

REFLECTIONS ARISING FROM MILITARY SERVICE UNDER CONTRACT IN THE PORTUGUESE ARMED FORCES: FUNCTIONAL AND SOCIAL AND CITIZENSHIP PERSPECTIVES

*REFLEXÕES DECORRENTES DA PRESTAÇÃO DO
SERVIÇO MILITAR EM REGIME DE CONTRATO NAS
FORÇAS ARMADAS PORTUGUESAS: PERSPETIVA
FUNCIONAL E PERSPETIVA SOCIAL E DE CIDADANIA*

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Abbreviated title: Reflections Arising From Military Service Under Contract in the
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Abstract

In times of great economic and financial restrictions, with high unemployment rates and an aging society and with different perceptions of the military context, the aim of this article is to analyze the problem of obtaining and retaining military personnel under contract and evaluating the respective benchmarks for training and professional development, in a double perspective– functional and social –essential for the operation of the Armed Forces(A.F.) and the satisfaction of national and international duties of the State in the context of defense, and the subsequent socio-professional reintegration of citizens who temporarily integrate the ranks.

The study relies on a qualitative research strategy (Bryman, 2012) implemented through documentary research and a semi-structured interview survey, the resulting data having been subject to content analysis (categorical) supported by Bardin (2000).

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The main problems diagnosed were the reduced ability of the A.F. to independently engage and retain citizens in voluntary military service/military service under contract (VS/CS), as well as on the reduced socio-professional value that constitutes their passage through the ranks. The results, which are important to the A.F., to the Portuguese State and to Society in general, point to perhaps less traditional shared solutions, which the Political Power is instrumental in implementing.

Keywords: obtaining and retaining; training and professional development; voluntary military service/military service under contract; functional perspective; social perspective; citizenship.

Resumo

Em tempos de grandes restrições económicas e financeiras, de elevada taxa de desemprego e numa sociedade cada vez mais envelhecida e com perceções distintas do contexto militar, o objetivo deste artigo é analisar o problema da obtenção e retenção de efetivos militares em regime de contrato e avaliar o respetivo referencial de formação e desenvolvimento profissional, numa dupla perspetiva – funcional e social – essencial, quer ao funcionamento das Forças Armadas (FFAA) e à satisfação dos compromissos nacionais e internacionais do Estado no âmbito da defesa, quer à posterior reinserção socioprofissional dos cidadãos que ingressam temporariamente nas fileiras.

O estudo apoia-se numa estratégia de investigação qualitativa (Bryman, 2012), concretizada a partir de uma pesquisa documental e num inquérito por entrevista, semiestruturada, cujos dados são objeto de análise de conteúdo (categorial) apoiada em Bardin (2000).

Os principais problemas diagnosticados centram-se na reduzida capacidade que as FFAA, por si só, têm para cativar e reter cidadãos em regime de voluntariado/regime de contrato (RV/RC), bem como no reduzido valor socioprofissional que constitui a sua passagem pelas fileiras. Os resultados, importantes para as FFAA, para o Estado português e para a Sociedade em geral, apontam para soluções partilhadas, porventura menos tradicionais, sendo determinante na sua implementação o papel do Poder Político.

Palavras-chave: obtenção e retenção; formação e desenvolvimento profissional; regimes de voluntariado/contrato (RV/RC); perspetiva funcional; perspetiva social; cidadania.

1. Introduction

The object of study of this investigation focuses on the bench marks for training and professional development of the non-permanent military personnel of the Portuguese A.F., in a double perspective: functional; social and citizenship. The first perspective has to do with the necessity of obtaining and retaining personnel in the ranks and their professional training, to guarantee both a good individual performance and a good group performance and the functioning of the Military Institution, namely in fulfilling the national and international duties of the State in terms of defense. The second perspective refers to the importance and the advantages that passing through the ranks of the A.F. can bring with regard to the exercise of citizenship and the socio-professional reintegration of ex-military citizens, resulting from the acquisition of competences and expertise relevant for the labor market.

The research seeks to answer, among others, the following questions: In what way has the military workforce in VS/CS in the services of the Portuguese A.F. evolved since 2004 and what implications arise from that evolution? What is the value to the A.F. of the current training benchmarks defined for the forms of provision of service in VS/CS, from a technical-professional performance perspective? What are the advantages, for citizens, of their passage through the Military Institution? What have been the recent initiatives by the National Defense Ministry (NDM) and the services of the A.F., and what changes should still be introduced to overcome the diagnosed problems and shortcomings and to prevent their future occurrence?

