

Strategic Management and Retention of Talent: Challenges in the Portuguese Army

David Pascoal Rosado^{1,*}, Ana Romão², Helga Santa Comba Lopes³, Maria da Saudade Baltazar⁴ and Dinis Fonseca⁴

¹Academia Militar/CINAMIL & Universidade Europeia, Portugal

²Academia Militar/CINAMIL & CICS.NOVA, Portugal

³Academia Militar/CINAMIL, Portugal

⁴Universidade de Évora/CICS.NOVA & Academia Militar/CINAMIL, Portugal

Abstract: Organizations are made up of people, their most important asset. The Armed Forces are no exception in this context, quite the opposite. Despite all the developments in military equipment, especially in the last century, the human component continues to be a determining factor in the overwhelming majority of the weapons systems. The investments that have been made to the military, in terms of academic, technical and operational training, have contributed to increasing their skills and abilities in a professional career that, today, is facing even more asymmetrical challenges. Different levels of motivation, different career aspirations linked to organizational constraints and different economic contexts, have led to an increasingly difficult strategic management of human resources in the military areas, such as the Portuguese Army. This article addresses the urgency of retaining talent in the Portuguese Army, at a time when this branch of the Portuguese Armed Forces is confronted with new assignments, missions and challenges.

Keywords: Active Service, Motivation, Portuguese Army, Professional Career, Reserve, Retention of Talent, Retirement, Strategic Management.

1. INTRODUCTION

We are aware that *“at the most fundamental level, we can differentiate three types of research based on their respective purpose”*, namely basic research (pure research), applied research and evaluation research. Concomitantly, we are also aware that *“the depiction of knowledge as flows through a ‘value chain’ (and, in practice, through various feedback loops), where knowledge adapts and changes as a consequence of wider and wider engagement with users, offers a more realistic view of how research gets disseminated”* (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson and Jaspersen 2018:2-4)

Talent in organizations has been very much addressed in the scientific literature in the field of human resources management, in the sense that it is one of the key points for organizational success. This topic became relevant in the late 1990s, when a group of McKinsey consultants detected and attributed the name of “war of talent” in a context of highlighting problems that organizations were having in attracting and retaining talented persons (Armstrong 2006; Beechler and Woodward 2009).

According to Armstrong (2006:390) talent management is “the use of an integrated set of activities to ensure that the organization attracts, retains, motivates and develops the talented people it needs now and in the future”. The goal is to recruit and retain talent in organizations, as it is an asset to organizational success. Competitiveness, open markets and globalization are some of the factors that contribute to the need for organizations to want to recruit people with more skills and qualities. Beechler and Woodward (2009:275) recognize this idea when it translates the factors that can affect the talent of the people: the global demographic and economic trends; increasing mobility of people and organizations; transformational changes to business environments, skills and cultures; and growing levels of workforce diversity.

It is not enough to attract talents without ongoing monitoring by organizations. Talent management is not simply the attraction of people with great cognitive abilities; it is much more than that. As defended by Kontoghiorghe (2016), talent management is generally seen as a process of transformation that begins with the entry of people into the organization, and ends with its exit, and the main objectives are attracting, developing, motivating and retaining talent in order to achieve the goal of organizations: improving organizational performance and competitiveness addressing both internal and external challenges.

*Address correspondence to this author at the Academia Militar/CINAMIL & Universidade Europeia, Portugal; Tel: 00351 961425275
E-mail: david.rosado@academiamilitar.pt

In this way, there are organizations that can not complete this evolutionary process of recruitment. In addition to having difficulties in attracting talent, they show difficulties in retention, and this will be reflected in their performance. This is a current problem in the Portuguese Army, especially in its base structures (Exército Português 2017). The base structure is powered by contracted personnel and there are data that reveal this difficulty of attraction and retention. The Portuguese Army recognizes that it must take measures to develop activities that promote the recruitment of personnel, making the military service more attractive and ensuring its retention in the Portuguese Army. This problem, assumed by the organization, will have to be to increase incentives by equating other forms of military service, attractive to citizens and appropriate for the Armed Forces (especially in the Army, where our study focuses), which minimize the effects of the possible insufficiency of volunteers in peacetime, seeking to improve the efficiency of military actions (Soares 2014; Cardoso 2018).

