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PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING THE MILITARY CAREER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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Abstract:

Unanimously accepted, the human resource is the most valuable resource of an organization. The success of an organization depends, to a large extent, on the level of *convergence* of both *organizational goals* and *human resources' expectations*. This can be done only by managing in a very well manner the performances, the potential and individual preferences of the employees in the sense of achieving the mission of that organization. Who are the managers? Both, employers and employees are the *main actors* in this „movie”. Civil or military, any organization has to adopt, implement and periodically assess the best policies for a very good career management. The aim of this paper is not to offer an universal solution available for all organizations, but to propose a *set of principles* which can be taken into consideration when *projecting career management policies*.

1. Introduction

Generally speaking, career is associated with the idea of upward movement or that of promotion of a person in the field he or she wishes, the aim being to obtain more prestige, more power, more responsibility and much money [1]. The aim will not be necessary achieved exactly in the order just mentioned, this depending on the short, medium and long term objectives established by each individual.

A career is viewed by individuals differently according to the different situations they experience and their own expectations. Thus, some of the people look at the career as being a succession of posts in one or more companies and others think that the occupation they have is their career. However, traditionally speaking, the notion of career is associated with those who fill managerial positions or are assigned on very well paid posts.

Miller says that the human resources management is different from the other domains of general management because it has to serve the interests of all three involved stakeholders: the company owner, the employees and, by extension, the entire society.

Nowadays employees ask more from their posts and their answer to those managerial activities that have the aim to improve the quality of their life in general and the professional life in particular is more favourable. This is why the career of all employees has to be managed from the very first step of any individual into an organization until his or her retirement.

2. Career management – theoretical concepts

The concept of career management evolved during the years concomitantly with the improvements against the concept of human resources management. In order to provide a better understanding of the career management concept it is necessary to have an overview

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over its definitions and also over the process of career management as it is seen by the specialists who have developed researches on this topic.

2.1. Career management – definition

Klatt, Murdick and Schuster [2] defined the career management as being the process of designing and implementation of those goals, strategies and plans that allow an organization to satisfy its own needs in respect of human resources, and the individuals to achieve their career goals.

Michael Armstrong [3] says that “*career management is concerned with the provision of opportunities for people to develop their abilities and their careers in order to ensure that the organization has the flow of talent it needs and to satisfy their own aspirations. It is about integrating the needs of the organization*”.

According to Armstrong the aims of career management are:

- To meet the institutional needs in order to ensure the managerial succession;
- To give the employees the necessary guidance and support in order to fulfil their potential and achieve a career of success within the organization they work for according to their talents and aspirations
- To assign those who prove certain competencies and experiences to fulfil activities that will prepare them for the future level of responsibility they have the ability and the opportunity to reach.

In order to achieve the above mentioned aims, career management integrates career planning and career development, and implies functional interdependencies between individual career planning, organizational career planning and career development. These interdependencies are shown in Figure 1.

