

CHALLENGES TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN UNIFORMED SERVICES OF LITHUANIA

Abstract

Purpose. HRM in uniformed services is researched significantly less than in the civil service which in turn is under researched in comparison to businesses. Recent studies of public employment (e.g. Demmke & Moilanen, 2012) show that due to variety of factors public employment is becoming less attractive in the labour market. However, there is little data that this is the case in the uniformed services in particular. This study aims to evaluate career development experiences of military and statutory servicemembers in Lithuania to collect and interpret data about their understanding of management of the career development and career perspectives both within their services and the broader labor market.

Design/methodology/approach. The purpose of this study was to analyze career development mechanisms in the uniformed services (statutory and military services), by identifying advantages, disadvantages of career development systems in the context of emerging challenges to these services, identify connections between successful career development and the sense of social security among servicemembers. The career development analysis was based on 3 career development stages regulated by both statutory and military regulations. 16 experts – all servicemembers were interviewed for the purposes of this study. Based on the interview analysis of how the career development is applied in the respective services a set of comparative criteria were developed to expand the three stages in the initial regulation overview.

Findings. Research data showed that two distinct uniformed services in Lithuania are coping very differently with the challenges. This study revealed several important weaknesses of career development mechanism as they are applied in Lithuanian statutory service: lack of sense of social security by servicemembers, insufficient initial training, no clear objective setting mechanisms. In military service lack of information about career opportunities and competition among members for access to qualification courses were found to be important issues. However, the military service career development was found to be more advanced and successful than that of statutory service. So fundamental conclusion of this study is that the military service achieves better outcomes through means of career development than statutory service.

Research limitations/implications. Two main groups of factors (internal and external) affect career development process. This research aimed to view the career development through the career outcomes from the perspective of service members themselves. That is why a qualitative research method was chosen as a pilot research on challenges. Qualitative research (interview) was used to find similarities, differences, advantages and disadvantages of career development mechanisms in statutory and military services. Experts' answers to questions on the issues of career development systems advantages and disadvantages of the stages were not sufficiently detailed, so it is hard categorized and did not reveal detailed insights and connections. This disadvantage can be regarded as a restriction on the study, which will be addressed in further studies with other empirical research instruments. However, the survey data were sufficient to distinguish the basic problems of career development in statutory and military services, clearly identified a link between a successful career development and sense of social security. A key implication that we see is that the military service

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career development instruments are far advanced as opposed to other uniformed services and does demonstrate the benefits of explicit creating career development mechanisms.

Practical implications. Comparative analysis of career development mechanisms of the statutory and military services identifies the essential advantages and disadvantages of these systems. For a greater sense of social security, military service has achieved more than other services. Therefore, based on the results of the study suggest that social protection directly determines the success of the career development process, its protection may help to improve the career management system, especially in the statutory service.

Originality/Value. There is the lack of research dealing with the career development process specifically in the uniformed services. While career development in terms of legal regulation in statutory and military services justify very similar, in practice, these processes are treated as separate, unlinked elements. This means that best-practices have low chances of being transferred within the public service as whole. As more and more institutions move towards creating career development mechanisms we see a need for more evidence on what predicates success of these mechanisms. That's why such a comparison of two similar councils in terms of career development can help to identify not only individual strengths and weaknesses, but also help in finding solutions to the identified problems, drawing as best practices from each other.

Keywords: career development, uniformed services, sense of social security.

Research type: research paper

JEL classification:

M12 – Personnel Management; Executives; Executive Compensation

M54 – Labor Management

Introduction

Globalization processes that have touched the whole world, increased intensity of military threats and geopolitical situation of Lithuania influenced the changes in the statutory service of the country and especially in the national defense system. Large-scope military exercises are organized in the country, the issue of recruitment of the army is being tackled and the decision to increase the reserve of the army was made. Conscript army was reinstated because of this in 2015. In such dynamic media, human resources are becoming the most important part which determines the efficiency of performance of the services. One of the essential human resource management (HRM) processes is career development. Although this process is complicated and requires significant resources, it is one of the most important parts of a modern person's life. It is very important to have and be able to maintain a qualified, apt and motivated staff able to perform the tasks set and help the organization achieve its strategic objectives when seeking for more efficient performance of statutory service and reorganizing the structure of the national defense system.