But if there are problems of retention in the lower classes, despite having the less organizational impact, there is also a premature departure of the Portuguese Army at the level of sergeants and officers belonging to the permanent structure. This paper will specially focus on those cases; the more trained and qualified personnel. The methodology followed is based in the analytical framework of the mobility processes for the reserve and reform situations. The data under analysis refer to the universe of military that left the Portuguese Army to enter the reserve or reform between 2000 and 2017. In the reserve situation the military remain available for the service: service effectiveness or out of service effectiveness (MDN 2015:3221-3222).

2. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND DIFFICULTIES IN RETENTION OF TALENT

One of the best ways to understand the scope and purpose of Anthony Giddens's theory of structuration is to look at the so-called "*duality of structure*", which can be explained as a "*particular relation between social structure and human action*". That is to say that "*structures as rules and resources are both the precondition and the unintended result of the action of individuals*" (Baert and Silva 2014: 145-148). The question of the passage to the reserve by the military is one of the aspects that best illustrates the cause and effect in one direction and on the other, especially

when we understand the relations and the meanings between the military institution and military individual.

Portugal is one of the oldest countries in Europe. Its foundation, as a country, is linked to the time of the first crusades. Perhaps as in very few other places, the Order of the Temple played a crucial role in the formation of this country (Silva 2018). Portugal was innovative at the time of the discoveries (between 1415 and 1543) and at that time it became one of the most daring countries in the world, searching for new geographies through technologies that were absolutely modern (Proença 2015). The current Portuguese Army and the remaining branches of the Portuguese Armed Forces are a reserve of this testimony (the sociological studies of the Armed Forces "*can be usefully supplemented by historical investigation (especially social history), social psychology, cultural anthropology, and political science in general*" (Caforio 2006:3)). In the XXI century, Portugal, as a nation, is about to fulfill nine centuries of History and in 2014 the country celebrated forty years of the transition to democracy, following the revolutionary process led by the military. Today, Lisbon is one of the pearls of tourism in Europe and Portugal lives a consolidated democracy, being an example of multiculturalism and tolerance, with huge reflexes in the business market (Conceição and Costa 2017).

As referred by Henry McClave (1997:46), "*in its day-to-day operations a business company comes in contact with many different groups or publics*". The social changes resulting from globalization have made, just like the companies, modern armies even more attentive to their external audiences. But now, more and more, this attention also turns to the internal organizational aspects, since new mentalities and new yearnings are filling, in growing, the ranks of the Armed Forces. Portugal has a full professional army since 2004. This means that there is no compulsory military service. And this also means that, like in the companies, also in the Army, the Strategic Management is not effective if it does not do justice to the institution where it is developed, using the available resources sparingly (Felsmann 2016).

Those who follow a military career in the Portuguese Army do so of their own volition. Still, it is not an easy task to carry out recruitment for this branch of the Portuguese Armed Forces. In fact, wages are not competitive in the face of a corporate market that is greatly boosted by tourism and economic expansion. In addition, career prospects are very limited for military

personnel who enter into contracts only. In this area, like others in the Portuguese Army, “*the nature of the internal organisational environment and its role in strategic choice processes*”, it’s inevitable (Krzakiewicz and Cyfert 2017:7).

For those who enter the Portuguese Army Sergeant School or the Portuguese Military Academy, the rationale that subsists (or rather, subsisted earlier) is that they will make a military career for their entire life. These military professionals, after a highly specialized training, have a defined professional career, but the truth is that, increasingly, the opportunities to ascend socially in this career, are increasingly reduced. Also growing up, more and more military people choose to do specialized training and academic courses even beyond the military institution, thus obtaining other skills that value them not only for the Portuguese Army, but also constitute them as potential human resources for the business domain (or other domains) outside the Armed Forces. It is certainly not by chance that there are authors who advocate an extension of the fields analyzed by strategic management, precisely because the use of strategic management by society and for the society will have unequivocal advantages (Ronda-Pupo 2015:161). As part of the society and of its challenges, the Armed Forces and the Army have to be studied, also, in this rational.