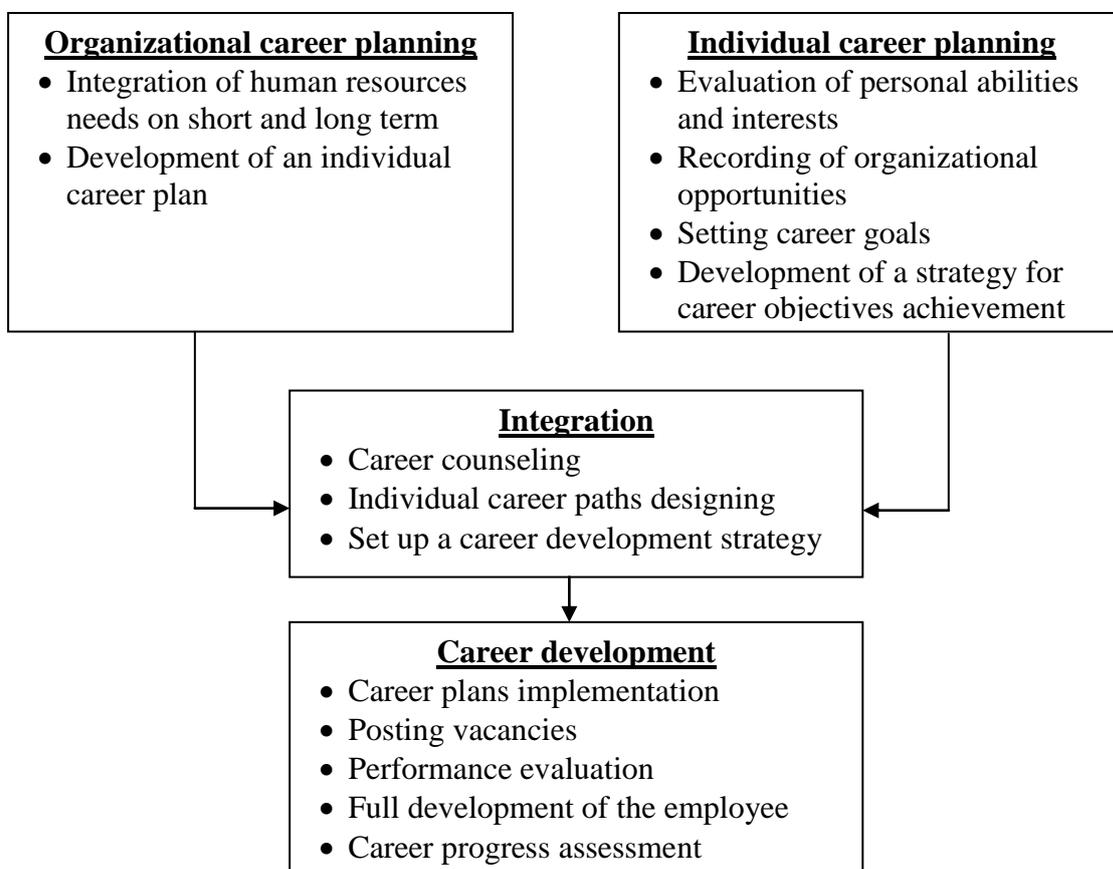


Fig. 1 Career management model by L.A. Klatt

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2.2. Career management activities

As by Baruch and Peiperl [4] career management comprises 17 activities. I have to mention here that some of them are more or less used also in our military career management system. These activities are presented below not in the order established by the above mentioned authors but in that these practices are used in our system.

1. Postings regarding internal job openings – fully implemented.
2. Formal education as part of career – fully implemented.
3. Performance appraisal as a basis for career planning – fully implemented.
4. Lateral moves to create cross-functional experience – fully implemented.
5. Common career paths – partial implemented.
6. Books and/or pamphlets on career issues – partial implemented.
7. Career counselling by manager – empirically used.
8. Career counselling by HR department – empirically used.
9. Succession planning – empirically used.
10. Formal mentoring – empirically used.
11. Career workshops – not used.
12. Retirement preparation programs – not used.
13. Dual ladder career paths (parallel hierarchy for professional staff) – not used.
14. Written personal career planning (as done by the organization or personally) – not implemented.
15. Assessment centres – not used.
16. Peer appraisal – not used
17. Upward (subordinate) appraisal – not used

2.3. The process of career management

The process of career management has been already illustrated in Figure 1. Another relationship scheme for the process of career management, more suggestive in my opinion, is that presented by M. Armstrong [5] in his handbook.

