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**ANALYSIS OF SUITABILITY TESTING SYSTEM AND WORK
SOCIALIZATION
OF CONTRACTED STAFF IN
HUNGARIAN ARMY**

PhD Thesis

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Introduction, justification of subject

Not later than at the beginning of the social-economic transition in Hungary an existing demand of shifting recruitment from compulsory to voluntary base emerged.

It was pointed out by a number of studies that values of society and that of the liable youngs concerning military service are showing a contradictional pattern and even on professional platforms sharp disputes were conducted on pros and contras of compulsory military service.

Main argument of opponents of compulsory service is that how disadvantageous is for the army and also for the individual when he is recruited against his own will. The solution - according to them - is an army enlisted on voluntary base. Their arguments are based on the tendencies having been present globally and from the 90s even in Europe that ever more countries turn or tend to turn their army completion to voluntary base.

Supporters of compulsory recruitment, however, seem to be skeptic about the guarantees of getting the headcount filled up on voluntary base, in their opinion the necessary reserve staff cannot be obtained this way in an eventual wartime.

Recent years brought decisive measures concerning the shift of recruitment and also political decisions were drawn in the topic.

Long term filling up the headcount by common contracted staff is ensured by a government decision. It states that the headcount of common contracted staff is to be raised continuously. A motivation system has been elaborated that can help in improving the attractiveness of military career and in strengthening the level of loyalty toward the Army so - similarly to other countries - it has been possible to keep the previously contracted staff, too.

All the above tasks were carried out on highest level by the Human Resources Division of the Army, however practical execution itself on the levels of corps and other organizational units is facing problems even today.

Choosing my topic of study was influenced mainly by asking the question how the shift of recruitment - in the scope of the above mentioned information - can be managed in a way that on one hand does not cause disturbances in the operation and ensures - on the other - the accordance of individual and organizational needs.

Present study began in 1998 when social discussion about the shift was still in a conversational phase. At that time most severe problems - among others - were caused by extremely high fluctuation and on the long run it had negative effects on shifting strategies.

In the highlight of discussions and existing situation my main goal was set as to investigate the interactions of suitability tests, work adaption and work socialization and to clear what advantages have the knowledge of the above interactions on the management of contracted staff. On one hand there is a problem and attached to it exists some kind of virtual solution (fluctuation and human resource management measures) on the other there is an annual contingent of 3-4 thousand of contracted soldiers being sent to examination and this latter for sure raises questions about the effectiveness of the HRM measures.

It seemed to be reasonable to connect the two main fields of interest because preliminary assumptions suggested that apparent problems are mostly caused by the applied approach and methods of suitability checking, position appointment and the lack of work socialization. Both fields (i.e. suitability and socialization) have their own development process, both have their own set of regulations and measures but their integrated and practical execution is quite problematic.

1.1. Hypothesis, objectives of study

As a result of the above facts project design is based on two distinct hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Military suitability of youngs choosing contractual military career is below the level required for successful work socialization.

Hypothesis 2. Work socialization as an institution hardly exists in Hungarian Army and it remarkably contributes to fluctuation of contracted staff.

To validate the above hypotheses the following aims have been set:

- ❖ Elaborating a critical analysis of ability check of contractual field crew in being able to make suggestions - in the scope of the obtained results - for the usage of an up-to-date methodology.

- ❖ Studying the motivation of applicants choosing contractual military service optionally along with their attitude to army.
- ❖ Studying the motivation, work satisfaction of presently in-service contractual staff along with their knowledge concerning work socialization.
- ❖ Studying the most common reasons of leaving the service.
- ❖ Checking the presence of and knowledge level concerning conscious and planned work socialization process in commanding staff.

