficult. Soem seemed to feel that there is no time to try and empathise with learners: "we just have to get on with it", stated one participant.

Individuals' Behaviour

It is difficult to empathise with students that display poor behaviour and attitudes to learning, however every recruit must leave training with the knowledge and skills to carry out their jobs which is the responsibility of the teacher - instructor.

The students with behavioural issues and welfare issues stemming from their past experiences will have more time spent on them leaving less time for others within the class.

Teaching Experience

The demands of the Army Training Regiments require teachers to be motivated, resilient, with knowledge and skills in a plethora of subjects. There is also an issue that some of these teachers are not willing to be in this type of 2 year posting (job, role, or placement) and have no teaching experience and qualifications, this can lead to motivational and interaction problems towards the students. However could these types of individuals also be capable of a more humanistic approach and empathise because of their different attitude systems.

The Physical Environment

The constant change of classroom environments for teacher and student impacts on time, quality of the lessons and the size of the group can impact on the empathic interaction within that classroom. The walls are bare with no visual aids to assist in the learning experience and most resources have to be acquired by the teachers again impacting on time. Also if the teachers are not empathic to the students needs and motivated, the resources for the lessons will not be up to the quality required for the students learning and development.

Conclusions and implications for the Main Study

The pilot study was a small scale case study. By the end of this exploratory research it became apparent that I would not come to identify precisely key issues due to the complexity of empathy in this teaching environment.

However I did gain a more holistic understanding of the issues surrounding empathy in a military educational context, at the same time gaining experience in research methods to conduct the main study research.

Methods - Main Study

This chapter explains the methodology developed for the main study. I will be looking at the research methods I have used to construct the main study and the process used to analyse the data gathered from my interviews and observations. The research questions and direction in the main study was a result of my early research and pilot study and direction taken from discussions with my course tutor.

> Research is about a willingness to engage in dialogue with others, the world as it dialogues back without pre conceptions, without fear or in another set of words purely from the yearning curiosity of the soul as we search (Clarkson, 2004, p184).

Research questions

- What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

- What do teachers in the military think are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathy?

- What do teachers in the military think are the opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathic?

McLeod (1994, p7) maintains that it is imperative for a researcher to have a clear understanding of the choices they make when designing and carrying out a piece of research. He also posits that these choices are informed by "Values, philosophical considerations and practical research constraints.

Case Study

I have used a small scale case study for this project to gain new knowledge and understanding in order to enhance teaching within my organisation, at the same time developing my own perceptions and understanding of empathy.

A case study is my main method; within it I have used interviews and observations. Both of these methods have strengths and weaknesses and if the data gathered from them converges, then I will be getting a reasonably valid picture (Gillham, 2000) (French, Reynolds, Swain, 2005).

Bell (2005, p10) stated "all organisations have their own unique features, and case studies can identify such features of implementation, process of work, and systems of work within a organisation".

Sample

I have used the following sample for my research within the same military teaching environment; all participants are working towards the same recognized organisational teaching and training development.

Table 3. Sample used for the main study

Sample	Specialist Teaching Subject	Additional Information
Dave	Leadership & Management	Responsibly for Values Based Leadership Project
Jane	Leadership & Management Teacher Training in the Military	Responsible for soldier education at all levels of rank
John	Leadership & Management Teacher Training in the Military Equality &Diversity	Responsible for monitoring best practice within this organisation.
Richie	Leadership & Management Teacher Training in the Military Coaching within Training Environments	Responsible for Leadership & Initiative Training
Nigel	Leadership & Management Coaching within Training Environments	Teaching on the various courses responsible for soldier development
Georg	Leadership & Management Coaching within Training Environments	Teaching on the various courses responsible for soldier development
Phil	Leadership & Management Coaching within Training Environments Outdoor Education	Responsible for all levels of outdoor education within military training environments
Emma	Coaching within Training Environments Outdoor Education	Responsible for program planning and co ordination of the various courses
Taylor	Coaching within Training Environments Outdoor Education	Responsible for teaching and couching of outdoor

Gaining access to the sample for my research was problematic at first due to their various work commitments, as five of my participants changed teaching appointments during my research.

I then had to seek permission from the new teaching staff to assist in my research, surprisingly they were keen to assist given the considerable amount of work they had to undertake in their new teaching appointments, within the military educational environment.

All participants are in a two year appointment in which they are expected to teach and develop various strategies for improving learning in the military, and learner centred approaches towards learners. I felt their experience and perceptions would answer my questions for this project, at the same time giving me understanding of how empathy shows itself in military education from the various perceptions.

I used semi–structured interviews and open ended questions so the participants could answer in their own way, and allowing them to be honest and open in their views.

My sample was appropriate for this research because of their military teaching and instructing experience within the same environments, with the same aims and objectives and 30 years of military experience. Also all the sample are currently researching and developing such areas as, coaching, mentoring, learner centred approaches and cultural awareness.

Therefore my sample was one of convenience for me (Flick, 2009) explains that convenience sampling is related to locating people who are available for the particular purpose and relevance in progress from the data collected and theory development.

These are all part of a bigger aim to develop future soldiers and leaders educationally and morally, all these areas come under Values Based Leadership teaching and training.

Ethics

Ethics are the rules and guidelines to ensure the professional conduct of this study. These were approved before the research could take place by the following participants within the military organisation where I conducted my research.

Head of Army Training Regiments

Before embarking on this research project I needed to gain permission, because the learner centred approach is being encouraged within the organisation permission proved not to be an obstacle. All my participants hold similar rank and status in this organisation, with different roles and responsibilities, and work in conjunction with upper management to develop Values Based Leadership.

I issued a covering letter and a consent form describing my research, when, where, and how I would carry out this study, at the same time discussing how my research would benefit the organisation. A copy of the ethical requirements for this dissertation can be seen in Appendix C.

Curriculum Heads of Departments

I was advised to gain permission from the head of all the departments within this organisation that my participants were required from to help me with my study.

Again all heads of departments were given a covering letter and a consent form for them to read and sign.

This was an important part of my ethics process due to military security in some of the subjects that are taught and for me to gain access to these environments. They all agreed for me to carry out the research using their staff and classroom areas within this environment.

Individual Participants

The participants I used for my main study were as a result of my pilot study. The reason for this choice was that all the departments that my samples were from have a responsibility to develop and research various learner centred approaches in education. I had twice as many interviewees for my main study however I still used the same ethical approach as used for my pilot study. I also completed the Ethical Issues Audit Form and an Ethical Issues Implementation Form. These forms were given to me by the University of York.. All documentation from the ethical process is kept on file in my home and will be destroyed on advice from the University. Each stage of this ethical process was important to ensure that each organisation's, i.e. military and university, research policies were followed in order for my research to be valid.   I will now discuss the methods I used to gather the data for this research also explaining advantages and disadvantages of the different methods used.

Qualitative Research

It is generally accepted that both quantitative and qualitative methods are relevant methods based on fundamentally different epistemological assumptions (Travers, 2001, p7). Making a choice between them commits one to a particular way of studying human beings and their behaviours. I felt that the nature of my question demanded a qualitative method for my research.

> Qualitative methods are used to address research questions that require explanation and understanding of social phenomenon (Lewis, 2003, p5).

I feel that this approach allowed me a better understanding of my sample, assisting me in accessing people's feelings, emotions and beliefs (Corbin, 1998), allowing me the possibility of unearthing data that I had not expected or accounted for. (French, Reynolds, Swain, 2005).

Interviews were carried out for this research as they are particularly useful for generating understanding as they gave me a relatively holistic perspective of key issues and the environment that the research is conducted.

> Interviewing is not a research method but a family of research approaches, that have one thing in common – conversation between people in which one person has the role of the researcher (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p208).

Interviews with observations within my selected groups may be the best way of determining why these differences exist and such studies provide the opportunity to explore mere variables in greater depth with a few subjects to find out how they are related.

Gillham (2001) explains that the overpowering validity of observations and what the researcher see's is the most direct way of obtaining data to enhance understanding of the subject being studied.

A drawback to using qualitative research methods could be the length of time taken to gather, transcribe and analyse my data and the possibility that I may become personally drawn into the topic, acting not as a researcher but as a participator. There is a chance that as soldier myself I may select data that stands out for me, or fits my preconceptions (Maxwell, 2005). My bias is something that I had to acknowledge; I also believe I should embrace it. My experiential knowledge gave an added depth to my study, allowing me to notice themes that others who do not have my awareness of the topic may miss.

My choice of research methods and sample revealed issues from the beginning of the main study, due to the obstacles created due to security within this military environment. Furthermore the unforeseen changes within the organisational structure, roles and the constant change of the sample I chose for my research. The qualitative data was collected using two separate interviews these were both semi – structured interviews. The second semi – structured interview was constructed from the data gathered during my observations, this was done to discuss what I witnessed during the classroom observations.

Nine people were interviewed for my study each at two separate occasions firstly the initial interviews, then interviews after my observations. The reason for this three part process of Interviews, Observations and Interviews on findings during my observations, was to try to understand the interaction process in the classroom.

All the interviews were Semi-Structured using open ended questions as I felt this gave the participants a better chance to be open and respond in depth to the questions. In this type of interview the interviewer knows all the questions to be asked but is free to change the wording and structure throughout the whole process. This method is effective in encouraging the interviewee to relax and explore their answers to the questions.

The interviewer's probing and prompting is a key element to the success of this type of interview structure, which was an area of my research experience that I needed to improve. So whilst all my interviews were taped I ensured that I listened to the participants, only probing for answers to my question when I felt the question was not being answered.

A more detailed example of transcripts from my interviews can be seen in Appendix B, the following shows the structure of my interview process which was structured in such a way as to answer my sub questions for this study:

Example of Semi Structured Interview

The research question for this study will ask;

"What are the Perceptions of Teachers in the Military about Empathy?"

Examining how empathy impacts on the teacher and student relationships looking at issues, challenges and opportunities of such a diverse phenomenon.

Sub questions

- What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

- What do teachers in the military think are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathy?

- What do teachers in the military think are the opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathic?

Interview Questions

What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

- What do you think empathy means?

- Does empathy have the same or a different meaning from 'sympathy'? Please explain.

- Is empathy about connecting with the whole person? If so, what does this mean?

- Is empathy centrally about moral issues? Please explain.

- Is empathy something that relates to an individual or can it also relates to a group? Please explain.

- Is empathy in educational contexts a tool for helping people to understand how students think? Please explain.

What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathy in the military?

- Is it possible to really understand another person by placing yourself in their shoes? If so can you explain?

- If it is possible to understand another do you think it is inappropriately intrusive? Please explain.