Strategic Management owes much to what has been the evolution of military knowledge throughout history (Santos 2008). In terms of strategic management and responses to the lack of motivation of subordinates facing a military career without competitive opportunities, these realities present ever greater challenges to military leaders, different leaders, and politicians who guard these areas. And this, when we know that management theorizations (Bilhim 2013) and strategic management theorizations are not easy to adapt for public sector organizations (Hansen and Ferlie 2016; Bagheri 2016), when there is an increasing diversity of employees in the Armed Forces and in organizations in general, with direct implications on the results and goals (Atiyah 2016), and when, just like in companies, because of this, it is more and more important to speak within the Army (listening to the wishes, ideas and proposals of the military personnel at different organizational levels), as well as outward (O’Shannassy 2003).

Retaining talent in the Portuguese Armed Forces and, in the specific case of the Portuguese Army, is therefore essential. It is even more important because

retaining talent can lead to cost savings (Craig 2015), which in the public domain is even more pressing, in a case such as that of Portugal, which has gone through various budgetary and financial contingencies. It should also be said that, in the specific case of military forces, authentic leadership and the development of talents are closely linked (Debebe 2017), as well as the creation of value (Ghana and Haque 2017), despite the tensions therein (Garrad 2018). Unfortunately, if it is true that traditional managers do not always master what is an adequate human resources management (Ferreira et al. 2015), in fact, in the military environment, it occurs that, too often, there are also many vulnerabilities in human resource management.

The Portuguese Army has been modernized but, like some other armies, it continues to suffer from a certain lack of agility in terms of human resources management, a factor that is very relevant (Gochman and Storfer 2014), even in terms of talent development (Ho 2017) and in order to obtain value-oriented processes (Sparrow and Makram 2015), but which is, of course, a consequence of scarce human resources for all the missions entrusted to this branch of the Armed Forces. It is true that the new potentialities of the most emerging technologies have even transformed human resources management (Ignatius 2018) and, even in the case of the Armed Forces, because the institutional image is very relevant in terms of public opinion, there also the contributions of marketing institutions have been felt, as it happens in companies, although with the necessary adaptations (Yearsley 2017).

When it comes to trust in the institutions, the confidence in the Portuguese Armed Forces conquer a prominent and consistent place over the last few years, being in the first position or among the top three places in the ranking from 2000 to 2016 (Morais 2017). Nevertheless the evidence of a certain devaluation of the Armed Forces has been pointed out by several authors (Vaz 2002), and this has repercussions on the recruitment and retention processes.

The Armed Forces structure at the highest level is aware of the organizational challenges aiming to ensure the social relevance of the Military Institution and in conformity the strategic directive for 2018-2021 emphasizes the need to strengthen the credibility of the Military Institution and to overcome difficulties with the personnel recruitment and retention (Estado-Maior-General das Forças Armadas [EMGFA] 2018).

3. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND IMPLICATIONS

Knowing that “at each stage of the data collection process, decisions made by the researcher can influence the quality of data that can be obtained and the influences that can be made from that data about the character of the population of interest” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson and Jaspersen 2018:301), it is essential to say that, in this investigation, the analysis of the data obtained from the Personnel Department of the Portuguese Army was carried out with the objective of extracting contributions to the research project “Military Careers of the Portuguese Army: reservation and reform in the (re)configuration of their life paths” (C_Mil_R3). The main objective of this research project is to understand the interrelations between vicissitudes and contingencies within the legislative, institutional and individual framework that underlies the transition to the reserve and the reform of the military of the permanent staff of the Portuguese Army. The following are the first descriptive results based on the universe of 4883 military that live the army between 2000 and 2017 to join the reserve or the retirement situations.

The data provided refer to military personnel who are distributed in the following categories: 1994 Officers (40.8% of the total sample), 2882 Sergeants (59% of the total sample), and 7 Soldiers (0.1% of the total sample).

Of this universe 4869 are male, representing 99.7%, and 14 are female, accounting for only 0.3%. The low representativeness of women is understandable because they are fewer in number and have joined the Army later, so that few of them meet the conditions for moving to the reserve or retirement.

As for military patents, we can conclude the following: the most representative positions are the rank of SMOR (Sergeant Major) and SAJ (Assistant Sergeant) with 18.4% and 16.8% respectively, and both fall into the class or category of Sergeants. The most representative post in the Officers class is the TCOR (Lieutenant Colonel) post that represents 15.2% of the total of the sample.