Theoretical part of the thesis offers an overview on academic questions of suitability, socialization and work motivation as well as on historical development process of suitability checking along with its theoretical backgrounds taking principally Hungarian aspects in consideration. Possible application of suitability checking in both Hungarian and western armies is also reviewed. Having studied the theoretical backgrounds of the topic the following conclusions can be drawn:

- ❖ Demand for suitability checking has appeared ever since scientific usage of psychology was first introduced to Hungarian Army.
- ❖ Beginning from the end of World War I almost each period had its typical suitability checking system and some of them proved to be inappropriate from different aspects (e.g. the 50s).
- ❖ Suitability checking methods applied in western countries can be used in Hungarian Army only after rigorous considerations.
- ❖ When elaborating suitability checking techniques main stress has to be set on the matching i.e. rule and need of co-ordination of work activities and private life conducting processes as well as on economic efficiency.
- ❖ Most important prerequisite of successful career building is the adequate acceptance of given career but beyond this efficacious matching with job is also needed.
- ❖ Successful work socialization is extremely important for both the employer and the employee. The higher is the matching level between individual qualities and job requirements the more successful is the socialization process.
- ❖ When discussing relationships between man and work the questions raised by work motivation and work satisfaction are not ignorable.

2. *Description of analysis*

2.1. *Analyzed panel*

The project focused on three main target groups.

- A) *Compulsory recruitees* who took part on military recruitment in year 2000. Examined persons are young Hungarian males aged 17-23 ($N=307$) who had to take part in military recruitment according to Act CX.1993.

- B) *In-service contractual staff members*. Panel covers males and females with age 19-33 ($N=128$; males: $N=114$; females: $N=14$).

- C) *Professional commanding staff members* ($N=21$). Examined persons are in commanding positions, among their subordinates there are also contractual staff members.

Study began in autumn 2000 involving contractual staff ($N=128$) and professional commanding officers ($N=21$) of three different military corps as well as compulsory recruitees examined by a county Recruitment Office at a recruiting ($N=307$). Hence total headcount of panel equals to 456.

Involving compulsory recruitees was needed to map the attitude of youngsters to military service and to obtain relevant data on what kind of knowledge the youngs have about military service and on which percent they would eventually choose contractual military career.

Studying in-service contractual staff members can clear the motives of the involved persons to choose military career and reveals their satisfaction level concerning their present status.

In case of professional staff, however limited headcount of panel does not support to draw general conclusions from the obtained data, an answer was sought to the question that what means and methods are used in supporting the adaptation of contractual staff, whether the need for such support emerges and if so, how it is done.

Reflecting to the above issues, main point of view in composing the panel was to ensure the analysibility of the main problem in focus and that was the adaption process of contractual staff. Getting deeper knowledge on contractual staff was supported by additional partial surveys.

2.2. Methods

In successful recording and processing of data both individual and group methods were used. Hence the final set of applied methods was as follows:

A) Compulsory recruits

1. General work sheet - sociological features of the panel
 - questions of career orientation
2. Ritók Questionnaire on vocational choice
3. Questionnaire on contractual military service.

B) Contractual staff

1. General work sheet - sociological features of the panel
 - validating the career acceptance
2. Exploration
3. Super-Questionnaire on labor value - Value structure of professional activities
1. Csirszka Questionnaire on motivation - Motivational aspects of professional activities
2. Ritók Questionnaire on vocational choice
3. Questionnaire on contractual military service
4. IOR (Index of Organizational Reactions) Questionnaire on work satisfaction.

C) Professional commanding staff

1. General worksheet
2. Exploration
3. Questionnaire on the knowledge concerning work socialization.

2.3. Status of analysis

During conduction of the survey different methods were used in each staff categories. Persons involved were informed about the objective of the survey and they were guaranteed about anonymity.

In category of *compulsory recruitees* ($n=307$) filling the questionnaires happened in groups.

In case of *contractual staff* ($n=128$) both individual and group methods were used. Questionnaires were filled in groups, exploration was done individually.

Professional staff ($n=21$) was analyzed also by using group and individual methods.

3. Results

3.1. Compulsory recruitees have minimal knowledge on military career, most of them would not take up such a job voluntarily. Motives of rejection can be found in low social prestige of military career and in lack of relevant information.

3.2. Significant part of contractual staff is far not satisfied with its present position, they - explained by different motives - would see themselves in other jobs. On drawing contract they accepted the offered positions mostly as a yield to force because positions matching with their qualification and interests were not available.

The analyzed panel puts the level of financial compensation on quite a low level, they find the required work too much as compared to their wages (even despite the raised provisions).