- Empathy means that people will be individualistic could group identity be lost? If yes can you explain your reason please?

- Is empathy too soft in a military context? Please explain.

- Would empathy undervalue the value of hard knowledge? Please explain.

- Sometimes in the military people need to know things not waste their time understanding each other what is your view on this?

What do you think are the opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathic?

- What opportunities could soldier education gain from humanistic approaches to teaching such as empathy? Please explain.

- Do you see any issues or challenges that military teachers would have if they were more empathic towards the learners? Can you explain your reasons behind your answers?

- There are various issues that affect an empathic approach in teaching. Is it unrealistic considering these issues to expect more empathy to be shown to students? Please explain.

- Would the knowledge of empathy improve teaching skills within the military? If so could you please explain?

- Are there any subjects that you feel would not have a place for a humanistic approach such as empathy? Please explain.

- Is there a place for empathy in military education environments? If so could you explain?

My choice of interview question developed from the pilot study that I carried out prior to my main study. I felt that the data gathered from the pilot study was good and interesting, however I did not feel I was gaining the perceptions I required to give credence to this study.

The following is a time line showing how I carried out this process;

Table 4. Timetable for Quantitative Research

Date	Participant	Research Methods	Location
11 August 10 COMPLETED	P 1 Dave	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview.	ATR Education Department
12 August 10 COMPLETED	P 2 Jane	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview.	ATR Education Department
13 August 10 COMPLETED	P 3 John	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview.	ATR Education Department
6 September 10 COMPLETED	P 4 Riche	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview	ART Education Department
20 September 10 COMPLETED	P 5 Nigel	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview	ART Education Department
21 September 10 COMPLETED	P 6 Georg	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview	ART Education Department
04 October 10 COMPLETED	P 7 Phil	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview	L&IT Education Department
05 October 10 COMPLETED	P 8 Emma	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview	L&IT Education Department
06 October 10 COMPLETED	P 9 Taylor	Semi Structured Interview, Non Participant Observation, Follow up Interview	L&IT Education Department

The advantages to this type of research was that an interviewer may discover information that they had not even considered to be of relevance at the beginning, due to this personal face to face approach. However interviewing, transcription, and analysis are very time-consuming plus the time needed to carry out the interviews.

> The interviewer needs to be sensitive and provide an empathic and non–judgmental atmosphere (French, 2005, p137).

This approach was relevant to my interviews in which I wanted to clarify what I observed during my observations in regards to the emotions, feelings and thought process to explore a link to empathy in military education. This was a very complicated area of my research which I was aware that I had to try and be mindful remaining non–judgemental throughout to gain the data for this study.

Observations

For the observations I tried two methods. One, I focussed on a list of empathic characteristics gleaned from past research which I extended by including non-verbal characteristics and physical proximity; and, two, I kept field notes in order to record more holistically and in depth what was happening during the lessons.

Some of the areas that I would observe for my main study were similar to that of the pilot study, with extra observations of the teachers' actions in relation to their emotions, feelings and interaction in the classroom. It was important that data gathered from my observations revealed in some way the use of empathy in the classroom environment in their teaching practice, communication and general personas of the teachers themselves.

> The overpowering validity of observations that it is the most
> direct way of obtaining data (Gillham, 2001, p46).

To imply that I observed empathy in the classroom would not be true due to its complex nature.It would be impossible for me to observe how another human being thinks. Kyriacou, (1986) explored eight key classroom qualities for effective teaching, identifies the underlying importance of empathy to all of them:

> The observation concerns the importance of teachers being able
> to see the progress of a lesson from the pupil's perspective, and
> make the appropriate decisions and modifications to the lesson
> while it is happening. This quality of social sensitivity is an
> important contributory factor to all eight of the qualities
> considered in this study (Kyriacou, 1986, p113).

The following headings were related to this concept used to give me structure to my observations in which I observed the classroom dynamics of the teacher and student.

The data was used in my next set of interviews discussing the various teaching methods and interactions that I identified, in which to explore perceptions of empathic approaches and understanding in these classroom environments.

Meaning of empathy - (Focusing on Personalised interaction)

- Teaching Styles towards individuals and the group
- Body Language
- Interaction
- Methods of dealing with classroom behaviour

Advantages and Disadvantages of Empathy – (Focusing on Personalised and Group Interaction)

- Individual teaching style
- Teacher and learner relationship

Challenges when attempting to use Empathy - (Focusing on issues in the classroom)

- Class Size
- Time Constraints
- Basic Skills Levels
- Physical Environment

The primary use of observing was to identify key points in the classroom in which empathy would be required, to assist a learner. From these key points I would take notes and use this data to ask the participants how they felt in various situations, encouraging them to explain their feelings, emotions and thoughts at that time.

The observations were successful in clarifying the answers that I received during my interviews, and giving me more questions to ask for my follow up interviews. Once these observations had been carried out I used interviews asking questions on their feelings, emotions and their thought process, during my observations of their classroom interaction.

Process of Analysis

I have used a method called content analysis to determine the presence of issues or concepts within texts from the interviews I carried out during this research. I then used the process of coding to refer to those codes which were used most often in order to develop my argument as it gave me a structured simple result from the data I had gathered for my research. All the interviews were taped then transcribed once this was done I started the process of coding my data.

The method of coding is designed to place data together in a selected format. De Vaus (2002) talks about coding being a beneficial method as it will make the answers more manageable with key emerging issues grouped together.

Once I had picked out issues, subjects and similarities from the data gathered during my interviews, I made lists placing the data into categories that were relevant to my questions and research rationale.

Table 5. Example of research coding

Question	Participant Feedback
What do you think empathy means?	"Being able to sense and feel what someone else is experiencing".
Does empathy have the same meaning has sympathy?	"They are different: sympathy is about understanding someone else's problems but not necessarily being able to place yourself in their shoes. It's also about feeling a level of compassion for someone and/or their plight".
Is empathy about connecting with the whole person? If so, what does this mean?	"It would be impossible in the environment that we teach to even consider connecting to every individual in the classroom or the troops the work in. Imagine trying to do that with the size of the class and time constraints".
Do you see any issues or challenges that military teachers would have if they were more empathic towards the learners? Can you explain your reasons behind your answers?	"I don't really think it would be effective to just concentrate on this one area of education such as empathy and its meaning in this environment. But we must consider all aspects of education if we are to improve the soldiers and develop future leaders". We don't have the time to train and educate such a large amount of recruits in such a short space of time. The curriculum demands and learning required by recruits and troops going to Afghanistan are causing problems professionally and personally at present across the British army".

My analysis by hand was initially challenging during my pilot study and during the main research because I wanted to be congruent to what my sample revealed.

> This is difficult when you code, analyse and dramatically reduce the data because you are immediately selecting and interpreting the meaning anyway (Cooper, 2002, p96).

However as I searched for themes and patterns from the early interviews and observations the themes that I have highlighted became subjects for my discussion. My interviews were broken down to the areas as shown in Fig, 5 Conceptual Framework to give me an understanding of the data and to illustrate patterns and key findings, the colours signify the coding system I used to identify key findings.

Table 6. Conceptual Framework for colour coding of key areas of findings

<table>
<tr><td>

What do teachers in the military understand by "Empathy"?

- **Meaning**

- **Sympathy and Empathy**

- **Moral Development and Empathy**

- **Context factors**

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What do teachers in the military think are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathy?

- **Leadership**

- **Responsibility**

- **Enhancing Knowledge**

- **Familiarisation**

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What do the teachers in the military think are the opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathic?

- **Teamwork**

- **Results**

- **Class size / Time**

- **Educational Damage**

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Reflection on my Methodology

This research study raised issues that I will improve and even practice for my future study such as my questioning technique, observation analysis, and time management which became an issue during this research.

The methodology used for this study fell into two stages, firstly exploratory and emergent, this being my earlier research and pilot study. There were various key finding and issues which were vitally important in my structuring the main study which would answer my question for this thesis.

The process for the main study in which the methods were used to gather the data from my participants were as follows;

- Interviews
- Observations
- Interviews

The data gathered was extremely surprising. I did not expect some of the positive reactions that surround the use of empathy, and the interest towards my motivation for my study and future implementation.

The observations that I carried out were very worthwhile but I would need more time to carry out interviews with the participants to talk about what I saw during the observations surrounding my subject. So to that end my time management however hard at times it is with other commitments needs to be better as I rushed this important part of my research.

For future research, more participants would be utilised to allow for change should they drop out through work commitments or lack of interest.

The methodology I have used worked for the nature of this study giving me a much better understanding of my research question and the methods I need to employ for this study.

> Reflection seems to be a useful concept. It is applied in many fields and as a concept it helps those in learning and professional situations to make sense of an area of human functioning. As the idea of reflection is commonly understood, it seems likely that it is a concept that is useful in everyday functioning as well (Moon, 1999, p13).

In the chapters that follow I will discuss key findings from the data gathered from my research which I have described in this methodology chapter.

Chapter 4

Discussion of Findings

Military teachers' understandings about empathy

I will argue from the data gathered that teachers within the military, who are widely perceived to be a traditional, hierarchical, and didatic organisation perceive empathy to be an important component within teaching and learning in the military educational environment. They declare their commitment to the value of empathy and characterise it in ways shown by this:

> This is the ability of the teacher to sense someone else's feelings as if they were your own. Being able to place yourself in the position of the student and feel what they are feeling and therefore adapt your style, methodology accordingly.

For this part of my research I wanted to gain understanding of the participants' general understanding of empathy and how they related this concept to their own teaching and the environment in a military context. I have divided section one of this chapter into 3 main sections;

- Consideration of the general meaning ascribed to empathy by military educators in my sample

- A limited discussion about the connections between moral education and empathy

- Reflection on the purposes to which empathic approaches are directed in educational contexts.

General Meaning ascribed to empathy

The participants that took part in this research project all had an overarching sense of what empathy meant in their ability to help the soldiers achieve their goals and potential in their chosen military careers.

All the participants work daily within the various soldier educations in which the development of teaching and learning strategies, such as coaching, mentoring, values based leadership and cultural awareness are leading the way in improving the education of soldiers and recruit training.

The description of empathy as a complex phenomenon emerged from teachers across my sample referring to "feeling", "thoughts" and "co-experience".

One of the teachers described this learner centred approach by suggesting that empathy was to do with "matching concerns - co-experience and relating thoughts". This is the ability of the teacher to sense someone else's feelings as if they were one's own. Being able to place yourself in the position of the student and feel what they are feeling and therefore adapt your style, methodology etc accordingly.