Regarding the Weapon / Service that reflects the speciality of the military, we can observe that the most representative Weapon / Service in the sample is INF (Infantry) with 1078 military personnel, ART (Artillery) with 431 military personnel and the SGE (General Army Service) with 415 elements, with percentages of 22.1%, 8.8% and 5.5% respectively.

Of the military listed in the database 2884 are in the retirement situation (59.1% of the total) and 1999 are in the reserve situation representing 40.9%.

In order to determine the situation of the military according to the category, we find that 690 officers and 1309 sergeants are in the reserve situation.

Of the 690 officers in the reserve situation, 138 are in service effectiveness and 552 out of effectiveness, representing 20% and 80% respectively. In the class of sergeants, of the 1309 who are in a reserve situation, 198 are in service effectiveness, and 1111 out of effectiveness, which represents 15% and 85% respectively.

The data show that regardless of the current situation of the military, the average age of passage to the reserve is 51 years, and the 168 missing cases

Table 1: Military Category

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Officers	1994	40,8%	40,8%	40,8%
	Soldiers	7	0,1%	0,1%	41,0%
	Sergeants	2882	59,0%	59,0%	100,0%
	Total	4883	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 2: Gender

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	F	14	0,3%	0,3%	0,3%
	M	4869	99,7%	99,7%	100,0%
	Total	4883	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 3: Rank

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	1SG	491	10,1%	10,1%	10,1%
	2SG	1	0,0%	0,0%	10,1%
	CPL1	3	0,1%	0,1%	10,1%
	CPT	63	1,3%	1,3%	11,4%
	COL	648	13,3%	13,3%	24,7%
	CPL2	4	0,1%	0,1%	24,8%
	GEN	5	0,1%	0,1%	24,9%
	MAJ	358	7,3%	7,3%	32,2%
	MG	119	2,4%	2,4%	34,7%
	SSG	820	16,8%	16,8%	51,4%
	MSG	670	13,7%	13,7%	65,2%
	SGM	900	18,4%	18,4%	83,6%
	LTC	740	15,2%	15,2%	98,8%
	LT	5	0,1%	0,1%	98,9%
	LTG	56	1,1%	1,1%	100,0%
	Total	4883	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 4: Branches

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	ADMIL	121	2,5%	2,5%	2,5%
	AM	85	1,7%	1,7%	4,2%
	AMAN	402	8,2%	8,2%	12,5%
	AMAN PQ	40	0,8%	0,8%	13,3%
	Artillery	431	8,8%	8,8%	22,1%
	Cavalry	246	5,0%	5,0%	27,1%
	CBMUS	10	0,2%	0,2%	27,3%
	COG	180	3,7%	3,7%	31,0%
	CORN/CLAR	35	0,7%	0,7%	31,7%
	Dent	1	0,0%	0,0%	31,8%
	ENF PQ	2	0,0%	0,0%	31,8%
	Engineering	220	4,5%	4,5%	36,3%
	Pharmacy	44	0,9%	0,9%	37,2%
	Infantry	1078	22,1%	22,1%	59,3%
	MAT	297	6,1%	6,1%	65,4%
	Medicine	190	3,9%	3,9%	69,3%
	MUS	184	3,8%	3,8%	73,0%
	Airborne	229	4,7%	4,7%	77,7%
	QAS	1	0,0%	0,0%	77,7%

(Table 4). Continued.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
	QEO	18	0,4%	0,4%	78,1%
	QTS	111	2,3%	2,3%	80,4%
	SAM	1	0,0%	0,0%	80,4%
	SAR	15	0,3%	0,3%	80,7%
	SGE	415	8,5%	8,5%	89,2%
	SGPQ	50	1,0%	1,0%	90,2%
	SPM	7	0,1%	0,1%	90,4%
	SS	2	0,0%	0,0%	90,4%
	TEDT	9	0,2%	0,2%	90,6%
	TEXPTM	31	0,6%	0,6%	91,2%
	Signals	224	4,6%	4,6%	95,8%
	TMANMAT	74	1,5%	1,5%	97,3%
	TMANTM	59	1,2%	1,2%	98,5%
	TPESSECR	22	0,5%	0,5%	99,0%
	TRANS	1	0,0%	0,0%	99,0%
	TTRANS	9	0,2%	0,2%	99,2%
	Veterinary	39	0,8%	0,8%	100,0%
	Total	4883	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 5: Current Situation

