
Competencies of Retired Officers of the Polish Armed Forces in the Civil Labor Market

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Abstract:

Purpose: The publication addresses the competence potential of retired Polish Armed Forces officers on the civil labor market. Due to their specific job, which is service to the Homeland, soldiers acquire many unique competencies that they could or use during their retirement employment. A professional soldier employed before 2013 can retire after 15 years of service. According to the latest research, more than 8,000 soldiers have left the Armed Forces over the past two years. That shows how many educated people could still function in the labor market. Failure to use this potential is a waste of a valuable resource, highly useful in the civil labor market. The results of the conducted research concern the situation and competencies in work in retirement according to the opinion of the retired officers of the Armed Forces and employers/superiors employing retired officers.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study uses the method of analysis and criticism of the literature. This made it possible to complete a bibliography related, inter alia, to competences. Additionally, a heuristic method was used to interpret the cited definitions. Another method used in the work was the comparative method. The main research tool was questionnaires developed by the co-author, addressed to retired officers and employers/superiors of retired officers.

Findings: The results of this part of the research indicate that retired officers are assessed positively by employers/superiors, and the most important factors in retirement employment are knowledge, skills, personality traits and experience.

Keywords: Polish Armed Forces officer, competencies, qualifications, employer, labor market.

JEL classification: J0, M50, Y2, Y9.

Paper Type: Research study.

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1. Introduction

The employer is often interested in the broadly understood employee's competencies, which are useful for him/her and bring benefits to the organization. Such competencies including, among others, "aptitudes and predispositions, education and knowledge, practical experience and skills, health and psychophysical condition, useful character, and personality traits constitute a specific capital" (Butkiewicz-Schodowska, 2015). Nowadays, employee competence is a "bargaining chip" in finding employment (Matysik, 2016). The requirements of the job are increasingly focused on competencies. Retired officers of the Polish Army are educated people, specialists in many fields. Therefore, when retiring, they could still be employed in various organizations.

2. Position of Retired Officers on the Domestic Labor Market

The domestic labor market has been chronically in need of hands to work for several years. That applies mainly to manual workers and those job positions where officers' qualifications are useful. When it comes to soldiers leaving military service, retraining, career counseling, job placement, and apprenticeships are undertaken. These activities are aimed at preparing those entitled to take up employment (<https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/rekonweskja-szrp>). It is a formal program called reconversion. In such a capacious labor market, employers are often interested in the broadly understood employees' competencies bringing benefits to the organization (Knecht, 2016). In the case of former officers, it can be claimed that they have competencies close to such expectations since their "talents and predispositions, education and knowledge, practical experience and skills, health and psychophysical condition, useful character, and personality traits constitute a specific capital" (Butkiewicz-Schodowska, 2015). Nowadays, employee competence is a "bargaining chip" in finding employment (Matysik, 2016). Working requirements are increasingly focused on competencies.

The labor market is two interrelated elements: labor supply and labor demand. If the market mechanism is taken into account, the price function, i.e., the salary, must be added. The positive meaning of the officers' situation can be mentioned; they already have quite a high pension, so their expectations are slightly different, valuable for employers because it is about job satisfaction and achieving satisfactory results. The aspects are considered crucial qualities/attachments that enhance the officers' qualities beneficial to employers. The adequate assessment of the labor market situation is significant as it constitutes "factor for the success of the transit of people to the labor market" (Bera, 2019).

3. The Essence of Competence and its Types

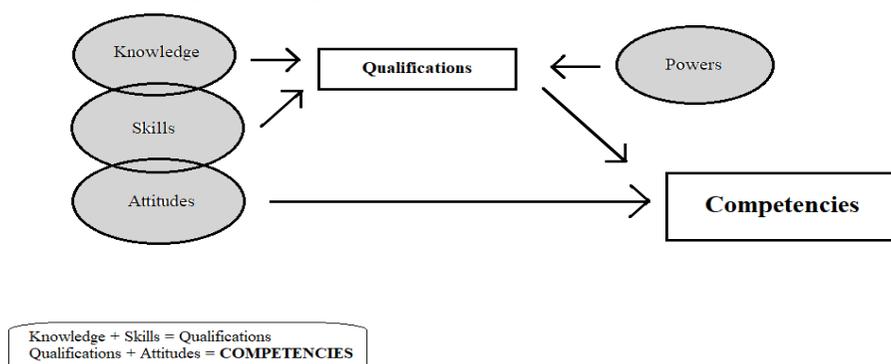
Competence is "a group of knowledge, experience, skills, personal qualities, motivation, behavior, and attitudes" (Balcerzyk and Balcerzyk, 2017). Competence

is also the personal resources of employees (Dudzińska-Głaz, 2012). M. Montmollin believes that competence is a specific set: “knowledge, skills, typical behaviors, standard, procedures, reasoning that can be applied without new learning” (Moczyłowska, 2008). Competencies can also be called the totality of knowledge, ability to act, and attitudes that build a whole depending on the objectives and circumstances.