Efficient uniformed services¹ need to be able to attract and retain qualified, talented and motivated staff who are able to carry out the tasks and help the organization achieve its strategic objectives. In the public sector of Lithuania the development of HRM has in recent years began adopting career development mechanisms. This is seen as one of the key innovations in the Lithuanian public sector.

¹ NOTE. In Lithuania there are two categories of uniformed services: statutory and military. The military service regulation is completely separate from other public service regulation, while the statutory services regulation (e.g. police, penitentiary, border guard) does overlap with the general civil service regulation, and also the diplomatic service, despite not being a uniformed service in the academic sense is considered to be a statutory service.

Novelty and originality. Career development in civil service is one of the main HRM functions. However, in the Lithuanian public sector it is still an under-developed area. Moreover, there is the lack of research dealing with the career development process specifically in the uniformed services. While career development in terms of legal regulation in statutory and military services justify very similar, in practice, these processes are treated as separate, unlinked elements. This means that best-practices have low chances of being transferred within the public service as whole. As more and more institutions move towards creating career development mechanisms we see a need for more evidence on what predicates success of these mechanisms. That's why such a comparison of two similar councils in terms of career development can help to identify not only individual strengths and weaknesses, but also help in finding solutions to the identified problems, drawing as best practices from each other. The relation between successful career development and sense of social security is also analyzed sporadically. Analysis of statutory and military servicemembers' social guarantees in Lithuania is fragmented; therefore, this topic is relevant both scientifically and practically.

Review of literature and its analysis. Impact of globalization on labor market and disproportionate effects was analyzed by C. Demmke and T. Moilanen (2012). Authors believe that globalization also have disastrous side-effects for a labor market such as low or volatile income, high job insecurity, the loss of the public sector ethos, new social inequalities and poverty in old-age. Career development process as a part of HRM and its'problematics in public sector was investigated by A. Valickas and V. Gražulis (2011). Traditional career transformation as a result of globalization factors which caused fundamental changes of the concept of career was analyzed by R. Korsakienė and R. Smaliukienė (2014).

A. Diržytė, A. Patapas, U. Fedkovič analyzed subjective well-being peculiarities of statutory organizations servicemembers', which was the first time when the psychological well-being of officers' has been investigated (2014); the research which revealed that the salary, working conditions and social security are one of the most important motivational factors for statutory officers was made by K. Vitkauskas (2012). E. Vileikienė, A. Pocienė and J. Aleknevičienė published a scientific study that discloses the aspects of soldiers' motivation to serve in the Lithuanian Army in 2015; I. Klenauskienė performed a research analyzing social security of soldiers in 2008, which revealed that social security for soldiers is not inadequate.

The object of the research. Career system of statutory servicemembers (police and prisons) and soldiers of vocational military service of the Republic of Lithuania.

The purpose of the research. Investigate the systematic career development mechanisms of statutory and military services, identify their differences and disadvantages as well as substantiate the relationship between successful career development and sense of social security.

The methods applied. The information presented in the article was obtained by performing a theoretical descriptive, systematic and comparative analyses. Qualitative research method was chosen as a pilot research on challenges. The opinion of 16 respondents was collected using a questionnaire and applying the method of an interview of experts.

A practical and scientific significance. Having systematized the data obtained while performing the research, essential shortcomings of the career development mechanism which prevent the efficiency of military and statutory services were identified. Military service is considered more prospective than statutory one because of more tangible sense of social security. Therefore, it may be maintained based on the results of the research that social security directly determines the process of successful career development; assurance thereof may help improve the career management system, especially in statutory service.

Traditional career transformation

It is noticeable that different concepts explaining the same phenomena are used in the works of different Lithuanian scholars, e.g. career design is identified with career development or career management. The terms “career planning” and “career development” as well as the concept of the process of a career was formed in the developed European countries in approx. 1960-1970. Career may be analyzed in two aspects: personal improvement of an individual when speaking about personal, individual career, a person’s self-expression and personal improvement, and organizational level when speaking about specialty career or a specific profession and the period of time spent in an organization. Likewise, career development may also be analyzed in two aspects: individual and organizational level. Successful career development is a very important factor when pursuing both personal and organizational goals (Wesarat et al, 2014).