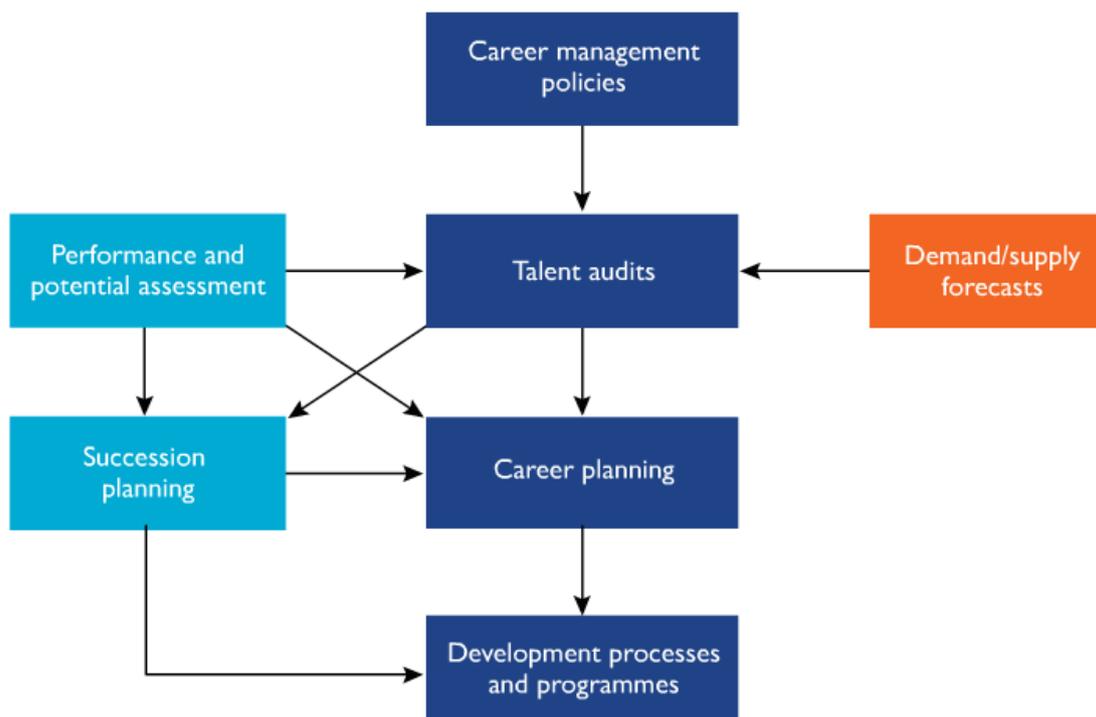


Figure 2: Career management process

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2.3.1. Career management policies

By his "Handbook of human resource management practice" Armstrong provide an interesting approach of the career management process and takes into consideration career management policies, talent audits, the assessment of employees' performance and potential, the career planning, the succession planning and career development, all of these being related each other.

First of all the organization have to decide what is to do: to train or prepare talented people by itself or simply to "buy" them. Both ways have their own advantages and disadvantages. The policy might be to recruit potentially high performers who will accomplish the job in a good manner and remunerated accordingly. If they are good indeed, they will be promoted and the organization will have what it desires. Relying on the external recruitment the organization has the advantage of bringing "fresh blood" which can provoke the boost it needs. At the same time the new people can be seen as a sort of intruders and the organization could face problems like demotivation of the old employees and a slower integration of the new comers.

By contrast, the promotion of the own talents implies a complex process of career planning. Those employers who consider the long term career planning have to develop very well structured systems which include reviews of employees' performance and potential, special assessments in order to identify the talent needed for specific posts, "high flyer" schemes and a detailed program for all planed moves within the organization.

There could also be some policies to retain within the organization those managers who already have reached the top of their career and they cannot go further. Some of them will continue to be effective and efficient on their jobs but others will become frustrated and unproductive. Depending on the specific situation it is up the top level management to adopt the best solutions with the aim of providing them with new challenges and avoid or solve this kind of problems.

2.3.2. Talent audits

Once the career management policies are established, a talent audit is to be conducted in order to identify the employees with potential within the whole organization. The talents discovered during the audit provide the basis for the next career management process sequences: career planning and career development. During this process the managers and the specialists within Human Resources Management department have to ensure that talented employees have the necessary experience accompanied by formal learning programmes that will enable them to fulfil new and demanding posts in the near future.

Another role the talent audit has is to timely indicate the possible risk of talented employees departing the organization and to propose the actions to be taken to retain them.

2.3.3. Performance and potential assessments

During the talent audit and/or whenever is needed the managers can be asked to carry out formal assessment of the potential of their subordinates following the performance evaluation. The aim is to identify the needs for learning and development of all individuals, to provide them the necessary guidance regarding the directions in which their career should go and to establish who has the potential to be promoted.

The problem which can appear is that people with good performance in the present job might not perform well in jobs with broader responsibilities, but at least the organization will be aware about the talents it owns.

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2.3.4. Career planning

Career planning is one of the most important phases of the career management process. According to Armstrong [6], it plans and shapes the progress of individuals within an organization in accordance with the assessments of the organizational needs, as well as with the individual performances, potential and preferences of its members.

Usually, the progress of individuals is shaped by establishing specific career paths using the information provided by the assessment of the organizational needs, the appraisals of both performance and potential and management succession plans.

Therefore, it can be said that the career planning is built on two pillars: the organizational career planning and the individual career planning.