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	REFORM	2884	59,1%	59,1%	59,1%
	RESERVE	1999	40,9%	40,9%	100,0%
	Total	4883	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 6: Cross Tab Rank *Current Situation

Score				
		CURRENT SITUATION		Total
		REFORM	RESERVE	
RANK	Officers	1304	690	1994
	Soldiers	7	0	7
	Sergeants	1573	1309	2882
Total		2884	1999	4883

correspond to military personnel who transitioned to the retirement situation without going through the reserve situation. It is also verified that the youngest soldier in the sample that went to the reserve situation was about 31 years old.

We verified that the existing variance in the age of transition to the reserve situation is higher in the officers class, namely 24,89. It should also be said that in the sergeants class, exists the decrease of 17,32 and in the military less graduated the value of the

variance is 7,18. Thus, the difference age at the time of passage to the reserve is higher in the officers class.

Table 7: Transition to the Reserve by Age

Reserve age		
N	Valid	4715
	Omission	168
Average		50,789
Median		51,010
Standard deviation		4,6790
Amplitude		33,8
Minimum		30,9
Maximum		64,7

In the case of the Portuguese Army, there are some reasons for a military (permanent staff members) to go into reserve, but we can group them into three general groups where other specific situations are included as described in the table below: (1) Upon request, where the military needs to have more than twenty years of military service or are subject to other conditions provided by law; (2) By declaration, the military must be thirty-six years of military service and cumulatively fifty-five years; (3) For service imposition or exceeding the age limit in the Armed Forces, or exceeding the age limit at the position to which it belongs or being

excluded from promotion to the immediate post (ascending to a higher level).

Our research concludes that the highest percentage of military personnel in the reserve situation was by request (2248 corresponding to 46% of all situations), the second is the passage to the reservation by declaration (1677 corresponding to 34.3 % of the total) and 575 of the military went on to reserve due to age limit (11.8%).

Please note that the table below shows the 168 military personnel who immediately transferred to the retirement situation without going through the reserve situation.

Regarding the number of permits to the reserve taking into account the year of decision, we conclude that among the data presented, the year 2012 is the year in which there is a greater number of cases (687 military, corresponding to 14.1%), followed by the year 2005 (642 military, corresponding to 13.1%) and third place in 2011 (327 military personnel corresponding to 6.7%).

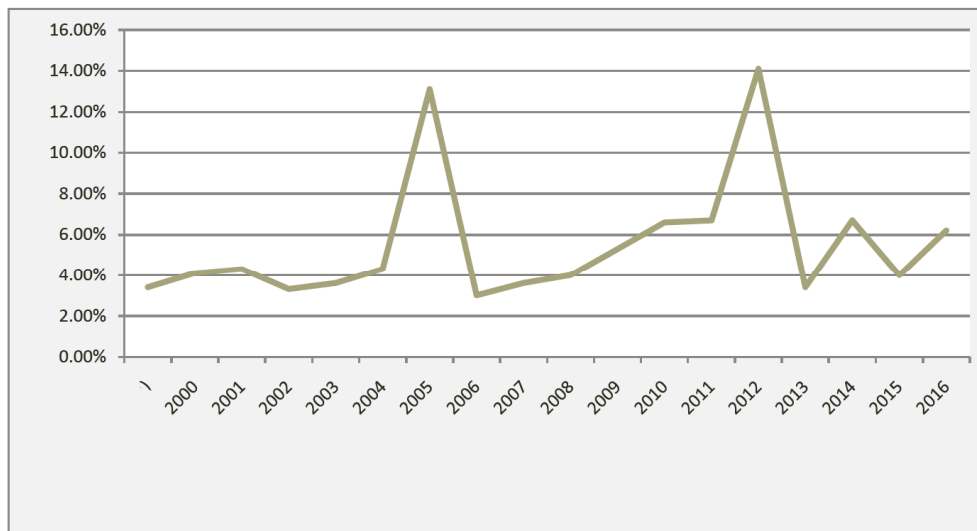
In the following table, we find the positions of the military that have become in the reserve situation in each year under study. We verified that in 2012, 207