Career development may be considered a constant process which covers the processes of making life and career-related decisions, planning, implementation of plans and self-assessment (Adekola, 2011). In the works of Lithuanian scholars, career development is also considered a process of planning, implementation of plans, self-assessment and decision-making (Klusienė, 2014). Career development system covers most of the processes of HRM (Valickas and Gražulis, 2011). This enables determining the volumes of mobility in career, assess career development opportunities and perceive individual parts in the context of HRM (Valickas and Gražulis, 2011). Thus, when analyzing foreign and Lithuanian scientific literature, is obvious that career development not only covers several important processes but also that a properly operating career development mechanism directly influences a person’s satisfaction with work and his/her motivation.

Table 1. Differences of modern and traditional career

Issues	Modern career	Traditional career
<i>Career model</i>	Flexible discontinuous structure which is not consolidated in the organization (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)	Continuous hierarchical structure which is consolidated in the organization, “career ladder” (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)
<i>Who is in charge?</i>	The individual (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)	The organization (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)
<i>Essential values</i>	Freedom of growth (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)	Promotion (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)
<i>Social (material) security</i>	Relative, depends on many personal and social factors (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)	Stable in the context of clear future progression (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)
<i>Degree of mobility</i>	High (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)	Low (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)
<i>Factors of success</i>	Psychological success (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014) Fulfillment of self-realization, personal freedom, individual attitude towards success (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)	Position, remuneration (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014) Individual achievements (status, salary, etc.) at a certain age are compared to the achievements of other people who are of the same age (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)
<i>Essential viewpoints</i>	Satisfaction with work, loyalty to profession (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)	Loyalty to the organization (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)

Issues	Modern career	Traditional career
<i>Requirements set for the person</i>	Innovativeness, initiative, creativity in undefined work environment; career “portfolio” is necessary (career competence combining specific and versatile skills) (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)	Obedience, ability to perform a usual task well (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014) Specific professional skills are necessary (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)
<i>Learning</i>	Learning at the workplace (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)	Formal training programs (Korsakienė and Smaliukienė, 2014)
<i>Future of career</i>	Difficult to predict, related to the person’s competence in respect of the goals chosen (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)	Predictable, clear, related to the organization (Stanišauskienė and Naseckaitė, 2012)

Source: developed by author

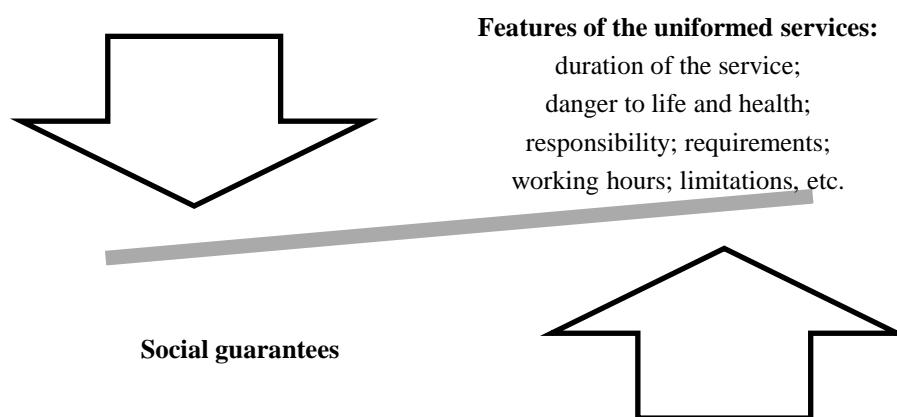
Such surrounding factors as increasing global competition, change of technologies and recession caused most organizations’ striving to adapt to new conditions, implement restructuration, reduce the number of employees and create organizations of new type in the 1990s of the last decade (Thomas, 2013). C. Demmke and T. Moilanen agrees that globalization impact for the labor market could be analyzed in two perspectives: positive (increasing variability in employment relations, rising employment participation of women (work-life-balance), mature aged workers, and persons with restricted work capacities) and negative senses (low or volatile income, high job insecurity, the loss of the public sector ethos, new social inequalities and poverty in old-age). According to H. A. Tlaiss (2014), the variety of labor force increased, economic changes occurred, competition of the Western nations increased, the process of restructuration of organizations became more popular, traditional bureaucracy began declining and global dismissals from work was taking place as a reaction to globalization in the middle of 1990s. A traditional organization did not keep its promise to ensure long-term career (Baserer, 2016). Organizations started promoting individual employment instead of lifelong work and guaranteed security. Therefore, it may be said that organizational career was proclaimed dead. According to R. Korsakienė and R. Smaliukienė (2014), restructuration caused employees who were older, worked in managing positions or had better education to lose their jobs, most employees’ job-related liability increased even more, while work hours and career opportunities were reduced. The differences of modern and traditional career are presented in Table 1 (see Table 1).