The first pillar is focused on the achievement of the objective of an organization by satisfying the short and long term needs and comprise, according to Klatt, Murdick and Schuster [7], four stages.

First of the four is identification of the employees who are willing to know what capabilities, abilities and development opportunities they have and to accept the necessary training for future responsibilities;

The second refers to the establishment of the career paths. As by Armstrong [8], these can be defined as *“the routes people can take to advance their career within an organization”*. In the most general sense, a career path refers to the succession of the posts which an individual should fill in order to progress toward the top management positions. The career paths can be written or not, but it will be very useful for the entire organization if they are defined in a very clear manner and formalized in a document. This will ensure also that the promotion system within the organization is a transparent one.

The organizational career planning involves a lot of actors: individuals who want to promote, managers on different levels of the hierarchy and the human resources management specialists. Establishing the responsibilities between these actors is the third stage of the first pillar.

The last stage of the organizational career planning is the individual development plan. It consists of those activities developed by the specialists in human resources management in order to set up individual career paths for all people from the organization's point of view, but taking into consideration their actual skills and performance and their potential discovered by their evaluators

The other one pillar of the career planning, the individual one, focuses on the personal needs and aspirations more than on the organizational ones. Though, all employees working in an organization must be aware that a career can be planned and developed only if their aspirations and actions concur to the achievement of the objectives the company they work for has.

All the information gathered during the career planning phase is used in the end of career management process to elaborate individual careers development programmes and to set up general rules for management development, career counselling and mentoring.

2.3.5. Career development

Even if the career development is the outcome of the interaction between the individual abilities and desire for achievement on one hand and the opportunities offered by the organization on the other hand, the main responsibility for career development rests with the individuals. Obviously, the organization has an important role in the career development. The eventual lack of adequate training or development programmes could lead to some difficulties in attracting, maintaining and developing the personnel.

According to Armstrong [9] a career development strategy should comprise the next activities:

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- a policy of promoting the best employees of the organization wherever possible;
- career paths which allow the talents to move toward the top of the organization;
- individual development planning in order to develop each employee's skills and knowledge;
- formalized procedures in order to share and increase the knowledge across the organization;
- project teams comprising members from different areas in order to offer opportunities for development to as many employees as possible.

3. Military career management systems in some NATO countries

The military organization, more than any other closed organization, is characterized by rigid hierarchical structures. It is very well known that within this kind of organizations the career management has a key role for the proper functioning of the system and for its effectiveness. Generally speaking, the military as institution is interested in having a very good career management system and to use it as a tool for retaining and promoting the most experienced people with the best performances and the highest development potential. Considering the characteristics of the current security environment in constant change, putting the right people in the right place at the right moment should be a desideratum for all armed forces all over the world.

The aim of the career management in general and especially that of the individual career management is to ensure the management of the military so as to achieve the necessary operational readiness of the armed forces and to meet the individual needs and aspirations.

3.1. Considerations regarding the actual career management system within the Romanian Armed Forces

The legal framework of the actual military career management system in Romania is given by the provisions of several documents as:

- Military statute law;
- Military career guide;
- Instructions for recruitment, selection, formal education and military career development within the Romanian Armed Forces;
- Instructions for selection boards;
- Instructions for the annual evaluation of the military personnel.

There are also some national laws whose provisions influence the way the military education is built, but the main documents which set up the rules for the military career, for both officers and non-commissioned officers, are those mentioned above.

There are two pathways for becoming officer within the Romanian Armed Forces. The direct pathway refers to the military academies graduates and the indirect one refers to reservist officers, warrant officers, non-commissioned officers and civilians who are university graduates with bachelor's degree in different fields and meet specific requirements related to age, medical status, psychological aptitude, and physical training. Independently of the pathway adopted all officers make up full-career officers and can expect to remain in the military service until the age of 60 and retire with a pension depending on each individual's contribution during working life. Lateral entrance into the system is allowed only for those specialties which cannot be trained

All officers are promoted directly from second lieutenant to first lieutenant since there are no special conditions or qualitative screening for this stage. Because of the manner the Armed Forces are built at the present, for first lieutenants to be promoted to captain only the condition of graduation the advanced course is necessary to be achieved.