As for employees in managerial positions, where essential decisions for the organization are taken as to whether appropriate solutions are made, *managerial competencies* must be mentioned. They are defined by a set of appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes. They are related to the manager's efficient performance (Olszewska, 2007). Another aspect of competence is a proper education, which will facilitate understanding of the organization's activities. Also crucial are individual managerial skills and personality values (e.g., empathy, quick reaction). Managerial and social experience and universal and special managerial skills are also necessary (Olszewska, 2007). It is also worth mentioning the universality of competencies, e.g., the ability to shape and effectively implement the organization's mission, vision, and strategy. Besides, it is "the ability to harmonize the interests of the organization and its stakeholders" (Olszewska, 2007.) *Specific competencies* are "coupled with the specific competencies of a given organization and with professional competencies" (Olszewska, 2007). Former officers correspond to the described conditions and thus should find these specific jobs.

The concept of competence is often used interchangeably with qualifications; however, the significance of the latter category is narrower and can be confirmed by diplomas and/or professional experience (Balcerzyk and Balcerzyk, 2017).

Figure 1. Knowledge vs. competencies



Source: Study based on Baraniak B.2009. *Metody badania pracy*, Wyd. Akademickie i profesjonalne, Warszawa, 101.

The figure above describes a situation in which qualifications are the starting point in the pursuit of competence. "Their professional aspect guarantees a high level of functional and motivational structure. It is vital and helpful in situations of changing

labor market and changing management principles" (Baraniak, 2009). It affects employee qualifications, directly aiming at professional competencies, including professional qualifications, "which are sets of knowledge, skills, psychophysical characteristics, and powers" (Baraniak, 2009).

When it comes to former officers, social competencies deserve to be emphasized. Here, one can find a close connection with social, adaptive, empathy, cognitive, and emotional skills. They are educated in military schools while creating the authority of a leader, which is also a determinant of the organizational culture of a given organization (Załoga, Nowicka, and Ciekanowski, 2018). Let us add the emotional competencies that people need to function in a changing environment (Załoga, Nowicka, and Ciekanowski, 2018). These qualities are mastered during service by officers who are prepared to operate in extreme combat conditions. Competency development related to (Balcerzyk and Balcerzyk, 2017):

- developing new skills;
- improving already acquired skills;
- change or better use of current skills;
- adapting own behavior - effective use of your skills in relationships with other people;
- exclusion of behavioral deficiencies;
- removing redundant behaviors, thanks to which it will be possible to control oneself more efficiently, and it will be possible to change inappropriate interpersonal habits.

4. The Polish Armed Forces' Officer - Characteristics of Usefulness on the Civil Labor Market

Officers have different education, they are engineers, chemists, mechanics, etc. They can work in a team, even under harsh conditions, communicate with colleagues with ease, have leadership qualities close to the managerial style. Furthermore, the speed of making decisions, effectiveness in enforcing orders, and their reliable execution are worth mentioning. Physical condition is crucial since fitness is an essential element of the functions that the Polish Armed Forces' soldiers fulfill (Rzepecka, 2019).

Soldiers are required to supplement their knowledge and improve their professional qualifications continually. An officer acts as a commander, teacher, and educator. According to S. Jarmoszko and R. Stępień, the command competence, useful later in the labor market, comprise:

- Conceptual competencies - referring to "the ability to abstract thinking about forecasting activities, changes taking place in the organization's environment, setting goals for a given organizational unit, as well as the

- ability to delegate powers appropriately" (Balcerzyk and Zapała, 2020).
- Administrative competencies - related to "skills of efficient and effective management, decision-making, general planning, and organizing the process of training subordinates" (Balcerzyk and Zapała, 2020). They also include knowledge of, among other things, the rules and regulations that are indispensable for a given position.
 - Technical competencies – concerning the skills that are supposed to help perform the tasks of a given commander at a particular level. It is connected to, among others, proper methods and techniques applied in the task execution, or knowledge of proper handling of a given equipment.
 - Social competencies - including communicative, cooperation, collaboration, ethical-moral, and assertive-reflective ones (Balcerzyk and Zapała, 2020).