Thus transition from traditional to modern concept of career can be observed from the beginning of the 1980s of last century. Organizational career development process which equals traditional viewpoint has changed because of uncertainty of labour market in the long run and became especially focused on the factors of supply and demand. The opinion that the ties between individuals and organizations must be weaker started prevailing in the context of all changes; less organizations can provide any guarantees for the employees that they will be able to work and pursue stable vertical career all their life. This caused fundamental changes of the concept of career. Successful vertical movement of the individual in the organization which defined success of traditional career before transformed into difficult to predict career which depends on the employee’s competence and in which psychological personal success is increasingly more important. The path of career development was a predictable, guaranteed, linear path before the changes caused by globalization.

Career development in uniformed services

Features of career in uniformed services. Statutory and military services holds a special position in public management because of the servicemembers' status, functions performed and available powers over insubordinate persons. It is important to mention that statutory service may not be identified with military bodies of the national defense system and their servants may not be identified with the soldiers of the national defense system because of their different constitutional purpose although statutory relationship of strictly subordinate nature are typical to both of them. Constitutional (art. 141) purpose of statutory service pertains to the fields significant for the security of the state and society: guarding and controlling the borders of the state, assurance of public order, investigation of crimes, protection of national secrets, etc. Military service which is in charge for defending the state from aggression as well as for implementation of obligations in the field of defense and of international obligations plays an equally significant role in government of the country.

The state is obliged to provide proper social security for this social group because of the duty for the country performed by statutory and military servicemembers, the significance of their services to the residents of the country, danger to their health and life as well as the relatively short time intended for the activities. It is stipulated in part 1 of paragraph VIII of the Decree of the Parliament of the Republic of Lithuania "Regarding approval of the guidelines for improvement of service, social guaranties and payment for works of statutory state officers" of 28 March 2013 that it is compensated by the social guaranties established in the laws due to the peculiarities of the service (higher danger to life or health, stricter liability and various restrictions related to the service). Social integration measures and soldiers' social insurance are applicable to soldiers in case of death, natural disasters and loss of property (art. 68 of Law on Organization of the National Defense System and Military Service). Thus it may be stated that the state tries to compensate the peculiarities of statutory and military services by ensuring social security for them. Graphic representation is presented in a Figure 1.



Source: developed by author

Figure 1. Uniformed services and social guarantees

Although constitutional purpose of statutory and military services is different, these services can be compared because of special legal regulation (statutes), statutory relationship of strictly subordinate nature, special requirements, social and other guarantees, specific powers, threat to health and life and other aspects which enable comparing these services.

Research methodology

Four statutory state servicemembers from each of two statutory services (police commissariat and correctional facility) were used in order to obtain objective data because of the abundance of statutory services in Lithuania. Also eight soldiers were asked to join in this study. Qualitative research method was chosen for the research: it was aimed to find out experts' opinion during an interview using a questionnaire drawn up especially for that. In order for the research to reveal experts' opinions, assessments and reasoning as well as to enable finding out more about the object analyzed and, having analyzed the topologies of the interview, a semi-standardized interview was chosen (Bitinas et al, 2008). A questionnaire consisting of 14 questions was presented to the experts personally. Since identification of the constituents of the system is important for perception of any system, three comparative stages were distinguished: preparation for the service, acceptance to the service and performance of the service. The research was performed in October-November of 2016.