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To be promoted beyond captain officers must apply and be selected for major positions. The staff officer course is mandatory to be graduated before this promotion. For officers to be promoted from major to lieutenant colonel the graduation of the postgraduate course for specialists is a must. All these promotions, less the first one presented above, are done through selection boards organized at the level of each forces category, General Staff and Human Resources Management Directorate, for the officers that are under their competency. The officers who meet the necessary requirements for being promoted from lieutenant colonel to colonel are analyzed only within the selection boards established at the level of General Staff and Human Resources Management Directorate. It doesn't matter the rank, the process of promotion comprise few steps as follows:

- The position for which the selection has to be done should be advertised through one or more different means or publications (e.g. Armed Forces Bulletin, Monitorul Oficial etc.). The dead line for submitting the reports for vacancies is 3 months from the moment the posts were published;
- The officers willing to be appointed to specific positions have to hierarchically submit their personal reports to the selection board in charge with those specific posts;
- Specialists from the offices ensuring the secretariat of the selection board analyze if the officers meet all minimum requirements established by the job descriptions. Only those who meet these requirements will be discussed within the selection board;
- The selection boards comprising members coming from different units shall meet in sessions once a month or whenever is necessary. Each selection board comprises six to eight voting members and is chaired by a president who has also voting rights. The secretary of each selection board is a human resources specialists who has to ensure that all required relevant data about the candidates are presented to all members;
- During the sessions of selection boards all voting members, individually, grade the officers under discussion according to the experience they have in the field of the post, the annual appraisals, the potential and the educational background of each of them, the participation in international missions, etc;
- The officers are hierarchized and the one who receive the best grades is appointed to fill the post under selection.

So, theoretically speaking the process has to go smoothly. Though, the practice is different.

There are situations when none of the candidates meets the minimum requirements and even if the post is a critical one the process will start again and again until a suitable officer will appear. All this time somebody else from the unit where the post is vacant has to accomplish, besides his/her current duties, also the tasks of that post. This can lead to frustration and demotivation of people in such situations and may even result in the separation of the best officers. The lack of flexibility of the regulations, the manner in which the positions are defined and the lack of responsibility of some leaders who normally develop the job description are the main causes for this deficiency.

A strange situation is given by the impossibility of promoting officers who have the necessary educational background but who didn't fill in the past mandatory flight assignment gates according to the career path established for different commanding positions. For example, there are officers, filling those mandatory posts, who are not willing, for financial reasons, to attend the commanding master which is a must for being promoted to the position of squadron commander. At the same time officers having the commanding master graduated cannot be appointed as squadron commanders because they

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didn't have the opportunity to fill posts categorized as mandatory flight assignment gates. This dysfunction is due to the fact the rules were changed during the game, the rigidity of the rules adopted in this field and even due to some conflicts between the provisions of the regulations ensuring the legal framework for career management.

Another aspect I want to mention here is that not all the time the best officers are promoted to the most important and challenging posts. This usually happens because of the lack of quantifiable criteria and due to the subjectivism that could characterized the members of the selection board.

At the present, there are also many officers who have been appointed to command positions but who don't meet the education criteria. At the same time there are officers who meet all the criteria for being promoted in such positions but there is not any legal possibility to remove the officers who are filling those positions now. This happens because the rules for filling such positions have been changed during the game and due to the fact that in 2010 the level of almost all posts within the Armed Forces was grown artificially by a rank for political reasons.

Considering the career management activities found by Baruch and Peiperl the manner these activities are implemented and executed within the Romanian Armed Forces is presented below.

1. **Posting of the internal job openings** is one of the specific activities of the career management which is fully implemented. As mentioned before, the rule is that all vacancies have to be advertised by various means and is formalized by ministerial order. As an exception, in certain conditions, only the minister of the national defence can appoint officers to specific posts without posting the jobs. The urgency of filling posts in this manner should be strongly argued by the requestors.

2. **Formal education as part of career.** The very first step for the accession into the Romanian Armed Forces of the most officers is the graduation of one of the military academies with a bachelor's degree. After that, there are mandatory career courses which have to be graduated by officers in order to be promoted. At the same time the military personnel has the opportunity to attend specialty courses during their military career for free within both the military educational system and the private one.