5. Research Results

The 2019 and 2020 survey concerning, among other things, the competencies of retired officers of the Polish Armed Forces covered 178 former soldiers and 108 employers/supervisors who employ retired Polish officers³. Answers to the four main questions as mentioned below were collected:

- 1) *Which of the competencies acquired during military service impacted employment/are now useful in the current workplace after retirement? (More than 1 answer could be marked).*
- 2) *Do you think that a retired officer achieves results comparable to those of a civilian employee with similar competencies?*
- 3) *How do you assess your superiors in the current workplace? / How do you assess the work performed by a retired officer? (Please tick the appropriate number 5 - high, 1 - low).*

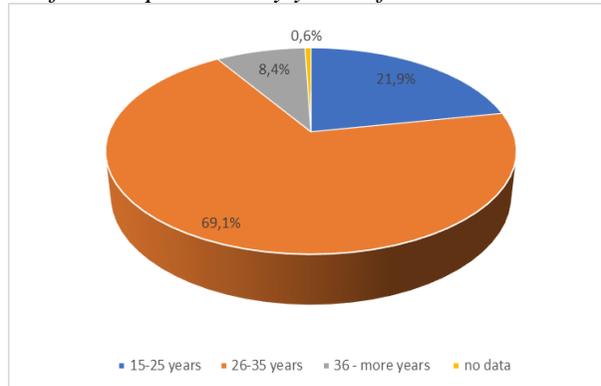
The figure below shows the division of the respondents by years of service. The largest group of the respondents are officers who served for 26 - 35 years. That indicates that the surveyed, through their long service, could acquire a whole range of competencies and experiences.

Table 1 shows that the respondents found knowledge, skills, personality traits, and experience the most important. In comparison, persons employing retired officers indicated knowledge, skills, and experience. According to both groups, the conclusion is that it was knowledge and experience that had an impact on

³*The questionnaires developed by the co-author of the publication, addressed to retired officers of the Polish Armed Forces and to employers/supervisors employing retired officers. The research results will be used to write a doctoral thesis on: Rozwój potencjału kompetencyjnego oficerów Wojska Polskiego w kontekście zatrudnienia w wieku emerytalnym (Development of the competence potential of Polish Armed Forces officers in the context of employment at retirement age).*

employment, and it is these competencies that are useful in work after retirement. The fewest retired officers indicated *motives for action*, *behavior* and *others*. It was the same with employers.

Figure 2. Division of the respondents by years of service



Source: Study based on own research.

Table 1. Comparison of responses of retired officers and employers/supervisors to the question: Which of the competencies acquired during military service impacted employment/are now useful in the current workplace after retirement?

Responses	Retired officers	%	Employers/supervisors	%
knowledge	123	18,01%	81	21,77%
skills	115	16,84%	70	18,82%
attitude	86	12,59%	48	12,90%
personality traits	107	15,67%	44	11,83%
experience	135	19,77%	75	20,16%
motives for action	43	6,30%	20	5,38%
behavior	52	7,61%	21	5,65%
others	22	3,22%	13	3,49%
TOTAL	683	100%	372	100%

Source: Study based on own research.

Table 2 displays answers to the question concerning comparing the retired officers' performance in the civilian environment with civil workers with similar competencies. Most retired officers indicated the answer "definitely yes" (52,8%). In the group of employers/supervisors, the same answer was also highly significant (61.1%).

Another answer *rather yes* also received a large number of points. However, none of the respondents chose the last two answers, that is *rather not* and *definitely not*. That proves that retired officers do good work.

Table 2. Comparison of responses of retired officers and employers/supervisors to the question: Do you think that a retired officer achieves results comparable to those of a civilian worker with similar competencies?

Responses	Retired officers	%	Employers/supervisors	%
definitely yes	94	52,8%	66	61,1%
rather yes	58	32,6%	33	30,6%
hard to say	26	14,6%	7	6,5%
rather no	0	0	1	0,9%
definitely no	0	0	0	0
no response	0	0	1	0,9%
TOTAL	178	100%	108	100%

Source: Study based on own research.

Table 3 presents the answers concerning the evaluation (1 - low to 5 - high) of the work performed by retired officers from their point of view and employers/supervisors employing retired officers. Both respondent groups - the majority of former soldiers and more than 50% of employers/supervisors - rated the retired officers high.

In the case of answer 4, almost the same percentage of people from both groups assessed the work of retired officers. As for grade 3, over 11% of retired officers chose it. Employers/superiors, there were only less than 4%

Table 3. Comparison of answers to the question: How would you be assessed by your superiors in your current workplace?/How do you assess the work performed by a retired officer?

Responses	Retired officers	%	Employers/supervisors	%
5	79	44,4%	60	55,6%
4	66	37,1%	41	38,0%
3	20	11,2%	4	3,7%
2	1	0,6%	1	0,9%
1	0	0%	0	0%
no response	12	6,7%	2	1,8%
TOTAL	178	100%	108	100%

Source: Study based on own research.

6. Conclusion

The officers of the Polish Armed Forces have rare competencies acquired during their service. Competences are essential in human resource management. They enable the adaptation of employees to the needs of the organization. It can be concluded that competences are predispositions based on professional knowledge and skills that contain qualifications. They are also related to the ability to perform tasks that may result from official duties and responsibility for their work.

The research shows that it is mainly their knowledge, skills, or experience that have contributed to their employability and are useful in the current workplace. As most of the soldiers leaving the military service are still in their productivity, they would be good, highly efficient employees. That is confirmed by the research outcomes, especially the positive opinions of employers/supervisors regarding the quality of work performed by retired officers.

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