The selection of these questions resulted, during the exploratory period of investigation, from a brief revision and critical analysis of the current situation regarding the object of study, a few specific problems having been identified, regarding both the acquisition and retention of personnel by the A.F., and military personnel leaving the ranks and their socio-professional reintegration into society and the labor market.

The following general goal was defined for this study, consistent with the enumerated research questions: to diagnose and formulate, in an integrated and systematic manner, a set of solutions regarding the capacity of the A.F. to capture and retain personnel for the provision of volunteers and contracted military services, as well as to potentiate the respective training benchmarks, from both an internal functional perspective and a social and citizenship perspective, supporting the socio-professional reintegration of former militaries into the labor market.

Although there are some differences between the realities of the three categories (Officers, Sergeants, Enlisted), this study treats the situation of the VS/CS as a whole, occasionally focusing the approach on one category or another, according to the relevance of the diagnosed problem and/or the urgency of the recommended solutions.

The study is based on a mainly qualitative research strategy implemented through a documentary search and an interview survey (Bryman, 2012). The documentary analysis included the legal framework for the provision of services in VS/CS and various studies, reports and other official documents collected at the NDM and the services of the A.F. The semi-structured interviews (16) have been applied to military personnel and civilians of the

NDM and services with relevant experience and knowledge on the subject. The data collected from the interviews was the object of a content analysis (categorical analysis), as suggested by Bardin (2000).

For space management reasons, in this article assumes two broad approaches as its general, implicit and revised framework: (1) conceptions, macro-tendencies and challenges of the labor market and of the external training context, both national and international; and (2) the structure and operation of the military organization (e.g. codes of conduct, best practices and all other requirements of the military function; mission topologies).

Readers may wish to structure their reflection in three stages: in a first stage, a general evaluation of the evolution of authorized and existent personnel in the Portuguese A.F. under VS/CS forms of service provision is performed, at which point the recruitment process and selection of citizens for the provision of this kind of service is briefly analyzed and the retention capacity of the Military Institution is discussed; in a second instance, the internal functional perspective of training and development of the non-permanent military personnel (VS/CS) is discussed, regarding their capacity for performing duties in that service; in a third and final stage, the social and citizenship perspective of the military training provided is addressed, namely regarding the issue of the socio-professional reintegration of ex-military VS/CS personnel, after leaving the ranks.

As the kind of problems now under analysis can condition the regulated operation of the A.F. and the national and international commitments assumed by the country in the context of defense, this research seeks to emphasize the urgency in searching for solutions and opting for interdisciplinary, holistic and shared answers, which should be assumed not only by the Military Institution but also by the Political Power and by Society itself.

For the above reasons, the importance of this research is supported by its currency and relevance for military personnel, the A.F., Society and the Portuguese State.

2. Evaluation of the Evolution of Authorized Personnel in the portuguese Armed Forces Under Vs/Cs Service Provision

In this section, we will approach the problematic of quantity and quality of personnel, regarding strategic issues related to the functional perspective of this study. The transition of the conscription model to an exclusively professional one, ten years after its validity, will be analyzed, so that, afterwards, the recruitment process and the selection of citizens for VS/CS of the Portuguese A.F. can be briefly described. Finally, we will discuss the evolution in personnel since 2004 and analyze the difficulty of the services in retaining military personnel in CS.

The permanent function of the A.F., the fulfillment of various missions that they are assigned and also the manner in which they are structured stipulates the presence of high numbers of military personnel in the lower echelons, normally with a non-permanent link, whose recruitment process and selection obey, simultaneously, a pre-established framework

of requirements and a rigorous comparative exercise between the candidate profiles and a psychophysical standard profile, previously defined and generally accepted as adequate.

With the end of the conscription system in Portugal¹ and the adoption of an exclusively professional model, a decision of political and ideological nature that we will not discuss here, all the military personnel of the Portuguese A.F. became voluntary, which, from a political, social and functional perspective, allowed an increase of legitimacy and technical capacity of military organization, regardless of the context of actuation. It was precisely from these demands of the new context and the requirements of the new military competence profile that the “(...) new Military Service Law (MSL) and the new incentives for voluntary admission of service provision, providing A.F. with better human resources, more availability and more acceptability from our society” was prepared. (Gama, 1999, p. 11).

These changes were substantiated in the 90’s of the 20th century, where the legal-functional framework that framed the role of the Portuguese A.F. underwent several alterations, culminating with the creation of the current model of military service provision in 1999, based exclusively on volunteering in times of peace. Figure 1 summarizes the evolution of the legal framework regarding the normal recruitment (CS), providing a global perspective on the introduced alterations.