The views of my sample are in agreement with what is shown in the following literature in which Arnold explains the significance of empathy and communication with the learners.

> Empathic teachers can find many different entry points to an exploration of the nature of interpersonal and intrapersonal learning. A source of much disaffection for learning in schools stems from students feeling that such learning is remote from their interests and needs (Arnold, 2005, p20).

Empathy is a wide ranging concept in relation to how people perceive this emotion and my explanations from the teachers were limited, however they all perceived empathy to be an effective tool in teaching. At the same time describing how feelings and emotions were part of the process of understanding the learners, an example from the data gathered is shown below.

> [Empathy] is the ability of the teacher to sense someone else's feelings as if they were your own. Being able to place yourself in the position of the student and feel what they are feeling

A brief explanation but nevertheless a wide ranging description of empathy was given by a respondent who suggested that empathy is about "being able to sense and feel what someone else is experiencing".

Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal communication skills were described by all the teachers in my sample, as an integral part of developing empathic approaches in the classroom, in order to understand the learner and develop their potential educationally.

> The concept of empathic intelligence, with its attributes of expertise, enthusiasm, capacity to engage and to be empathic, is an attempt to provide a functional articulation of effective pedagogy. Effective pedagogy is in practice, a deeply complex and dynamic interpersonal and intrapersonal engagement (Arnold, 2005, p120).

Cooper (2002) describes how positive interaction produces a feeling throughout the body which leads to greater openness and willingness to engage in interaction. Conversely, negative affect produces a shutting down of self, a withdrawal, stimulating protection and defence. The samples descriptions varied in their explanation of the effects of interpersonal skills but a typical description was;

> I have carried out classroom observations on some of the instructors who are very good soldiers and have proved this in Afghanistan, but it became evident during the lesson that the recruits were scared to speak. I am not suggesting that these types of instructor have no empathy, however their interaction skills or empathic approach towards the recruits need shall we say to be developed. They had a presence about them that did not encourage the learners to interact even I found it hard to communicate after the observations.

> The aim or objective in my teaching is to communicate and invite communication, not to confuses the learner or impress them with my persona. Lots of times I find myself beginning to teach a group a subject or use military slang, so I have to stop and reflect because I know they wouldn't have a clue what I am teaching them. I can tell this by the facial expressions, sometimes when I look at a class of 48 learners.

These definitions from two very different teachers highlight the important fact that interpersonal communication is not only concerned with what is said, i.e., the language used, but how it is said, e.g. the non-verbal messages sent, such as tone of voice and facial expressions.

Hartley (1999, p.20) defines interpersonal communication as having the following characteristics;

- Communication from one individual to another.
- Communication which is face to face.
- Both the form and the content of the communication reflect the personal characteristics of the individuals as well as their social roles and relationships.

Mills (1994) explains most people are ambivalent about whether empathy should be considered as an end result, a tool, a skill kind of communication, a listening stance a type of introspection, a capacity, a power, a form of perception or observation, a disposition and finally an activity of feeling and emotions.

It is my perception from the research that military teachers understand the relevance of communicating with the learners and that the empathy reveals itself in many ways. When asked if empathy was about connecting with the whole person and I how this was achieved one participant stated:

> There are degrees of empathy. The situation we may find ourselves in with a learner my not require connecting with the 'whole person' but perhaps just with the persona we deal with within the classroom. In another instance the issues manifesting themselves within the classroom may require a more holistic appraisal and therefore require a more 'whole person' approach.

The teachers perceived that they were obliged to discover a learner's skills through communication and understanding the individual's needs and feelings and emotion, also the individual's socialisation process before joining the military.

Berman (2004, p110) explains that to empathise does not mean that one approves or agrees with a learner, but it does mean that one is trying to understand the learner.

Whilst a more military related answer was given to me during the interviews carried out after a classroom observation, in which I perceived the teachers approach to be very hard towards the learners:

> When I am training soldiers I understand what they require to move to the next level. I do not have the time or tolerance to sit and discuss everything they ask me or even discuss their views at that given time. However I will later reflect on what and why they have said something to try and better understand the reason behind this, even if I do not agree or sometimes care what they have told me.

Blackham (1976) suggests that tolerance and understanding will be achieved most effectively by personal contact, and in the absence of that, by a skilful use of literature and by the teacher's encouragement of sensitive relationships within the classroom and the school. The fostering of these positive attitudes in the children will then extend, we hope, outside the school into the wider community.

This was also explained to me during the interviews by one teacher who stated they aimed to encourage better understanding of the learner's or group actions and belief systems in order to develop soldiering qualities.

> It is possible to empathise with a group, the collective actions, omissions etc demonstrated by a group may display common characteristics and therefore be able to be viewed as a collective whole. An understanding of group mentality, either through shared experience, anecdotes or research endows us with the ability to empathise with how a group or its members may be feeling.

An appreciation of the significance of interpersonal and interaction skills were described as part of the military ethos amongst soldiers in the training environments.

During the pilot study and main study the various natures of empathic approaches were revealed to me during classroom interaction and reinforced my understanding. Until this point I had no knowledge of these empathic methods and their general meaning in the context of education and how interpersonal skills are part of this empathic process.

The entire sample explained that there were issues relating to time, class size and level of education of the learners when considering this type of empathic approach. However they all stated the importance of flexibility in the teaching styles.

Empathy and Sympathy

For my own knowledge I felt it was important to understand how my sample perceived the difference between these two widely researched concepts, at the same time exploring how these perceptions correlated to the military. There are varied definitions of these two concepts which Cooper (2007) suggests that all definitions are open to interpretation since the very personal and sensual interaction suggested in empathy is not easily defined or measured.

The difference between empathy and sympathy was described by the teachers with their own importance of differentiation between these concepts and their emotional reference. A typical important response of empathy as something that has a relatively precise meaning included the following;

> No it is not the same and quite distinct – sympathy – understanding of and feeling of the experience i.e., sadness. Empathy to share, understand and feel another's feelings.

> These are different: sympathy is about understanding someone else's problems but not necessarily being able to place yourself in their shoes. It's also about feeling a level of compassion for someone and/or their plight.

All definitions of sympathy and empathy are open to interpretation since the very personal interaction suggested in empathy is not easily defined or measured (Cooper, 2002). It was stated that at times it can be complicated to identify if you are being empathic or sympathetic by most of my participants.

The distinction between empathy and sympathy was made by each participant in their own explanations; however each stated how complex it is at times to distinguish sympathy from empathy, when connecting with the whole person on a large scale.

Rogers (1961) wrote about the importance of student centred approaches and the ability of the teacher to recognise empathy and reach out to the individual and group in the classroom environment and how it impacts on the learners' development.

> In every way the spirit of good will and friendliness was manifesto an extent that happens only in rare and isolated instances. In the many courses I have taken I have not seen the like. In this connection, it should be pointed out that the members comprised of a group that had been haphazardly thrown together: they had come from many backgrounds and they included a wide age range (Rogers, 1961, p309).

The significance of understanding the learners by professional educators in their role, which could be described as uniquely different from that of other teaching environments was described to me during the interviews.

> It is much wider than sympathy and in the case of the military all have been through similar training and so can really empathise with the issue or individual.

> There are degrees of empathy. The situation we may find ourselves in with a learner my not require connecting with the 'whole person' but perhaps just with the persona we deal with within the classroom.

> In another instance the issues manifesting themselves within the classroom may require a more holistic appraisal and therefore require a more 'whole person' approach.

When considering all the limitations described by the teachers and my own perceptions and experiences, it is revealed that empathy is a complex approach to human development.

It is not something that can be fully achieved by a discrete approach; many other concepts of teaching are required to be an empathic teacher. When asked if it was possible to understand another person they answered:

> Probably not but attempting to understand them will certainly help bridge the gap;

> Nobody ever really understands another individual – but they can try and understand as much as possible.

My respondents have identified and described to me wide range descriptions of empathy and its general meaning which apply to the environment that military teachers develop soldiers. Ultimately this is something that is impossible to fully achieve with limitations imposed on these teachers, however they all understand the significance and importance of empathy in the classroom.

Moral education and empathy

My reason for asking the teachers about morality and empathy was to learn from their perceptions how they encouraged both teacher and learner understanding in morals and values. This type of learning required teachers to have and encourage empathy if they are to understand and change the views, beliefs and attitudes of the learners, so they themselves empathise with other. This is a quality that is required of a soldier for them to be effective moral individuals in times of conflict or adverse pressures that only a soldier can understand.

> Specifically, the taking of reciprocal roles, in which the person alternately affects others and is affected by them in similar ways, may heighten his sensitivity to the inner states aroused in others by his own behaviours, i.e. having been in the other person's place helps him to know how the latter feels in response to his own behaviour (Hoffman, 1970, p346/7).

Before the research processes took place I perceived and still argue that morality and empathy are important parts of developing military learners to be effective in their operational environments.

> For the military shared morals and values that raise educational standards bond soldiers together, motivate, educate and equip them for grave potentialities of military service (Dr Basham, 2008, p1).

The Chief of Air staff, Sir Douglas Drake states (MOD, 2008, p5) "It is important to develop a strong individual to serve the country not just physically but educationally, this can be done by installing strong moral values within education" he then goes on to explain how empathic understanding teachers and trainers relationship with the young recruits past experiences and identity, sets a good example, for the soldiers of the future.

The determination by teachers in the military to be empathic towards the learners potentially means that a teacher may be drawn into reflecting and accepting another's morality. This has been shown by a minority of soldiers whose negative attitudes and beliefs have been displayed and shown to the majority of the world via the press and television.

Vetlesen (1960, p222) describes the lack of empathy in conflict due to pre conceptions, attitudes and beliefs as:

> If it can be shown that hatred is not sui generis but instead a by-product whose origin can be located in a deficiently developed faculty of empathy, then the immorality or lack of moral perception, judgement and conduct that hatred fosters can be overcome by strengthening the capacity for empathy with others.

The connection between morals and empathy was rejected strongly by all members of the sample:

> Not at all again could be about a range of issues [not just moral education].

> If we take 'moral' to mean the distinction between good and bad, then no. We should be able, as far as is possible, to empathise with anyone regardless of the morality involved.

> Being able to truly empathise requires the ability to see beyond issues of morality in order to make a reasoned judgement and therefore be able to place ourselves in the situation in which the learner finds his or herself.

From this data there have been some important issues in the perceptions of the sample, on the connections between morality and empathy.

For this study I did not want to research or discuss morality and empathy but examine the perceptions of this in relation to military education and teaching soldiers. Further consideration of what they understand empathy to mean is given in the next section discussing its application in military educational contexts.