Satisfaction level of organizational acceptance is also low. Most of them miss any long term loyalty toward the organization.

Work socialization as a phrase and as an institution is totally unknown in the panel. They did not make efforts on mapping their value system in a conscious way, even the need for that was missing.

The total panel stated that the organization did not adapt itself to the individuals, their problems were not managed properly.

On service sites the concerned corps do not organize occupations - apart from those strictly needed for fulfill service requirements.

Motives of eventual leaving the job can be given as follows:

- ❖ low provisions (however this parameter has changed recently due to restructuring provision system)
- ❖ higher wage offers from employers of other professional types
- ❖ wide gaps between actual job and individual fields of interest
- ❖ conditions are not given for recreation and entertainment in off time
- ❖ living and work standards and the level of supply are low
- ❖ place and role of contracted staff within organizational structure are not fully cleared (sometimes they are taken as compulsory recruitees)
- ❖ managing their human affairs does not happen in a proper way
- ❖ distance between living place and service site (missing family and friends)
- ❖ high requirements (too much work)
- ❖ low work motivation
- ❖ low social prestige of job
- ❖ lack of military traditions.

3.3. *Commanding staff* fails to know the phrase and methodology of work socialization.

3.4. Possible solutions resulting from obtained results to emerged problems

- ❖ Analyzing the applied means of labor force selection indicated the conclusion that presently applied tests failed to serve effectively the selection and appointment. It

seems to be essential to collect a set of selection methods by which matching to special requirements of different military positions, prior acceptance of career and motivational backgrounds can be measured adequately.

- ❖ Appointing individuals to a position should not be driven by sole completion of headcount but by matching work requirements and individual interests, that means it should not be a problem when personnel completion goes a bit slower but the most crucial is that the applicants should be entirely satisfied with the given appointments.
- ❖ Living and work conditions as well as the supply quality of the staff have to be improved.
- ❖ Planned and focused programs are needed to organize the leisure time activities of the staff.
- ❖ Place and role of the (contracted) staff have to be set clear in the organizational work structure. However the central regulations and measures are given, but the whole problem has to be cleared in the “heads” of the executive staff.
- ❖ Proper conflict management techniques have to be used in the conflicts between staff categories.
- ❖ Human relation problems of the given staff category have to be managed by professionals (so no drop in headcount in this specific field is acceptable during overall staff reduction).
- ❖ Acceptance and prestige of military career have to be strengthen in wide ranges of the society.
- ❖ Military traditions of the Army and of the given corps have to be kept and maintained.

4. New scientific achievements

Finalized study and analysis of data brought new scientific results that can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ Analysis of suitability checking system shows that presently applied psychological tests fail to adequately meet the requirements.
- ❖ A proposal has been offered on the application of such a set of methods which can collect remarkably more information about the applicant. It implies leaving out some

formerly examined parameters while introducing some new categories just as motivation, labor value etc.

- ❖ By using new methodology appointment of positions become more sensitive and more precisely focused because more information on the applicant can be taken into consideration. Matching of job requirement and individual interest can be measured more accurately.
- ❖ Possibly it is firstly published that suitability and work socialization is viewed from a new approach. Both fields are extremely important in achieving long term satisfaction of individual and organization but as it came out from the results none of them alone can provide sufficient preconditions.
- ❖ On the basis of the obtained results a new psychological program has been elaborated that can support adapting and probably can remarkably contribute to easier adaptation and stronger loyalty of the staff in concern.

Finally possibilities of academic and practical application of the results can be summarized as follows:

- ❖ Critical analysis of suitability tests can support clearing and revising theoretical backgrounds of suitability checking systems.
- ❖ Psychological contents of selection, appointment and work socialization of contracted staff obtained a clear shape.
- ❖ By reviewing theoretical aspects of work socialization it becomes possible to revise the given field within the Hungarian Army.
- ❖ Results of the study can be used in further theoretical and methodological survey of suitability tests and work socialization because the data provided by the applied diagnostic equipments can be compared with each other in a number of ways and variation possibilities of the applied methods cover a wide range.
- ❖ On the basis of results a psychological program took shape that can have an assisting effect in promoting work socialization of contracted staff.