The alteration from conscription to professionalization brought consequences, that were not always positive², in the military and social context, wherein it constituted one of the biggest transformations of the last years for the Portuguese A.F., namely because it led to a new paradigm of the relationship with the labor market, a concept that until then had practically no objective³ value.

This new form of relationship started to demand an effective capacity of projecting the military image and of divulging the institutional “labor” offer, at the same time, the adoption of renewed practices of human resources management (HRM), namely regarding the selection and education and training of the “new” military personnel.

¹ Compulsory military service – CMS (or normal effective service – NES) in Portugal ended on November 19th, 2004.

² Although out of the aim of this study, the military professionalization, occasionally, led to less positive aspects, such as, a more distant relationship between citizens and the State with lesser implications regarding issues of defense.

³ The legal framework then in force imposed the passing of citizens through the ranks, constituting the Nation as a “labor market”. The Military Institution limited itself to directly receiving the young men at the entrance of the barracks for the provision of military service.

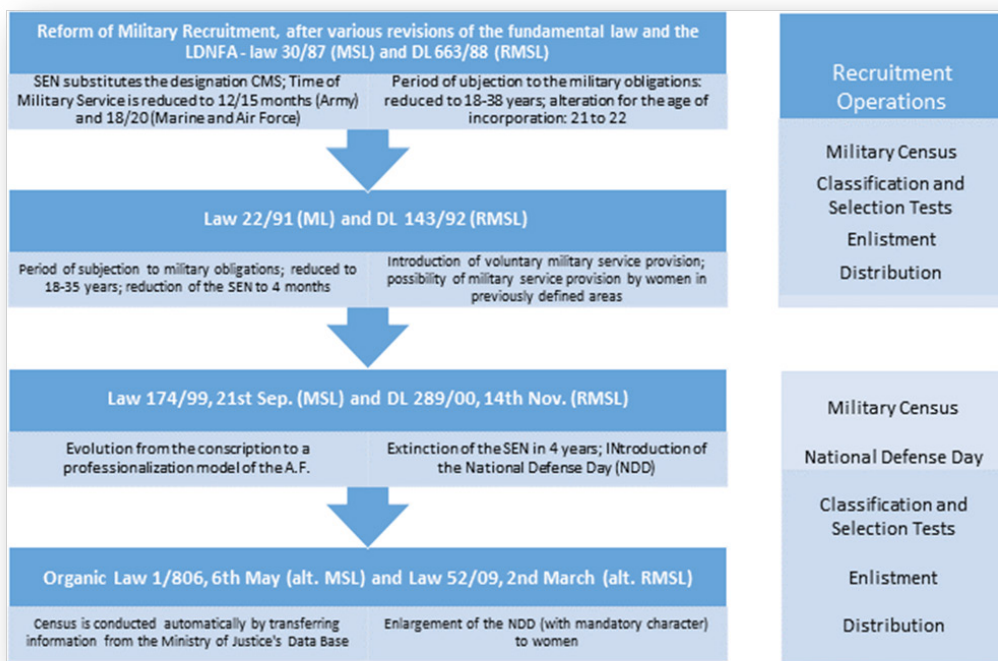


Fig. 1: Evolution of the legal-functional model of normal military recruitment

Source: Based on the analysis of the evolution of the legal framework.

Nowadays, in line with what has happened with the majority of the western European countries, it is understood that, aside from the high costs of the “professionalization” model (Vaz, 2002), the transition to a new paradigm has given rise to another question, one of maintenance capacity of the levels of adequate personnel to deal with the multiplicity of missions, whose perception has been revealed progressively. Contrary to what was admitted for some time, it has not always been possible to fill all the vacancies opening annually for the VS/CS, although the incidences vary between services and categories.

Due to the national and international situation in the financial and economical sectors and a substantial increase of the unemployment rate⁴, an increase in applications has been witnessed for some time, although the data obtained by the services of the A.F. and the NDM reveal that the quality of the profile demanded by the ranks has suffered a progressive degradation, namely between 2007 and 2012, which leads, in itself, to lower averages in the number of applications accepted. The referred data, in terms of applications, vary between services, with the most visible increase in the Army services, especially since 2008, in the

⁴ In September 2014, 77474 unemployed young people were recorded.

opinion of the Direção Geral de Pessoal e Recrutamento Militar (Directorate-General of Personnel and Military Recruitment)⁵ (DGPRM, 2010).

From a more detailed evaluation of each service and functional area, it can be seen that there are still, with regard to the various categories (officers, sergeants and enlisted), relevant roles to fill (Table I).