Empathy and educational context

The military teachers mainly perceived empathy as a humanistic and effective approach to teaching; however this was not always considered the best approach in such a traditional behaviourist environment for all subjects taught by some of the sample:

> Yes I understand what you're saying and I suppose that I have never considered empathy and understanding students, but I have got by up to now achieving high pass rates and my superiors have not really complained and I am head of department. Plus no one ever comes here and fails these courses it's all about the numbers game at the end of the day so why waste time being empathic towards my students

My sample expressed understanding of empathy in military education contexts but perceived empathy to get in the way of effectiveness at times. When asked if empathy may be used as an educational tool one representative reply was as follows;

> It certainly may be used as such. For example: if we can empathise with a student from a poor educational background with little or no parental support, then we can at least attempt to place ourselves in their mind and make a reasonable judgement as to how they may view education.
> Clearly we cannot generalise and it would require us to know the student for there to be any real degree of individual accuracy. Being able to empathise with our learners may well dictate the level of pedagogy we employ in our teaching.
>
> I really do empathise with then learners and young recruits today. I have been through them same learning curve and I came from the same background as most of these young people.
>
> But when I am teaching I cannot let this get in the way they are all the same when they come through those gates on the first day of soldier training. But yes you do have to understand them but don't let their past detract you from your job.

The teachers overall suggested empathy was a way in which they could identify with the learners, understanding their past and present experiences.

At the same time those that really never considered empathy in the teaching environment had an understanding of its complex existence in teaching.

I would now like to examine the two levels of effectiveness and humanistic approaches that are valued by the teachers in this study.

The group or collective is made up of individuals that have all been through the same training and experiences, as well as on a social and educational scale before joining the military

This overlap between the group and the individual was also emphasised by another typical respondent who suggested:

> It [i.e. empathy] may relate to both [the individual and the group]. .. It is possible to empathise with a group, the collective actions, omissions etc demonstrated by a group may display common characteristics and therefore be able to be viewed as a collective whole. An understanding of group mentality, either through shared experience, anecdotes or research endows us with the ability to empathise with how a group or its members may be feeling.

This method relates to group dynamics and the group cohesion in military education and how by empathising with the group we can understand the needs of the individual.

> Empathy could be used to recognise matters relating to individuals holistically as well as dealing more specifically with particular learning goals. Teachers "must know their [i.e. students'] strengths etc before they can be empathic with specific subjects.

> There are degrees of empathy. The situation we may find ourselves in with a learner my not require connecting with the 'whole person' but perhaps just with the persona we deal with within the classroom. In another instance the issues manifesting themselves within the classroom may require a more holistic appraisal and therefore require a more 'whole person' approach.

Summary

From these responses I came to understand the perceptions of the teachers in a military educational context as regards to empathy. These findings highlighted how determined the teachers in this military environment really are in their quest to understand and develop the individual learner and groups.

Their perceptions, determination and understanding showed me that empathy in military teaching is perceived as an effective, humanistic component for developing soldiers at all levels.

Advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathic teaching in military education

For the second part of my discussion I will be deliberating on the varied understanding on the advantages, and disadvantages, when implementing empathic learner centred approaches towards education, which again I have divided into 3 main sections;

- Consideration and guidance of military teachers on empathy in leadership and management development

- Advantages of focusing on responsibility and enhanced knowledge of both teacher and learner

- Disadvantages & advantages of focusing on empathic learner centred approaches and how it this impacts Familiarisation

Context of empathic teaching

Many would not consider the army in the context of a humanistic educational environment. However from my own experience and this research I will argue that the army is an appropriate place for empathy and that a soldier in some capacity is involved or part of an empathic, productive learning environment at some point during their army career.

With this question I was aiming to discover the perceptions of military teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of empathic approaches within military teaching and learning. From the data I discovered that educating teachers on a humanistic approach such as empathy would not just be a standalone subject. There are subjects within military education taught in which examples using guided discovery are used to encourage the teacher's awareness of empathic understanding.

One such response from my sample explained how the Education Corp has knowledge on such subjects as humanistic teaching. However the second quote shows the diversity in the variation of perceptions of teaching styles and methods;

> Soldiers are already gaining from a humanistic approach. All ETS officers are professionally qualified teachers therefore empathy is, or at least should, be part of their teaching arsenal. The only distinction arises when you look at 'teaching' or 'instructing' in the army.

> Army instructors are not necessarily educators and may perhaps not be overtly aware of empathy as an aid to education.
> That said, isn't empathy a human trait anyway? The ETS is developing more instructors in teaching with training available.
>
> Yes I understand what you're saying and I suppose that I have never considered empathy and understanding students has an advantage, but I have got by up to now achieving high pass rates and my superiors have not really complained and I am the senior instructor. I see some of these approaches as time consuming but I am aware of these methods.

The expertise and pedagogical knowledge of a good teacher are essential (McCaffery, 2007) teachers in the military are given the title of instructor at the various training and education establishments across the MOD. The definition of instructor stated by McCaffery, et al (2007, p208); implies to someone involved in the transfer of a skill, instructing someone how to do something. It is used in employment training centres where people are trained in practical skills and crafts. The term implies a level of subject knowledge and a need for training in teaching and learning techniques in order to impart the skills to someone else.

At present there are only a handful of soldier instructors, who are not Army Education Corp (ETS) that have undergone teacher training such as the Certificate in Education (Cert Ed).

> Training teachers: research is consistent in identifying the importance of skilled teaching, the value of responding flexibly to learner needs, and being able to draw on a range of possible strategies. Teachers learn from the experience of teaching if they have the opportunity to approach it as a learning experience (McCaffery, et al 2007, P168).

I will argue that this type of teacher training is an advantage in developing soldier education and organisational effectiveness. This was explained to me by one of my sample in which his sole responsibility is leadership and teacher training across British army recruitment.

> It is important to understand why learners are in the class and how you are going to teach them. You need knowledge of welfare and learning problems that these soldiers may face, and at the same time consideration of the learner's backgrounds, the various life choices they have made.
>
> You must empathise with the learners, empathy requires insight and understanding this understanding is an advantage in soldier development.

> Being a teacher requires building rapport, which is something that cannot be taught, but ongoing development knowledge of this knowledge can improve the instructors and teaching ability in the army. This knowledge is an advantage but time may not always be available.

A typical variation of answers during this research explained in a different context showing the importance of having such knowledge and understanding of learner centred education was;

> You do not necessarily need to focus on empathy, more be aware of it and its ability to help guide our actions and interpretations of how we teach or instruct the learners.

The major advantage of empathy perceived by the teachers is that it allows us to step into the learner's shoes and appreciate how they might be feeling at that time in the class or how they are receiving our instruction. This then allows us to make reasoned assumptions about how best to teach them, as one teacher explained:

> I see no disadvantage in being empathic as long as it is taken in context and is not the only guiding principle. Empathy in teaching is very complex and it is important for the teacher to be aware of the various attributes that make up an individual's identity. At times the approach we take towards the learner's development will be based on assumptions, so the knowledge of the educators in an educational context is required.

I will now discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the following themes that emerged from the data gathered during the pilot study and main research.

Leadership and Management

Leadership and management are two very different components in the successful day to day running of any military organisation, in any operational environment soldiers may find themselves operating.

Although leadership and management in the military are perceived as a strong, dynamic, authoritarian quality for a soldier to possess and become accustomed to, all my participants pointed out that empathy must be part of these soldiering attributes of future leaders and managers. (Arnold, 2005, p175) suggests that empathic educators are leaders who commit to engaging students and colleagues in educative processes which respect the inherent abilities of humans to learn and which implicitly and explicitly model such values.

This links moral development and empathy with leadership and management as it is important that the various methods used in leadership involve empathic awareness towards individuals and the situations they may find themselves in.

I asked all my participants if sometimes in the military people need to know things and not just waste their time? understanding each other.

> There is a time and place for empathy. As an educator I need to know my students in order to be able to deliver the best level of education I can for them. In a military context a good commander who leads men, in my opinion, knows his soldiers and is therefore able to get the best from them and lead them effectively.

I gained this response from the majority of my sample who described empathy as important in creating good inspiring educated leaders.

> There are advantages of being able to use everything in your teaching tool box whilst undertaking the development of future leaders. I think that your teaching methods set a good example for future leaders, teachers and instructors in the military training environment.

Responsibility

Responsibility relating to empathic teaching development was discussed suggesting that this type of subject should be part of the chaplain's duties to raise awareness of empathy amongst teaching staff and instructors. However this type of soldier development at present is relatively new and is available to recruits delivered by military instructors, who have limited knowledge of teaching theories of development in these establishments.

The teaching staffs in these establishments are aware of these issues and explained the structure of who should lead this developmental process stating;

> It is the responsibility of the teachers to ensure that learner centred approaches to education and moral understanding (Core Values) is taught at all levels within the teaching environment and not just in the recruit training environments. Here at this establishment these lessons are delivered by the Chaplin to both staff and instructor, which is an ongoing developmental process.

> Education and attitude change is not indoctrination but the empowerment of students into reflective thought that helps to shape and reinforce base characteristics and moral traits (Arthur, 1988, p5).

It was introduced by the then Chaplain General, Victor Dobbin in 1999/2000 and has infiltrated the Military System over the past ten years. All participants believed that the Chaplains and Officers are a good moral compass and point of contact for understanding others; however most stated that it is the teacher's responsibility if we are to raise the educational standards in the British Army.

Enhanced knowledge

Different educational programs in the military have different ways of selecting their instructors and teachers. This selection process brings many advantages and disadvantages when considering learner centred teaching and empathy, for the teachers and the within the environment they teacher. These can be the short time spent in the post (teaching position) lacking in the opportunity for personal development. Also the teacher or instructors experiences that have shaped their belief systems towards teaching soldier, from past operational experiences.

From my data some interesting points were raised, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of developing all soldiers. All those that I interviewed are involved in education at some capacity, and perceive the impact to develop their understanding of empathy and improve their teaching ability very relevant in soldier education.

> We need to know how to develop and sustain the long term professional development of empathic educators. Since it is a holistic dynamic commitment to a demanding, caring but rewarding professional orientation it requires sustained mentoring (Arnold, 2005, p135).

A typical response which highlighted both advantages and disadvantages in developing enhanced knowledge from the majority of my sample were;

> I think that military educators (as opposed to instructors) are already empathic towards their learners, but still require constant personal development; this can benefit all areas of education.
>
> The challenge arises in educating Direct Entry (DE) officers who have no concept of what it is to be a soldier, and with the quick turnaround in their post sending them on course would be a disadvantage. They often have preconceived ideas of what a soldier looks like and how they will behave. Late Entry (LE) officers, generally speaking, have a more natural empathy as they were once soldiers.

