

Title of Proposal: Learning within a Bureaucratic System: Civilian Defense Employees in the (Mandatory) Higher Education Classroom

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ABSTRACT

At four naval shipyards in the United States, civilian defense employees earn a free-of-charge college education through the Naval Shipyard Apprenticeship Program. Students are paid an hourly salary while in class, and completing classes with a passing grade is required to maintain their jobs. So, how does a bureaucratic, military organization affect one's ability to learn? And how does mandatory education affect students and instructors?

An educator's professional obligation, regardless of subject matter, is to teach critical thinking skills that enable students to function as reflective thinkers, learners, and members of society. The Department of Defense's obligation in mandatory adult higher education is to turn manual laborers into reliable supervisors whose management skills will translate into career-long workers who follow the system of rules dictated by the bureaucratic structure. This dichotomy places instructors and students in a tenuous situation.

This paper will examine the issues surrounding mandatory higher education, the effects of mandatory education on motivation and learning, and the issues faced by educators teaching within military and bureaucratic environments.