3. As stipulated in a ministerial order **the performance annual appraisal** of the military personnel is one of the tools used within the selection board by its members in order to grade the candidates. Moreover, in the case of two or more candidates with the same grades the members of the selection board should consider their potential as it is mentioned in their annual evaluations. The issue which can be raised here is regarding the empiric way the potential of the officers was assessed by raters. However, according to the information provided by the website of the Human Resources Management Directorate new instructions are in process of being approved by the minister of the national defence.

4. **Common career paths** are set up by ministerial order and these are partially implemented due to the fact that this order has entered fully into force only on early April this year.

5. **Lateral moves** are used a lot within the Armed Forces not necessarily to create cross-functional experience but more to cover eventual shortfalls. Usually this happens only at the special request of the officers who want to accomplish tasks in other fields or in other military units. The common career paths don't cover this aspect anymore and it will be challenging for all human resources management structures to propose and to set up specific rules for lateral moves.

6. The legal framework for the career management is established and it was presented a little bit earlier. All documents in this respect are published and can be studied by all interested personnel. The actual system of announcing the military personnel

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regarding the appearance of new orders and the free and easy access to all new regulations could substitute partially the using of **books and/or pamphlets** on this issue. Obviously, issuing of such documents will make people understanding much better the way they can be promoted and will make them aware about the manner they can manage their career.

7. **The career counselling** is empirically used **by commanders** at all levels. There are not any special provisions within the military legislation in this respect, even though within the annual evaluation the rater can recommend to the rated person to continue the work in the same field or to change it.

8. **The career counselling by HR department** is also empirically used. The way in which the military personnel is counselled depends too much at this moment on the personal attributes and the mood of the specialists working in the human resources structures at all levels and too little on the relevant legislation in this domain.

9. The empirical use of **succession planning** is given by the fact that there is not any career planning at the level of all units within the Ministry of National Defence.

10. **The formal mentoring** is done twice a year according to the instructions regarding the annual evaluation but practically this is just to tick another activity.

Looking at the problems presented above and at the manner in which the career management activities are accomplished it is quite clear that some changes have to be done within the policies regarding career management within the Romanian Armed Forces.

3.2. Career management systems in other NATO Countries

Within one of its researches, the RAND Corporation has presented few career management systems available in some NATO countries like Netherlands, Norway, Canada, Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom. For the scope of this paper I will mention only two of them. However the aim is not to make comparisons between them and the Romanian one but just to present other approaches.

3.2.1. Norway [10]

In principle, the Norwegian officer system is a full-career long-term profession that allows officers to complete a 40-year career or retire at age 60, whichever comes first, with two-thirds pay as a pension. Because there are only few NCOs in Norway's armed forces, there are officers accomplishing many of the responsibilities traditionally performed by NCOs. The result is a large content of junior officers who perform what would be NCO duties in other countries. All officers are drawn from conscription after one year as enlisted service members. Officer candidates then attend a one year officer's school and upon successful completion, must serve an additional year of duty as sergeants. Those still wishing to be officers must apply for the military academy. After that two groups are formed:

- Military attending only a two-year program at the academy and who will not be promoted beyond the rank of major but can stay until age 60.
- Military who apply and are accepted for an additional two years of academy studies, for a total of four years at the military academy. These are expected to reach lieutenant colonel or higher before retirement at age 60

There are two opportunities for officers to voluntarily leave the service or retire prior to age 60. The first opportunity comes four years after completion of the military academy, at about age 30, and in the year studied, several chose to depart to enter private sector employment without any pension. The second opportunity occurs at age 57 when officers can choose to retire. These separations are not qualitative screenings by the services but decisions of the individual officer. Most officers retiring from the military are not expected to pursue second careers because of their age. During the present period of

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downsizing turbulence, temporary policies are offering early retirement to officers after age 50 to assist force reduction requirements. As a result, qualitative screening reductions to eliminate officers are possible only after age 50 and prior to age 60.

All officers that stay will become captains since there is no qualitative screening to that rank. All officers must remain captains for at least four years. At the rank of captain, officers must apply for special skill training that will qualify them for positions of higher rank and promotion. For all positions in the grades of major and higher, officers must apply and be selected based upon (1) education and special skill qualification, (2) experience, and (3) competent performance in previous assignments. Once selected for a position of higher rank, an officer will be promoted. There is keen competition for most higher-rank positions, and therefore promotion is considered competitive after captain.