In general, research ethics covers aspects such as research originality, clear analysis of the research, appropriate research publication, the voluntary submission of survey participants, confidentiality (Baserer, 2016). Before the beginning of the interview the questionnaire was presented, as well as the purpose of the research. Also it was mentioned, that information collected during the investigation will be presented only in summary form, and the data form will not be publicly announced. Agreements of heads of police commissariat, correctional facility and battalion were get before the interview.

Methodological assumptions formulated in the classic theory of tests were used to determine an acceptable number of experts (Podvezko, 2005). Theory states that reliability of aggregated decisions and the number of persons making the decisions (in this case, experts) is related by a quickly fading linear relationship. It has been proven that accuracy of the decisions and assessments made by a small group of experts' equals' accuracy of the decisions and assessments made by a large group of experts in modules of aggregated experts' assessments with the same weights (Libby, Blashfield, 1978). Accuracy of decisions and assessments is high enough when the number of experts reaches at least 12. A total of 16 experts was surveyed in the research; therefore, the number of the experts established is sufficient in order to obtain accurate information. The data was processed invoked SPSS and Excel programs. Kendall concordance coefficient calculated from individual test groups. This showed that the experts' opinions sufficiently compatible and experts have been properly selected.

Results

As it was mentioned already, three comparative dimensions were distinguished in the research: preparation for the service, acceptance to the service and performance of the service. When analyzing the stage of preparation for the service, statutory servicemembers distinguished the issue of manifestations of corruption without detailing it (*"Corruption, a clan of relatives", "Non-transparency in the system"*). One more issue which was distinguished is training: too short duration, too large groups, lack of time to memorize information. In the military service, however, distinguished problems of entirely different type. Soldiers named a lack of information about their career opportunities, needed specialties and job vacancies as one of the greatest issues of this stage (*"Soldiers lack knowledge about their career opportunities", "Lack of information about needed specialties and job vacancies, etc."*).

Statutory servicemembers distinguished manifestations of competition and corruption in the stage of acceptance to the service again. In their opinion, too high requirements for

health and too low requirements for the necessary level of education are also set in this stage (“Too low requirements for education are set”, “The requirements could be higher”). Soldiers did not distinguish any shortcomings in this stage. It is only mentioned that soldiers are restricted during the appointment, they do not know where they will serve and they lack information about career opportunities.

The stage of performance of the service. Altogether statutory servicemembers distinguished the issues of social guarantees that do not ensure security, insufficient salary was also mentioned (“Lack of social guaranties”, “Too low salary, lack of time, disinterest”) in the stage of performance of the service. Cases of corrupt nature are mentioned in this stage as well. Unequal opportunities to use qualification improvement courses and training opportunities that are not ensured for all persons concerned which causes competition among military servicemembers are named as the greatest issues in military service (“Huge competition because of career courses. There are many officers but the vacancies in them are limited and this stops career prospects.”, “The issue of qualification improvement exists. An professional military soldier may not be sent to a patrols’ course if he/she is not in an intelligence subdivision, thus an ordinary infantryman has no chance to improve and participate in one of the best courses of Lithuanian officers.”, “The courses are held too late, the commanders of the companies are going to the courses intended for the commander of the squad.”). The issue of applying incentive measures was also distinguished in military service just as in statutory service (“Material incentives are not provided for specialists of certain fields (medics, IT specialists, etc.). It is difficult to compete with civil bodies as regards salaries of specialists of certain fields.”).

Interpretation of the results was based on 5 ratings:

- *Universal*, which means that all respondents identified and all agree about that problem;
- *General*, which means that majority of respondents identified and all agreed about that problem;
- *Mostly*, which means that most of respondents identified and most agreed about that problem;
- *Ambiguous*, which means that the problem was mentioned but there was not majority agreement;
- *Irrelevant*, which means, that this kind of problem was not identified at all.