> That's not to say that DEs don't empathise but that it may be a little more difficult initially for them.

> Yes and No – individuals should only be involved in their specific areas i.e. teachers teaching and instructors instructing but they must understand the advantages of different concepts used in developing the soldiers. Teacher training is an advantage especially the more humanistic approach to soldier training. But we must understand this can be a disadvantage both in time a cost.

The majority of the sample suggested that educators not only need knowledge of the subjects they teach and instruct but also knowledge of the best way to teach them whilst at the same time understanding the learners. This requires an understanding of both empathy and subject which will be an advantage to both teacher and learner.

Familiarisation

Familiarisation amongst teacher and student could cause problems within the military's behaviourist environment leading to discipline issues which asks the question, is there any need for teachers in the military to be empathic?

Rogers (1967) talks about the importance of being yourself whilst teaching, this creates an environment of trust, respect and security, with educators that can empathise with the learners. A short quote from the interviews yields an interesting perception;

> Staff being empathic or soft with the recruits brings the issue of familiarisation, and that some of the soldiers do not have the capacity to understand the reason for teaching in this way.

> This is due to their own social and educational backgrounds, so in this environment they perceive this approach as weak and become over friendly with the instructors, who themselves are not use to this approach and reaction.

This reaction on the subject of social class being a disadvantage was mentioned by another member of my sample who told me that when she has tried to show empathy to staff and students there seemed to be a communication problem, that was affected by social class i.e., Officers and Other ranks in the military.

Social class associated with educational attainment has been researched in the past looking at the use of empathic teachers and how social class can affect their interaction towards the students (Brown and Riddell, 1992), (Chazan 1992), (Kyriacou, 1997).

It is my perception that to try and develop all learners to a level of ability in order to succeed and carry out their job effectively, familiarisation should not be perceived as a weakness, instead development of the teacher and student relationship takes place.

Listening and understanding with empathy can develop the teachers interaction with the learners (Kjørholt, 2005, p56) this used with a variety of other teaching styles adds to the development of teaching methods and the learners' development.

> It takes more planning to be learner cantered, it takes more lesson preparation, it takes more search, both in search for materials and searching inside your student to see what it is they want to do, what kind of needs to meet together. It also takes more time for self evaluation…But I would say that the time requirements were worth it (Literacy South, 1997, p99).

Summary

From these responses I was to understand the varied perceptions in relation to advantages and disadvantages of empathic approaches in a military educational context. At the same time the teachers expressed opinions, perceptions, knowledge and understanding of empathy and how these advantages and disadvantages impact on the learners and organisational development.

I will argue that my findings illustrate that the military teacher's perceptions highlight the ongoing development of teaching and learning, always changing what they do regardless of obstacles that affect them in their teaching environment daily. This is because they are continually learning and improving what they do, which develops their effectiveness has teachers (Petty, 2004) (Kyracou, 1997), which in turn develops the potential, education and operational effectiveness of the soldier.

Opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning in the military

In the third and final part of my discussion I will be exploring the different perceptions from the teachers on the opportunities and challenges whilst focusing on empathy in soldier education. I have chosen to break down these topics into sub sections to illustrate these opportunities and constraints on teachers in the military, these are:

- Teamwork and Leadership
- Organisational Targets and Achievements
- Class size / Time
- Educational Damage

I will argue that there are always opportunities and challenges that affect the way in which we teach and interact with the learners, these opportunities and challenges require flexibility and tenacity to achieve or overcome.

> Reaching out to others, to ideas, to the challenges of extended understanding, occurs in the confidence that either the goal will be achieved or the attempted will be worthwhile in its own right (Arnold, 2005, p163).

At the same time being an empathic teacher requires flexibility and understanding in ones teaching style to encourage development and achievement.

> In my teaching I have attempted to focus on self observation and the development of empathy. I believe these emphases have been fundamental to my student's growth and training. They have constituted a major part of my course objectives and class time activities since the first class I taught (Mills, 2002, p201).

My sample generally had varied perceptions on this subject which illustrated the educational culture of a military traditional, hierarchical organisation. However I will argue that this traditional, hierarchical organisation shows tenacity and motivation, which at times these teaching attributes were not evident in the interview answers, but became relevant during the observations.

The time and effort they spent on lesson preparation and resources with the time constraints and other issues that I will discuss in this chapter were obvious to me in every non – participant observation I carried out for this research.

When asked about the opportunities and challenges of empathic approaches in military education, a typical answer from the majority of my sample was that;

> Trying to empathise with every student and every situation is not possible but in attempting to do so we may better appreciate the minds of our learners. I don't think we need to necessarily focus on empathy and I don't really see any challenges due to the military ethos and training which the teachers have undergone.

> No, I don't agree. There are no challenges, all military teaching staff have been handpicked for their teaching role and this humanistic skill is required by all my staff. I am positive military leaders understand their people very well; however we strive to improve the learners.

Some very didactic responses to this question, however it was obvious to see that the military staff from my research spend a lot of time reflecting on areas of improvement educationally, which one of my sample suggested;

> We have constantly got to improve our ability to teach and create a learning environment that makes the soldiers relax and want to learn. Some of these guys and girls hate education and have probably not even been to school, which I empathise with, been in that position myself. But the teacher creates the environment, improves the learners and understands the learners regardless of what obstacles stand in the way.

Aspy (1972, p118) explains the importance of the teachers responsibility to create such an environment. "The most important component of a humane classroom is the climate created by the teacher. Specifically, the classroom should have a supply of meaningful learning experiences and the teacher should maintain facilitative levels of empathy (understanding) congruence (genuineness) and positive regard (valuing toward the students)".

Teamwork and Leadership

Teamwork in context helps learners to develop skills such as empathy and understanding others at the same time promotes listening and communication skills which are required by all soldiers in the job role (Halberg, 2008).

Teamwork is developed and encouraged throughout an individual military career and is a major component in the success of military work and development.

Selected pedagogies such as empathy can be linked to developing team work which builds the capacity and confidence in the individuals' performance within the team (Gibb, 2006).

A member of my sample suggested that empathy with others in the team develops communication which leads to understanding. Thus suggesting that the significance of empathy and team work affects how the soldiers communicate on operations;

> Yes, empathy is an attribute in leadership and teambuilding which is used if avoiding conflict; or drawing on the viewpoints and ideas of other members of the group or team which improves communication and understanding of others.

> Commitment to each other and active listening will improve our ability to give constructive feedback to each other. If your team encourages the individuals to understand each other which they must do on operations when times become hard, it creates that military bond and ethos which is very strong in the military.

> On operations we must I suppose have empathy for the people of different cultures if we are to achieve the military objectives.

Understanding the concept of teamwork will require the reflective capabilities of the leaders and team members, group cohesion will require a level of empathy towards each other. A typical response discussing how understanding the soldiers in the context of developing teamwork, group cohesion and leadership;

> Every person is different having gone through the same educational military process, but the previous social and educational backgrounds must be taken into consideration. What I mean is empathic soldiers can have an impact on group cohesion and develop into influential leaders.

> Professional military educators are aware of the concept of empathic teaching in improving teamwork; whether they choose to accept its central tenets and apply them is an individual choice.

> In the lowest level of instructor qualification: the Defence Instructional Techniques course, potential instructors are taught, at a very low level, how to manage their students, and develop teamwork implicit in which is the notion of empathy.

A soldier's career largely requires the understanding of others in the team or who they are required to lead on humanitarian roles or operational roles across the world.

These skills are developed through listening and the ability to empathise and work effectively with people who have different perspectives, attitudes, and backgrounds than you.

Organisational Targets and Achievements

The Army is committed to ensuring that soldiers have the training and achieve the skills required for promotion, job role and future development. A Command, Leadership and Management (CLM) program is mandatory for those selected for or who wish to gain promotion to the rank of Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO).

The aim of the soldiers' education program is to improve the performance of soldiers both in barracks and on operations.

The CLM courses prepare soldiers for the tasks that they will undertake during their military careers. This is supported by a 'Skills for Life' package (MOD, 2010), which is funded by the governments education budget not the MOD.

When looking at the opportunities and challenges the participants had varied opinions and perceptions suggesting that empathy towards the learners can develop results and achievements.

The individual's perceptions suggested a negative view on future outcomes for the organisation, never less they seemed positive that empathy and humanistic education can improve achievements.

> Well understanding how the dynamics of the group and individuals work and gain better results this is always a challenge in this environment.

> The constant change in the curriculum and the purpose of the training establishment calls for targets to be reached due to funding from various educational agencies. Just look at the challenge we face now with less time and money to train recruits and still turn out high quality soldiers.

> As an educator I believe these challenges should not be a obstacle it is important that the military keep up high standards in everything we do. If it takes having more empathy with the learners to achieve our goals then that is an opportunity in its self.

> We are going to face even more challenges over the next few
> years and will have more targets to achieve with less
> manpower, time and money.
> Saying that, it is important to develop our humanistic approach
> to education, in order to deal with future change and conflicts
> globally, this will develop our soldier now and in the future.

Hurley (2007) explains how the British army has recognised the need to be flexible enough to operate and co-ordinate in a range of environments across the widening spectrum of national security. In pursuing additional flexibility there is a risk that the British army ends up prepared for nothing? However a natural compromise has been achieved. The intent to build a force which is educated and robust across a multiple of areas and alternative futures, but still tailored to meet the challenges of the most likely future event.

Class size / Time

The number one and most influential aspects of reducing empathy in the military is the size of the class, which within the (ATR) can be anything from 35 – 48 in size, within the Army Training Regiments, this issue was raised by all participants.

> Perhaps the most powerful factor in reducing empathy is class
> size. More children means more group interaction, thus on a
> daily basis teachers are continually modelling stereotyping, a
> potential moral disaster. This issue is aggravated in secondary
> schools where teachers see many different classes and even
> more so in the anonymous lectures in universities (Cooper,
> 2007, p10).

The class size and time allocated to deliver the military curriculum is significantly problematic for both teacher and student. The 40 minutes allocated to a class of 48 students who have had some very bad experiences with education in the past, is not sufficient if one is to empathise towards the individual needs. One participant explains that;

> The amount of students in a class means less interaction
> between teacher and student plus the issue is aggravated with
> the constant change of classrooms, facilities and resources.
> With this amount of students it takes a long time to even portray
> basic empathy such as knowing their names and the breakdown
> of barriers, or interaction with inaccessible.