Officers applying and being selected for these major-and-above positions are allowed to remain in them until they apply and are selected for new positions of the same grade or higher, or they reach age 60 and are required to retire. Special career jobs (such as command) have limited tenure (usually two years). Officers completing special career jobs can either apply for new positions or receive assignments from the service staffs. Officers in field grade that cannot obtain selection for new positions must remain in current positions and grade until retirement.

All captains desiring to be competitive for promotion to major must apply for, be selected for, and complete the officer's staff college of three-month duration. Majors must apply for, be selected for, and complete the general staff college of one year to be competitive for promotion to lieutenant colonel. These education gates are additional restrictive criteria for being selected for a higher-grade position that can fully qualify an officer for promotion. There are no mechanisms for lateral entry or assimilation of reserve officers into full career officer status in Norway.

Personnel management policies are identical for army and air force officers, and there are only minor differences (slower promotions to similar grades) for navy officers.

3.2.2. Federal Republic of Germany[11]

The Federal Republic of Germany uses a uniform system for managing the officers of its three military services. Military service in Germany is based upon national service with conscription for all eligible males. All officers begin their careers in the enlisted ranks. The officer candidates will attend one of the two German armed forces university institutions for a period of more than three and up to four years to obtain a university-level degree and an officer's commission. The officer career system is designed to provide the potential for a 40 year career inclusive of enlisted service and university attendance. Graduates of the German armed forces universities are commissioned in all three services with either regular or temporary commissions, depending on their graduating status. Additional officers are commissioned from the enlisted NCO ranks usually after some 12–15 years of service. These officers receive a specialist commission. Those officers who remain with temporary commissions and those with specialist commissions are limited in their potential for advancement to the grade of captain.

There are multiple levels in grades, with three at captain and two each at lieutenant colonel and colonel, with the more senior level called "de luxe". Within the regular officers, a division is made at the grade of captain selecting the very best officers, some 10–15 percent annually, to attend the prestigious two year general staff course. The graduates of this course, general staff officers (GSOs), form the core from which all senior leaders of the German armed forces will be selected. All regular commissioned officers can expect promotion to major and most to lieutenant colonel, but the vast majority of officers advanced to the higher grades of colonel and the flag ranks will be GSOs. Further, all

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GSOs will be advanced to at least the higher-level rank in the grade of lieutenant colonel and receive special management of their assignments and continuing education. This very competitive two-track regular officer career seems to ensure both high competency and appropriate specialized military experience and training for the future senior leadership of the German armed forces.

The German officer formal education and development system is rigidly structured and strongly focused on the middle grades of captain and major. By the time officers reach captain, they possess most of their branch skills and some 10 to 12 years of military experience. Captains attend company commander's courses to further develop their leadership skills and then the field-grade officer qualification course, a mandatory precursor to advancement to major. Next occurs selection for either the staff officers course or, for those on the more competitive track, general staff officers course. Much later in the careers of those destined for the most senior leadership positions, selection from mostly GSOs at the grade of colonel or brigadier general is made for attendance at the war college. The war college is seen as preparation for senior officers to serve at the strategic, combined (NATO commands), and operational levels of staff and command.

Retirement for officers in the German armed forces is based directly upon age and grade and indirectly tied to the type of commission, regular or other.

Captains are mandatorily retired at age 53 with a pension equal to 75 percent of their salary. Majors, all being regular officers, may serve to age 55. Lieutenant colonels may serve until age 57, colonels have service allowed to age 59, and generals serve to age 60. In each of the field-grade and flag ranks, the pension is equal to the same 75 percent of salary for those reaching the age limits. Those officers retiring earlier are provided pensions based upon a factor of 1.87 percent per year, with a maximum time of 40 years or 75 percent of salary. Officers who depart service before reaching retirement age will receive full credit for their military service in their subsequent civilian pension plans.

The conclusion resulting from the systems presented above (including the Romanian armed forces) and the research done by RAND Corporation is that the military systems are quite similar when speaking about the career management. The armed forces are closed systems with no or limited lateral entries and with mandatory educational or assignments gates. These systems are characterized by long, "one-career" systems with retirement around the age of 60 and with sufficient pension so that another career is not needed unless an officer chooses to do so. The experience accumulated during the career, the performance proved in previous assignments and the potential of the officers are taken into consideration when they are to be promoted. At the same time different career paths are set up for military within short service and long career.