Table 8: Reason for the Transition to the Reserve Regardless the Current Situation

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid		1	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	10 Year Unlimited License / Imposition	1	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%
	Electoral Capacity (up to 30Aug01) Application	3	0,1%	0,1%	0,1%
	Functions Cessation / Imposition	3	0,1%	0,1%	0,2%
	Declaration	1677	34,3%	34,3%	34,5%
	Promotion Exclusion / Imposition	76	1,6%	1,6%	36,1%
	Law 43 / 99 Career Reconstitution	4	0,1%	0,1%	36,1%
	Rank Age Limit / Imposition	575	11,8%	11,8%	47,9%
	No General Satisfaction Conditions Promotion / Imposition	2	0,0%	0,0%	48,0%
	Other conditions legally envisaged / Application	9	0,2%	0,2%	48,1%
	Rank Stay / Imposition	110	2,3%	2,3%	50,4%
	Application	2248	46,0%	46,0%	96,4%
	Compulsive Reserve	1	0,0%	0,0%	96,5%
	Without Reserve	168	3,4%	3,4%	99,9%
	Rank Staying Time / Imposition	1	0,0%	0,0%	99,9%
	Overdue / Imposition	4	0,1%	0,1%	100,0%
Total	4883	100,0%	100,0%		

Table 9: Year of Transition to the Reserve

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	168	3,4%	3,4%	3,4%
2000	200	4,1%	4,1%	7,5%
2001	210	4,3%	4,3%	11,8%
2002	159	3,3%	3,3%	15,1%
2003	178	3,6%	3,6%	18,7%
2004	209	4,3%	4,3%	23,0%
2005	642	13,1%	13,1%	36,2%
2006	147	3,0%	3,0%	39,2%
2007	178	3,6%	3,6%	42,8%
2008	197	4,0%	4,0%	46,9%
2009	261	5,3%	5,3%	52,2%
2010	320	6,6%	6,6%	58,8%
2011	329	6,7%	6,7%	65,5%
2012	687	14,1%	14,1%	79,6%
2013	168	3,4%	3,4%	83,0%
2014	325	6,7%	6,7%	89,7%
2015	193	4,0%	4,0%	93,6%
2016	302	6,2%	6,2%	99,8%
2017	10	0,2%	0,2%	100,0%
Total	4883	100,0%	100,0%	



Graphic 1: Evolution of transition to the reserve.

SAJ (Assistant Sergeants) were replaced by 140 SCH (Sergeants Chiefs) and 105 SMOR (Sergeants Majors), corresponding to 30.13%, 20.38% and 15.28% respectively.

In 2005, there was a change to the reserve of 151 SAJ (Sergeant Assistants), 116 1SAR (First Sergeant

and 77 COR (Colonel) corresponding to 23.52%, 18.06% and 11.99% respectively.

In these two years where the passage to the reserve was more significant it is interesting to evaluate the percentage of officers and sergeants in relation to their total value. Thus, in 2012, 26.2% of officers and

Table 10: Cross Tab Military Positions Vs Year of Passage of Reserve

	Year of passage to Reserve																				Total
	Omitted	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017		
1SG	28	24	29	19	23	31	116	26	14	26	26	20	28	55	3	11	9	3	0	491	
2SG	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
CPL1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
CPT	9	8	8	5	0	2	11	2	2	2	2	1	1	6	2	1	0	2	0	63	
COL	27	50	54	35	36	26	77	29	22	19	27	40	41	45	21	26	28	39	6	648	
CPL2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
GEN	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	
MAJ	16	13	19	23	11	12	45	16	3	15	19	8	41	59	13	27	12	6	0	358	
MG	1	8	9	5	6	11	11	4	5	9	2	8	5	9	8	4	2	10	2	119	
SSG	31	11	21	14	19	28	151	13	22	44	61	21	27	207	39	86	19	6	0	820	
MSG	6	15	17	14	8	23	59	4	16	17	20	20	51	140	25	80	58	97	0	670	
SGM	13	42	25	21	31	35	98	27	31	20	55	148	106	105	39	36	29	38	1	900	
LTC	22	26	22	20	38	36	68	22	56	44	46	54	26	60	14	52	36	98	0	740	
LT	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	
LTG	10	3	4	3	5	4	2	5	6	1	3	0	1	1	3	2	0	2	1	56	
Total	168	200	210	159	178	209	642	147	178	197	261	320	329	687	168	325	193	302	10	4883	

Military Positions

73.8% of sergeants spent in reserve, while in 2005 the percentage attributed to officers was 33.64%, sergeants 66.04% and 0.01% of soldiers.