The data of the analysis of all three stages is presented in the Table 2 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Assessment of career development mechanisms in uniformed services: the main problems

		Statutory service	Military service
1 stage	Corruption	<i>General</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>
	Lack of information about career opportunities	<i>Irrelevant</i>	<i>General</i>
	Insufficient vocational training	<i>Mostly</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>
2 stage	Corruption	<i>General</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>
	Too high requirements for health and physical preparation	<i>Ambiguous</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>
	Insufficient vocational training	<i>Mostly</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>
	Lack of information about career opportunities	<i>Irrelevant</i>	<i>General</i>
3	Corruption	<i>General</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>

	Unguaranteed social stability	<i>Universal</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>
	Lack of motivation assessment	<i>Ambiguous</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>
	Unequal opportunities to use qualification improvement courses	<i>Irrelevant</i>	<i>General</i>
	Insufficient salary	<i>Ambiguous</i>	<i>Irrelevant</i>

Source: developed by author

As can be seen, some recurrent problems were identified in all tested stages (for example, the problem of corruption in the civil service or the lack of information about career opportunities in military service). Such repeatability of the problems shows the importance of its settlement, in order to successful career development process. What is more, it must be mentioned all respondents identified and all agree about one concrete problem. Statutory servicemembers underlined that unguaranteed social stability as a greatest problem in statutory service.

Having identified the shortcomings of career development during the research performed, military service is considered more effective both by professional military and statutory servicemembers (quantitatively – even by the number of the issues distinguished). At the individual level, military officers distinguish their motivation to serve, pursue their career, prepare themselves for the future position, obtain all career-related information and improve themselves. In general, soldiers associate the concept “motivation” with personal wishes and aspirations, whereas this term is perceived as mandatory organizational attempts and motivation “from above” in statutory service.

Generalizing the conclusions of the analysis performed, it can be stated that the shortcomings of career in statutory service are the following: unguaranteed social stability, insufficient vocational training, unobjective system of selection to the service and manifestations of corruption. The shortcomings of career development in military service: lack of information about career opportunities, locations and specifics of the service as well as the issue of competition for qualification courses. The aforementioned shortcomings of career systems of the services may cause the servicemembers’ motivation to decrease; the said motivation is maintained at least by guaranteed social stability in the military service. On the other hand, military servicemembers distinguished lack of knowledge about potential prospects of their career. Statutory service is more attractive in this respect.

Conclusions

As HRM goes it is not surprised that uniformed services are slow to introduction and change. The nature of the uniformed services after all is to provide *status quo and* continuity of sovereign state power, there for HRM is more likely to come out of necessity rather than in search opportunity. This study which compered two uniformed services – military and statutory, suggests that this dichotomy of innovation through necessity *versus* opportunity nonetheless needs to be qualified. The difference between necessity and opportunity is not a categorical one but uncontinued. And different factors make different factors position themselves a different points of this continue.

The significance of sense of social security for career development in the services investigated is special. Uniformed services tend to have hirer level of social protection compared to the general national labor market. The state is obliged to provide proper social security to this social group due to the peculiarities of the service to the country performed by statutory and military servicemembers, the significance of the service to the residents of the country, danger to life or health, stricter liability and various restrictions related to the service

as well as relatively short time intended for the activities. Thus it may be stated that the state tries to compensate the peculiarities of statutory and military services by ensuring sense of social security for them. In Lithuania is also the case but changes that there brought by the globalization means that this different in social protection loses relevance. Lithuania is part of common European market, with significantly lower than average income and social protection levels (including in uniformed services). Also, in recent decades qualified staff have become highly valued in the private sector, dominated by the international investments.

Under these conditions we found that two distinct uniformed services in Lithuania are coping very differently with the challenges. Lithuania is part of NATO and for the military service operates in open international system which promotes adoption of best practices. Where as other statutory services are profound national with little-to-no international cooperation, especially at the level of HRM. And what we see that the military service upped at developing managerial innovation which allows them to better face the challenges of changing labor market environment, there as statutory services do not seem to be able to do that. Instead their HRM is outdated to a point that which member fear for their and their families' social well-being which reinforces unfavorable conditions for HRM innovation which in turn leads to an erosion of the capacity of these services. So fundamental conclusion of our study is that the military service which is the part of the national system (NATO) is achieves better outcomes through means of career development than statutory services. NATO model cannot be imitated in other services easily but there is no reason that sharing an adoption of best practices at the national level would not be possible. Our study shows that it would be clearly be beneficial for statutory services and this is understood by service members.

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