However (Hammond, 2006) suggests that this is an opportunity for teachers to realise that regardless of class size the learning environment can become entrenched in the dynamics of the typical classroom environment affecting who is in charge (teacher or learner), who is vulnerable, who steals the limelight and who shuns the learning experience. So it is very easy to forget qualities such as tolerance and empathy when teachers have other things on their mind.

> You never have enough ......you never have enough time ... time to speak to the kids as much as you want because you have always got everybody to think about I suppose class size comes into it ..the more children you've got the more you've got to look after (Cooper,2007,p10).

Educational Damage

Social and Educational backgrounds must be taken into consideration when teaching in the military or any educational environment.

The past learning experience from parents, teachers and peers, has impacted on their educational development and the perceptions of education, my participants explained that;

> From my experience in secondary education and military teaching environments, there is a need to understand individuals – especially if there is educational "damage" from previous educational experiences which impact on learners whilst they are serving and after military service.

> We tend to recruit from low social and educational areas in society which brings problems of emotional and educational damage. The views on education which are developed through their socialisation must be changed in order to achieve their potential and become affective soldiers.

I discussed the need for empathic learner centred understanding in military education with all participants with the majority explaining the importance in the development of the following:

- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Moral Development
- Academic Ability

There are research projects ongoing looking at reasons for the unsuccessful transition of soldiers from the military to civilian environments, which have resulted in homelessness, prison and suicide.

The findings chapters are quite good. I think the purpose of each could be sharpened up a little. Make it clear to the reader what you are dealing with – tell them what the discussion is about and make sure that you are being consistent.

Conclusion of the findings

This section presents a conceptual framework including the findings revealed in the interview data and observations on, what people generally understand about empathy, the different understanding in trying to develop empathic teaching and the constraint of focusing on empathy. These three discussions demonstrate the important role of empathy and how it is perceived in a military educational context. The data also suggested that the empathic understanding and perspectives on the role of empathy converge to a great extent. It is correct to assume that empathy can be understood in terms of an interpersonal phenomenon. I believe that both the observations and the interviews show the lived experiences and perceptions of my sample, due to the qualitative nature of the research instruments used to gather my data, I could not reduce my findings down to numerical or statistical data e.g. charts or graphs.

Instead I chose to look at the commonalities I found as well as the differences and to see if these are linked to what I found, and didn't find in the literature discussed with my literature review. It has also presented some additional data on types of empathy which though unsubstantiated by observations, illuminate the main conceptual framework; these concepts were further discussed in the literature review.

The next chapter will conclude my research of this study of the perceptions of military teachers on empathy.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This research project explored the perceptions of soldiers on empathy in a military training and educational environment. My research questions allowed me to look at specific areas of interest, gathering data from different sources which would allow me to construct an argument, for the importance of understanding and implementation of empathic approaches to learning within the military educational environment.

The literature, methodology and findings have been discussed in this dissertation, in this final chapter I will present my conclusions and recommendations.

Research questions

- What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

- What do teachers in the military think are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathy?

- What do teachers in the military think are the opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathic?

Key principles

A number of overarching concepts have been revealed and many of the debates I have raised in the different sections of this dissertations. These could be seen as key principles that we, as teachers, instructors, tutors or mentors feel should underlie learner centred approaches used to develop learners in a military context;

- Understanding the general context of empathy
- Recognise the importance of interpersonal interaction
- Address issues relating to the classroom environment that affect learner centred teachings
- Understand and apply the different concepts of Empathy

The findings from this study highlighted the conclusion that the concept of empathy has several meanings, for the soldier teachers in this study, at the same time raising a plethora of issues that affect its presence in the classroom environment.

This study showed the importance of empathizing with other learners whilst teaching or instructing within military education. Data highlighted the relevance of empathic teaching in an educational context, in regards to future soldier deployment operating amongst societies and cultures around the world on military humanitarian or operational duties.

I will now summarise these key principles below and follow this with my view of some key issues and opportunities for empathy and learner centred approaches in values based leadership and for military education program planners.

Military teachers' understandings about empathy

Empathy has been regarded as either cognitive, affective, or a multidimensional phenomenon and there has been much controversy about its complex nature (Arnold, 2005).

Throughout this research it has became clear that the teachers in my sample in the military are acutely aware of the meaning of empathy and the impact that related learner centred approaches can have on the development of the individual and the organisation. The data gathered from this investigation has raised important issues that are open to future discussion and change.

Aspy (1972) distinguished the significance between understanding the concept of empathy in a cognitive sense and being able put it into practice. My findings have shown that the military teachers in this education environment do put this into practice in their teaching and enthusiasm to develop military learners.

Kohut, (1980) suggested that empathy is the very basis of all human interaction. He was, however, eager to emphasize that for him empathy is a form of understanding and should not be confused with being nice, kind, compassionate, or loving.

Also, for Kohut empathy was not infallible. Empathy is a process that can lead us to both accurate and inaccurate results (Kohut, 1980, p485).

This human interaction that Kohut talks about in the context of empathy relates to the findings and areas of interest discussed in this study with a vast importance placed on interpersonal and interactional communication skills.

The research sample highlighted that during a period of time the relationships in these environments have the potential to become profound if the teachers can gain one to one and good group interaction, as well as developing an understanding of human feelings and emotions.

My study throughout highlighted the importance of interpersonal interaction during and after lessons due to the educational levels of the soldiers, thus the sample expressed their concerns over the lack of this interaction and their own misgivings affecting empathy.

Both the sample and my own perception in this study highlight the concerns relating to the basic skills levels, which are of a low level in the military. This issue requires that one to one empathic interaction which must take place in the classroom, however because of the number of students in this organisation requiring this approach; it would be unrealistic to do so due to time and the pace of the curriculum.

Distraction from the pressures of military training creates fear or anxiety which reduces positive attention during lessons at the same time having a negative effect on empathic communication between students and teachers.

Advantages and disadvantages of focusing on empathic teaching in military education

I have found through this study that for a soldier being empathic is not a recognised, conscious way of being; however, it is an approach that the teachers in this study understand to be an advantage to learning and soldier development.

Those that accept and embrace being an empathic teacher tend to enjoy the life of a teacher and appear to be motivated in gaining new approaches to teaching and learning.

The many benefits such as leadership and management development and enhanced knowledge show strength and a greater level of awareness of their own capability and the advantages and disadvantages of empathy in education.

> Unempathic managers can have a very negative and demoralising effect on staff, and can constitute a considerable constraint on the ability of staff to be empathic and to work as a team. Managerial staff they showed no interest in staff and their feelings, either personally or professionally, consciously or unconsciously, demotivated them (Cooper, 2007, p164).

My own experience and the research within this army educational and training environment showed me that empathy and understanding of others is an advantage in developing leadership and how we manage others.

From this study I have gained a positive perception of the attitudes of the sample and this environment in which my research took place on the focus of being empathic towards soldiers in developing understanding of people and other cultures.

My research suggests that empathy is only a word if we do not have educators that portray teaching attributes that enhance knowledge in themselves and others. Being an army teacher is a very rewarding profession which has the capacity to develop knowledge and achieve learning potential by its soldiers; they learn to cope with and manage difficult situations by supporting each other and the learners.

They keep busy to minimise the effects of being non progressive, and they learn that they are ultimately responsible for enhancing knowledge and understanding the needs educationally of every military rank. The majority of my sample has stopped expecting anything from the army regards to personal development, and take it upon themselves to enhance their own development. Having adapted to constant disadvantages of military life and educational issues they perceived empathic approaches and the knowledge in enhancing development is imperative.

The military classroom is a disciplined environment with the military teacher instructor being looked upon by the recruits as a God type figure. Through the course of this study I have become aware that this god type figure understands and perceives empathy as not a soft approach but an approach that can be enhanced in most educational situations to improve the learner. These god type figures actually perceive empathy to be beneficial in all types of teaching styles, supporting the learners and staff in military teaching.

Opportunities and challenges of focusing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning in the military

There are areas that affect the ability of an educator to show empathy in the learning environment suggests Aspy (1972) Cooper (2002). My research has identified such areas within the military and discovered that soldier education is affected by the similar issues as that of a civilian academic establishment.

The military teachers constantly discussed the problems of lack of time, class size, organisational targets and educational damage which showed these could be challenges when using empathic learner centred approaches in the classroom environment. Curiously,

I initially identified increasing class size as a possible factor in the introduction of empathic methods in the traditionally hierarchical, teacher centred world of the army. But my sample seemed to suggest that large groups restricted the development of empathy between teachers and learners.

This section presents a conclusion from this study revealing that people generally understand about issues in education and how these issues impact on everyday interaction and learners centred approaches such as empathy.

The different understanding in trying to develop empathic teaching in the military can be seen as an opportunity to develop military teachers new and old. The constraint of focusing on empathy will bring opportunity for personal development, especially with the amount of military teachers being encouraged to pursue teaching qualifications.

During the research over the last two years there has been correlation in the views of the sample I chose for this study; however their perceptions have given me more understanding of the subject of empathy in teaching and learning contexts.

The differences in the perceptions, feelings, emotions and explanation of the experienced teacher compared to those with less experience on empathy, were beneficial to this research, showing a holistic outlook to education by the organisation.

Also the appreciation of the significance of interpersonal and interaction skills combined with the military ethos amongst soldiers in training environments has been an area for much discussion during this study.

Illustrated in this quotation the development of the learners is important and always at the forefront of military educational development.

> Trying to empathise with every student and every situation is not possible but in attempting to do so we may better appreciate the minds of our learners, which will lead to a more rounded intelligent soldier.

Methodological conclusions

I conclude that the methods used in this study are appropriate for others who would embark on similar work to improve their own knowledge and development or the organisation that they are employed.

> Interviews with observations within selected groups may be the best way of determining why these differences exist and such studies provide the opportunity to explore mere variables in greater depth with a few subjects to find out how they are related (Black, 2002, p69).

Though my methods worked for this study in collecting data for my research question, I found that obstacles would reveal themselves in my pilot and main studies.

My first obstacle was carrying out the interviews in the first place which I did not initially foresee as a problem due to me being part of this organisation. It was not always easy to recruit respondents and my sample cannot be regarded as representative. . The second obstacle which was a new experience to me due to my own lack of experience in research was that of gaining access to the sample, some of whom over the 2 year period changed job positions frequently.

Once this access was gained I still had to ensure I gained permission from each Officer Commanding of the various departments within the establishments' in order to interview their teaching staff, and stick to the time frames they offered me, which changed frequently.