From the data provided it can be concluded that the military personnel who remain until later in the institution are the officers.

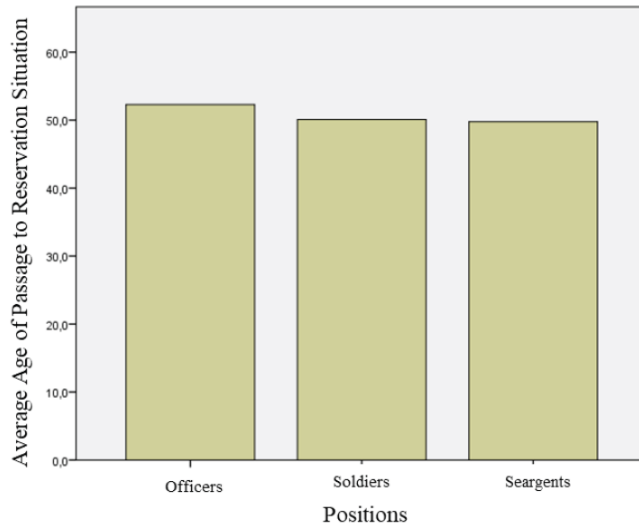


Figure 1: Average Age of Passage to Reservation Situation.

Recent legislation (the new statute of the military condition, EMFAR 2015) enlarges the career length to 40 years of service (it was 36 years until 2015) and introduces other restrictions on the conditions to end the career prematurely. The effects of the new legal framework are of course important and must be follow-up.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is true that “academic theories tend to look for higher levels of generalization” and that the “distinction between middle-range theories and grand theories is a matter of scale and formality”. In fact, “where researchers are seeking to built theory, this is normally at the level of middle-range theory, and is an incremental process” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson and Jaspersen 2018:133).

Attract talents is a key issue for the organizations regardless of their area of expertise, but this means much more than simply selecting the most competent personnel. Kontoghiorghes (2016) sees the talent management as a process, which start when collaborates entry into the organization and ends with their exit. This line of thought and action is especially important for the Military organizations, for several reasons, namely because of the specificity of the

military career and the military condition which implies (among other aspects) full institutional commitment, self-denial and loyalty to the command hierarchy, meaning therefore less individual agency to manage the own career.

Being less important at the present time, giving the technological evolution, the physically demanding nature of warfare required a young and vigorous force and for that reason the length of a military career had to be shorter than general civilian careers. The mechanism of reserve and early retirement served to adjust the force to the organizational requirements, including the need of ensuring the career flow and promotion opportunities for the younger personnel.

As shown by the data presented, 4883 military (officers and sergeants) of the Portuguese Army transited to the reserve or retirement situations during the period of 2000-2017. But for the discussion proposed in this paper, the most significant is the fact that almost half of the universe (46%) transited to the reserve situation before completing the full time of service (36 years until 2015). And this indicates, as we argue, a problem of retention the qualified personnel within the Army, which means the loss of skills and expertise trained over the years. The problem confronts the Armed Forces of liberal democracies in general and for overcome it many measures have been introduced in most countries. In fact, the reasons of the premature departs may not be reduce to the financial ones, although the importance of the income, and in Portugal the income of the military are less competitive than in the past. The challenges to the Portuguese Army are therefore pressing showing the urgent need for an innovative approach to the human resources management, taking into consideration the organizational needs and performance of course, but putting also in the equation the motivations and expectations of man and women in service, all along their career. And although the military institution remains well-placed in terms of institutional trust, the challenges also imply the building of stronger relations with civil society, for a better understanding of the irreplaceable role of the Armed Forces.

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