Various aspects of foreign military systems could provide very good ideas for improving the officer career management system within the Romanian armed forces. Which are those? It is not the aim of this paper to propose alternatives. First of all we should have a vision. After that a set of principles which have to govern the whole policy has to be adopted and implemented. These are presented in the next chapter.

4.Principles to be upheld

The first principle I think that should be adopted is the **coherence principle**. This principle refers to the state or situation in which all the parts or ideas fit together well so that they form a united whole. It is about harmonizing the provisions of all laws, orders, regulations and dispositions in respect of career management. These should 100% overlap. It is also about the harmonization of the legal framework with the manner in which the

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military structures are built and the way the posts within the military structures are defined. Only by having these achieved a better career management system can be built.

The consistency principle is borrowed from accounting but is perfectly applicable also to the legislation regarding career management. The idea is that once a policy is adopted and a set of rules related to the career management is implemented, it should be followed consistently. It implies also that, once adopted, the Human Resources Management Directorate must refrain from changing its career management policy unless on reasonable grounds. If for any valid reasons the career management policy is changed, the HRM Directorate must disclose the nature of change, the reasons for the change and its effects on officers' career. However, making changes during the game has to be avoided and if adopted these shouldn't affect the career of anybody.

Principle of separating personnel politics from execution implies a hierarchical delimitation of the responsibilities and the avoidance of duplication of the responsibilities/attributions between the administrative and operational structures. In other words it ensures the impartiality and the implementation of the processes and politics with regard to the career management in an equitable manner within the human resources management practices.

The flexibility principle ensures that the politics answer in an efficient manner to the needs of change. In this respect the regulations should be flexible enough in order to not be needed to make exceptions from the rules all the time.

Applicability is another principle that I consider it is to be taken into account. This means that the politics should be applicable to both military structures and personnel, but even the politics are flexible they should be applied in a rigorous manner.

The career management rules and procedures should be transparent. **Transparency** ensures that all regulations regarding career development, promotion and selection process are known by the entire personnel of the armed forces. This should be done by a correct and realistic counselling. At the same time all militaries have to be granted with an easy access to all information regarding vacancies, career development and professional development opportunities.

The principle of equal opportunities ensures the elimination of any kind of discrimination and the same criteria for participating of the whole personnel in the selection, promotion and professional development processes. This can be done only in accordance with the professional competence, performance and potential of each individual.

5. Conclusion

The career management process within the armed forces is a complex one. The main stakeholders involved in this process are the individuals trying to build a career, the commanders who have to counsel their subordinates in accomplishing their current tasks but also regarding the opportunities they have to develop their career and the last, but not the least important, the specialists from human resources management structures.

The **individuals** should know that they are their own career managers. The armed forces dictate the final outcome of all career development activities according to the operational requirements. In all cases the military personnel can participate in such decisions. Participation in the career development process is possible during the entire working life starting with the first step into the military system and finishing with their retirement. The key is to be involved in career development by making informed and logical decisions. Officers should review, update and maintain these records from their personal files throughout their careers. Officers should also request periodic advice and

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counseling to remain in-formed of career opportunities and to assess progress achieving career goals.

All military personnel look to their **commanders** for advice and career counseling. Some counseling is official, but the most forms of counseling are often unofficial and are related to career patterns, advice about new posts and duty positions. Regardless of the type of counseling, commanders should be exactly informed before giving advice.

The **specialists within human resources management** field from all levels are responsible for fulfilling current and future armed forces requirements while meeting the needs for career development of different branches and functional areas. At the same time they should balance the individuals' interests against the needs of armed forces. This is why the specialists within the HRM field can provide the best advice to the military personnel about the career development opportunities. However, the main actors in the process of career management are the individuals who should stay in touch with their commanders and with HRM offices within their units.

In conclusion, there is a career management process on going within the Romanian Armed Forces. It is somehow formalized and the legal framework is set up, but at the same time a lot of dysfunctions take place on a regular basis. This is due to the fact that the principles mentioned within the previous chapter haven't been respected when the policy was issued. At the same time, as long as there is not any vision regarding the future of human resources of the armed forces it is obviously that not any applicable politics can be issued.

It is very clear that changes are necessary in this field. This is challenging, it will take time and it will consume the energy of many people. The aim is to have the right member, with the right skills, in the right job, at the right time. It is hard but it is achievable.

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