Data Collection

This issue became apparent during my interview stage of this study, due to the busy and daily changes within these environments; I had to persistently ring the interviewees to ensure that they would be available.   I had three interviewees cancel because of work commitments thus causing me to change my interviewees at the last minute; however this did not deter me from the questions that I would use for this process.

Another issue that I overlooked was the venue of the interviews; each had to be carried out with other people present due to lack of quiet areas that would have been more beneficial for my interviews.

Some of the data gathered was extremely surprising and I did not expect the amount of positive reactions from the sample regarding the use of empathy, and the interest towards my motivation for my study and future implementation.

Recommendations

All the teachers saw the framework I constructed containing the categories that the data was broken down into as interrelated and compounding with in the development of their values based leadership education of soldiers.

The process of empathic humanistic teaching facilitates positive learning relationships (Cooper, 2002) in which both parties are focussed on and interested in each other. It enables teachers to assess and meet pupils' needs more precisely in the teaching and learning process, which is encouraged across military education.

The amount of recent change within the military has had an impact on every area and every soldier at some level. I have a perception that empathy could enhance learning and welfare of the soldiers and the organisation, and any other type of teaching environment in the military. Cooper (2007) explains that the ability to understand the other leads directly into concern for their welfare and to feel as learners think and feel, leads teachers to do their best for them, creating a deeply moral approach to the teaching and learning process. I also perceive that from my study it showed that the military are very proactive with the development of teaching and learning strategies and that learner centred approaches are not a new entity to the teachers in the military. In some respects the way they have always taught and interacted with the learners is in such a way to gain the best from their ability and constantly improve their potential.

However empathic learner centred approaches must continually be implemented in such a way that educators develop an open positive approach to empathy and learner centred teaching, which in turn creates a positive teaching environment.

Educational development is still at the forefront of change, which is illustrated in this congruent reply during my interview from a more experienced member of my sample;

> I've experienced many operational tours, deaths and accidents some of these were very close to me. I did not cry at the time or at their funerals, even when others are hurting, I was impervious to feelings of emotion or empathy for them or the families. However when I am in the classroom with 48 recruits from backgrounds that you could not imagine, with learning difficulties and the constant pressure of military training, I can empathies with them fully.
> We are very different from civilians and whatever challenges the classroom environment and the learner bring, we will always strive to understand, encourage and develop the learners.

Values Based Leadership across the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is a relatively new concept; from my findings issues have been raised that are not just related to the military but impact on education across society in general such as;

- Time Constraints
- Class size
- Educational damage
- Curriculum constraints
- Basic Skills levels
- Class divisions

This study, literature and sample have shown that these types of issues will always be present, but I argue that this does not stop the teacher empathising with learners, which in turn emulates good practice.

The conflicts have changed as have the roles of the soldiers but the role of the teacher; to support, develop and educate the soldier is more important than ever.

When soldiers leave the army they undergo a year's resettlement package, involving training for a new career, CV and interview training, medicals and learning about civilian life. They leave and attempt to merge into society without any support, civilian related qualifications and with little knowledge of how to fit in and make friends and adapt to a new career, (it is a different world).

This is an area that from my experience and perceptions needs development and change which again requires understanding, interpersonal skills and empathy.

Personal reflections

I stated in my introduction that I started to research this subject of empathy in education during 2010, but I have become aware during my research that unconsciously it began in 1987 when I first joined the British army. This unconscious development of empathy in myself and teaching, I perceive to have grown from experience, violence, sadness, happiness and learning to understand other human beings.

This study has allowed me the chance to re-explore my time as a soldier, seeing it through the eyes of my observations and interviews.

The 'rules of engagement' in civilian street feel vastly different to those of an army environment the soldier's existential quest to find meaning in his life and a place in society reveals different challenges.

The end of this study is poignant for me as it also signals the end of my life as a soldier. And whilst doing this research I now have a self-awareness of how I have become the 'me' I am today, my own feelings and emotions and what empathy means to me. I hope that this research will give the army education department new knowledge at some level; they are a group who I believe are undervalued by the army in general. I hope that I have shown how army teachers experience, or try not to experience, empathy, and the values, standards and expectations they live their lives by.

For my future research I would like to investigate the effects of empathy on leadership and management of teachers in offender learning, which is a unique environment, where empathy reveals itself in a very different context.

> **Empathy** in an interpersonal setting between persons who remain aware of their separateness, yet in essence it is an intrapsychic phenomenon based on the human capacity to know another person from moment to moment (Lichtenberg, 1984, p12).

Interview Format for the Pilot Study

What are the Perceptions of Teachers in the Military about Empathy

Introduction

Three individual interviews will be carried out by myself for this pilot study using participants from a variety of backgrounds within the military educational environments to gather data for my research, giving me a holistic view and deeper understanding of my research question.

All the interviews will be Semi – Structured using open ended questions as I feel this will give the participants a better chance to be open and respond in depth to the questions. In this type of interview the interviewer knows all the questions to be asked but is free to change the wording and structure throughout the whole process with the use of prompt questions.

This method is beneficial in encouraging the interviewee to relax and explore their answers to questions, giving people with learning difficulties or low self esteem a chance to give good input to the research. The following questions will have sub questions that will give me a more holistic view on the subject I am researching, also adding validity to my study:

- How do military teachers and instructors perceive the concept of empathy?

- How do military teachers and instructors understand the concept of empathy and its impact in their interactions with students?

- What might enhance or diminish the ability of military teachers and instructors to be empathic?

- Could the implementation of empathy in Values Based Leadership be perceived to create a holistic understanding within soldier education?

Interviews

Participant One - Name changed for anonymity

Name: John

Gender: M

Age group: 20-25

                26-35

                36-45

                46- 55 *

                56+

Years spent in the British Army - 30

Teaching role – Senior Outdoors Pursuits Instructor, Senior Coaching Instructor. (Army)

Age of students – 16 – 55 from Army, Navy, Air Force.

Location – Joint Service Outdoor Mountain Training Centre (Various Locations)

Participant Two - Name changed for anonymity

Name: Jane

Gender: F

Age group: 20-25

                26-35 *

                36-45

                46- 55

                56+

Years spent in the British Army - 4

Teaching role – Senior Tutor in Military Studies around the World.

Age of students – 16 – 18

Location - Army Training Regiment

Participant Three - Name changed for anonymity

Name: Dave

Gender: F

Age group: 20-25

                 26-35

                 36-45 *

                 46- 55

                 56+

Years spent in Teaching - 25

Teaching role – Senior Tutor for key skills and trade training for army recruits.

Age of students – 16 – 30.

Location - Royal Engineers Trade Training School

Semi Structured Interviews

Question One - Could you describe to me your understanding of empathy?

Prompts

Have you ever heard of empathy?   1 2 3 4 5

What does empathy mean to you?   1 2 3 4 5

Are you aware of the difference between empathy and sympathy? 1 2 3 4 5

What is your experience of empathy during your military career?   1 2 3 4 5

1 = Not at all (Is there any reason for this?)

2 = To a certain extent (Can you give an example?)

3 = A great deal (Can you give an example?)

4 = Other Response (Can you explain your answer?)

5 = No Reply (Are you willing to explain your response?)

Aim of Question – I am hoping this first question will give me a holistic view of the understanding of empathy by my three participants for my pilot study and whether their perceptions match the true meaning of empathy.

Question Two – Have you ever reflected on the use of empathy in an educational context?

Prompt

Do you believe empathy in education is important?   1 2 3 4 5

What does empathy mean to you as an educator?   1 2 3 4 5

Are you aware of empathic approaches in your teaching?   1 2 3 4 5

What is your experience of empathy in military education?   1 2 3 4 5

1 = Not at all (Is there any reason for this?)

2 = To a certain extent (Can you give an example?)

3 = A great deal (Can you give an example?)

4 = Other Response (Can you explain your answer?)

5 = No Reply (Are you willing to explain your response?)

Aim of Question – With this question I want to know the views of my participants on the use of empathy in an educational context in the development of students and how empathy can affect their communication with students.

Question Three – Do you consider a need for an empathic approach towards soldiers within military educational environments?

Prompt

Could this approach benefit the learners?   1 2 3 4 5

What impact could this approach have on the organisation?   1 2 3 4 5

Would other areas in the military support the use of empathy? 1 2 3 4 5

Are you an empathic educator?   1 2 3 4 5

1 = Not at all (Is there any reason for this?)

2 = To a certain extent (Can you give an example?)

3 = A great deal (Can you give an example?)

4 = Other Response (Can you explain your answer?)

5 = No Reply (Are you willing to explain your response?)

Aim of Question – This question hopefully will answer the question of whether empathy plays a part in military education, and if the educators feel the need for an empathic approach towards learners in the military.

Question Four - Do you think empathy can create a facilitating environment which would enhance the relationship between student and teacher?

Prompt

Do you believe that the learning environment should be a pleasant experience for students?	1 2 3 4 5
Do you want a better relationship with your students?	1 2 3 4 5
Would the students respond to this environment ?	1 2 3 4 5
Are you empathic with your students?	1 2 3 4 5

1 = Not at all (Is there any reason for this?)

2 = To a certain extent (Can you give an example?)

3 = A great deal (Can you give an example?)

4 = Other Response (Can you explain your answer?)

5 = No Reply (Are you willing to explain your response?)

Aim of Question – I want to examine the views of the interviewees on how they think empathy could enhance the learning environment, experience and development of the soldiers.

Question Five – Can you see any problems or issues that stop the teacher showing empathy in the classroom?

Prompt

Would anything stop you being empathic towards your students?	1 2 3 4 5
Do issues in your environment vary in the curriculum?	1 2 3 4 5
Is time spent resolving issues that affect empathy?	1 2 3 4 5
Are you empathic with your students despite such issues?	1 2 3 4 5

1 = Not at all (Is there any reason for this?)

2 = To a certain extent (Can you give an example?)

3 = A great deal (Can you give an example?)

4 = Other Response (Can you explain your answer?)

5 = No Reply (Are you willing to explain your response?)

Aim of Question – There are many issues that affect an empathic approach in any educational forum, so with this question I want to understand the interviewee's perceptions on these issues and if there are any other issues that only affect military education.

Question Six – The Values Based Leadership Scheme across the MOD is a relatively new concept; do you feel that the understanding of empathy would be beneficial?

Prompt

Do you believe that empathy could develop soldiers?	1 2 3 4 5
Could empathy develop military educators?	1 2 3 4 5
Could empathy be implemented into Values Based Leadership?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there a place for empathy in military education?	1 2 3 4 5

1 = Not at all (Is there any reason for this?)

2 = To a certain extent (Can you give an example?)

3 = A great deal (Can you give an example?)

4 = Other Response (Can you explain your answer?)

5 = No Reply (Are you willing to explain your response?)

Aim of Questions – I want to gather data that will give credence to my study for future implementation toward Values Based Leadership training and education. I will examine views of the participants on the subject of empathy and how it could impact on the development of the soldiers.

Conclusion

I have produced six sub questions with prompts for my pilot study that I am hoping will answer the 4 main questions for my study. The sample for this pilot study have experience and some understanding of empathy due to their experiences in education, but at what level should become apparent during the interview process and my analysis of the data gathered. My interviews will all be taped this will gives me a opportunity to listen to the interviewees instead of taking notes, plus the opportunity for myself to carry out reflections later on the interviewee and their perceptions in order to analysis my data.

Example of Semi Structured Interview

Interview Three John 13 Aug 2010

Main Question

The research question for this study will ask

"What are the Perceptions of Teachers in the Military about Empathy?"

Examining how empathy impacts on the teacher and student relationships looking at issues, challenges and opportunities of such a diverse phenomenon.

Sub questions

- What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

- What do teachers in the military think are the advantages and disadvantages of focussing on empathy?

- What do teachers in the military think are the opportunities and challenges of focussing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathetic?

Interview Questions

What do teachers in the military understand by 'empathy'?

This is the ability of the teacher to sense someone else's feelings as if they were your own. Being able to place yourself in the position of the student and feel what they are feeling and therefore adapt your style, methodology etc accordingly.

- What do you think empathy means?

  Being able to sense and feel what someone else is experiencing.

- Does empathy have the same or a different meaning from 'sympathy'? Please explain.

  There are different: sympathy is about understanding someone else's problems but not necessarily being able to place yourself in their shoes. It's also about feeling a level of compassion for someone and/or their plight.

- Is empathy about connecting with the whole person? If so, what does this mean?

There are degrees of empathy. The situation we may find ourselves in with a learner my not require connecting with the 'whole person' but perhaps just with the persona we deal with within the classroom. In another instance the issues manifesting themselves within the classroom may require a more holistic appraisal and therefore require a more 'whole person' approach.

- Is empathy centrally about moral issues? Please explain.

If we take 'moral' to mean the distinction between good and bad, then no. We should be able, as far as is possible, to empathise with anyone regardless of the morality involved. Being able to truly empathise requires the ability to see beyond issues of morality in order to make a reasoned judgement and therefore be able to place ourselves in the situation in which the learner finds his or herself.

- Is empathy something that relates to an individual or can it also relates to a group? Please explain.

It may relate to both. For individual empathy, see previous answers. It is possible to empathise with a group, the collective actions, omissions etc demonstrated by a group may display common characteristics and therefore be able to be viewed as a collective whole. An understanding of group mentality, either through shared experience, anecdotes or research endows us with the ability to empathise with how a group or its members may be feeling.

- Is empathy in educational contexts a tool for helping people to understand how students think? Please explain.

It certainly may be used as such. For example: if we can empathise with a student from a poor educational background with little or no parental support, then we can at least attempt to place ourselves in their mind and make a reasonable judgement as to how they may view education. Clearly we cannot generalise and it would require us to know the student for there to be any real degree of individual accuracy. Being able to empathise with our learners may well dictate the level of andragogy or pedagogy we employ in our teaching.

What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of focussing on empathy in the military?

I don't think we necessarily need to focus on it, more be aware of it and its ability to help guide our actions and interpretations. Its major advantage is that it allows us to step into the learner's shoes and appreciate how they might be feeling or receiving our instruction. This then allows us to make reasoned assumptions about how best to teach them. I see no disadvantage in being empathetic as long as it is taken in context and is not the only guiding principle.

- Is it possible to really understand another person by placing yourself in their shoes? If so can you explain?

  Probably not but attempting to understand them will certainly help bridge the gap; true understanding is the realm of psychologists, not teachers. We owe it to our students to try our best to empathise with them, especially if they are exhibiting difficulties.
- If it is possible to understand another do you think it is inappropriately intrusive? Please explain.

  Not if the aim is truly altruistic. That said, it also depends on the extent to which a teacher is attempting to empathise and the willingness of the student to allow you into their inner world, there will unique boundaries present in each scenario.
- Empathy means that people will be individualistic could group identity be lost? If yes can you explain your reason please?

  If you are empathising with a group then perhaps group identity is forged rather than lost. If you empathise with an individual then it is paramount that in so doing you do not endanger their group unity/identity merely understands and interprets it.
- Is empathy too soft in a military context? Please explain.

  Not at all. If we are to be professional about what we do then we need to understand our students.   This has operational gravitas as well as educational. In designing courses of any description we must be cognisant of the learner, how he behaves and why he behaves in that fashion. It's also, I believe, fundamental to being a good teacher.
- Would empathy undervalue the value of hard knowledge? Please explain.

  No, they compliment one another in being able to formulate a balanced opinion on someone. They may prove contradictory but they nevertheless help us discern the key character traits and idiosyncrasies of an individual or group.
- Sometimes in the military people need to know things not waste their time understanding each other what is your view on this?

  There is a time and place for each. As an educator I need to know my students in order to be able to deliver the best level of education I can for them. In a military context a good commander, in my opinion, knows his soldiers and is therefore able to get the best from them and lead them effectively.

What do you think are the opportunities and challenges of focussing on empathy within the development of teaching and learning that intends to be empathetic?

Trying to empathise with every student and every situation is not possible but in attempting to do so we may better appreciate the minds of our learners. I don't think we need to necessarily focus on empathy but certainly be aware of its value and application when required.

- What opportunities could soldier education gain from humanistic approaches to teaching such as empathy? Please explain.

Soldiers are already gaining from a humanistic approach. All ETS officers are professionally qualified teachers therefore empathy is, or at least should, be part of their teaching arsenal. The only distinction arises when you look at 'teaching' or 'instructing' in the army. Army instructors are not necessarily educators and may perhaps not be overtly aware of empathy as an aid to education. That said, isn't empathy a human trait anyway?

- Do you see any issues or challenges that military teachers would have if they were more empathic towards the learners? Can you explain your reasons behind your answers?

I think that military educators (as opposed to instructors) are already empathetic towards their learners. The challenge arises in educating Direct Entry (DE) officers who have no concept of what it is to be a soldier. They often have preconceived ideas of what a soldier looks like and how they will behave. Late Entry (LE) officers, generally speaking, have a more natural empathy as they were once soldiers. That's not to say that DEs don't empathise but that it may be a little more difficult initially for them.

- There are various issues that affect an empathic approach in teaching. Is it unrealistic considering these issues to expect more empathy to be shown to students? Please explain.

If lessons are designed with the student in mind then I don't see an issue. If the student is the benchmark then empathy will be preordained within the lesson and revised and acted upon dependant on contact with the students.

- Would the knowledge of empathy improve teaching skills within the military? If so could you please explain?

Professional military educators are aware of the concept of empathetic teaching; whether they choose to accept its central tenets and apply them is an individual choice. In the lowest level of instructor qualification: the Defence Instructional Techniques course, potential instructors are taught, at a very low level, how to manage their students, and develop teamwork implicit in which is the notion of empathy.

- Are there any subjects that you feel would not have a place for a humanistic approach such as empathy? Please explain.

  In my world as a military educator, no. But in the world of an instructor empathy may be less important, especially in situations where rote learning is the best methodology to employ. As I have said though, empathy is, for most people, quite a natural thing to do.

- Is there a place for empathy in military education environments? If so could you explain?

Letter to the Colonel of the Army Training Establishment

Sir

As you are aware I am a Sergeant within your Regiment, and a student at the University of York working towards an MA in Educational Studies by Research. As part of my I will be carrying out a pilot study which will give me more understanding of my subject on the perceptions of soldiers on empathy. I will be required to interview and observe various Military and Civilian Staff on the subject of empathy within the Military Educational Environment.

It would give me a plethora of experience, and knowledge towards my study if you would allow me to carry out my research within your Regiments.

I have attached an information sheet and an informal consent form which I will collect from you when you have given your permission to my research.

I will give you regular updates on my progression throughout my study and understand you have the right to terminate my study at any time if it causes problems to the participants or the Operational Effectiveness of your Regiment.

Your Obedient Servant

M BECKETT

Sergeant

Army Training Establishment

Letter to Military Staff at the Army Training Establishment

Sir / Madam

I am a student at the University of York on the M A in Education by Research. As part of my Study I will be carrying out a pilot study which is a practice study to enhance my main thesis that I am researching The Perception of Soldiers on Empathy. I will be required to interview and observe you, in your roll at the various Army Training Establishments during your teaching and nurturing of the Soldiers.

It is my intentions to tape you during the interviews due to the fact that your perceptions play such a vital role within my study, not just on your teaching but your reflections on how you were trained has a recruit. Your confidentiality and security will be observed at all times and no names will be used for my work. With your approval I will share your words with my tutor and no one else during this study.

You will remain anonymous during my discussions with my tutor, and within my study. All work will be destroyed in September 2011 after the completion of this study on receipt of my final mark. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time thus all work being destroyed on your withdrawal. See information sheet for details.

I would be grateful and honoured if I could interview and observe you for my study. Could you please sign the informal consent form attached the allow me to interview and observe you and to use the information gathered from you. On completion of your consent form I will contact you a week before the research takes place.

Yours Truly

M Beckett

Informal Consent Form Civilian and Military Staff

I have read and I understand fully what Sgt Beckett requires me to do.   **YES / NO**

I agree that Sgt Beckett can carry out his interviews with me at the College.   **YES / NO**

I acknowledge that Sgt Beckett will be using taped interviews with me.   **YES / NO**

I agree that I will remain namelessly in Sgt Beckett's study.   **YES / NO**

I acknowledge that all data collected from myself will be kept Safely and Securely at all times.   **YES / NO**

I understand that has a member of staff at the college I have the power to withdraw from this study at any time.   **YES / NO**

I understand that confidentiality will be respected by Sgt Beckett Within this study.   **YES / NO**

I understand the destruction of data during this module is the responsibility of Sgt Beckett.   **YES /NO**

Signed:

Date:

List of Acronyms

ATR	Army Training Regiment
Cert ED	Certificate in Education
DE	Direct Entry
MOD	Ministry of Defence
EFP	Education Promotions Certificate
RAEC	Royal Army Education Corp
ETS	Education and Training Services
LE	Late Entry
Ors	Other Ranks
NCO	Non–Commissioned Officers
BIT	Basic Instructional Techniques
CLM	Command, Leadership and Management
SNCO	Senior Non Commissioned Officer
L&IT	Leadership & Initiative Training

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