Table I Functional areas in need of personnel in VS/CS

Categories	Functional areas/ classes / most deprived specialties / criticisms		
	NAVY	ARMY	AIR FORCE
Officers	TSE (Engineers; technical areas)	Computer Engineers; Graduates in Law; Translators; Graduates in Physical Education and Sports; Graduates in Marketing and Advertising	There are no significant difficulties in CS Officials
Sergeants	Technical Areas (e.g. Informatics)	Special Forces; Nurses; Transmissions; various Campaign specialties	Currently does not recruit Sergeants for CS
Enlisted	Fusiliers; Divers	Areas of Auto Mechanics; Drivers of Light Vehicles; Specialties related to construction and restoration; Operators of Heavy Engineering Equipment	Operational areas and/or that are subject to a big geographical mobility

Source: Compilation of data collected by the Services of the A.F. (data of 2013).

Regardless of the seemingly positive evolution that has been witnessed during some years regarding the number of candidates, some aspects that indicate otherwise still persist (e.g. progressive reduction of the demographic base of recruitment; progressive distancing of citizens from the issues of national defense), demonstrating that some structural difficulties and dysfunctions still exist, thus admitting that the increase in applications is based on the economic and financial crisis.

⁵ This body was recently merged with other bodies of the NDM, giving rise to the Direção Geral de Recursos da Defesa Nacional (Directorate-General of National Defense Resources) (DGRDN).

A relevant percentage of the 16 interviewed entities (7 – 45%) consider that the reduction of the demographic base is a limitation that, as it is a structural problem, could “...advise a reflection outside the usual mental frameworks”, in order to prevent future constraints that may inhibit the A.F. and the State itself to “...comply with the most basic missions and commitments regarding national and international defense and safety.” To cope with the unfavorable demographic tendency, other countries are pointed out as examples, such as Spain, that started to resort to resident native citizens of South America”.

For the efficient fulfillment of its new canvassing role, it is fundamental that the A.F. know how to characterize the labor market (LM) and predict its evolution, to delineate the best strategies for capture of human resources. For purposes of analysis, the LM is divided into sectors and levels, and the age groups whose analysis is of more interest to us are between 18/19 and 27/28 years of age, corresponding to the recruitable universe of the A.F. It is acknowledged that the natural national LM has a successively reduced dimension, that is, the behavior of the country’s demographic base⁶ (Figure 2).

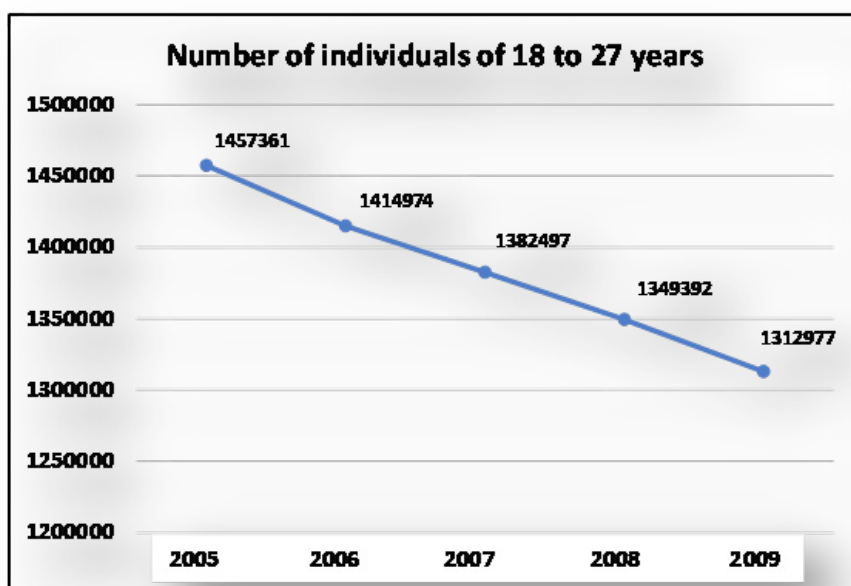


Fig. 2 Variation of the demographic recruitment base

Source: Coelho (2011).

Another point of reflection and increasing concern lies in the fact that the various studies conducted by the NDM and the services of the A.F., from 2010, seem to demonstrate

⁶ In 2011, the national population reached up to 10.555.853 people, only 200.000 more than in 2001 (Census 2011). The current natural growth rate (deducting the migration growing rate) is close to zero.

that schooling has increased as interest in the A.F. has dropped (Figure 3), with a reflection on the levels of recruitment of citizens for ingress in the non-permanent military staff (Coelho, 2011).

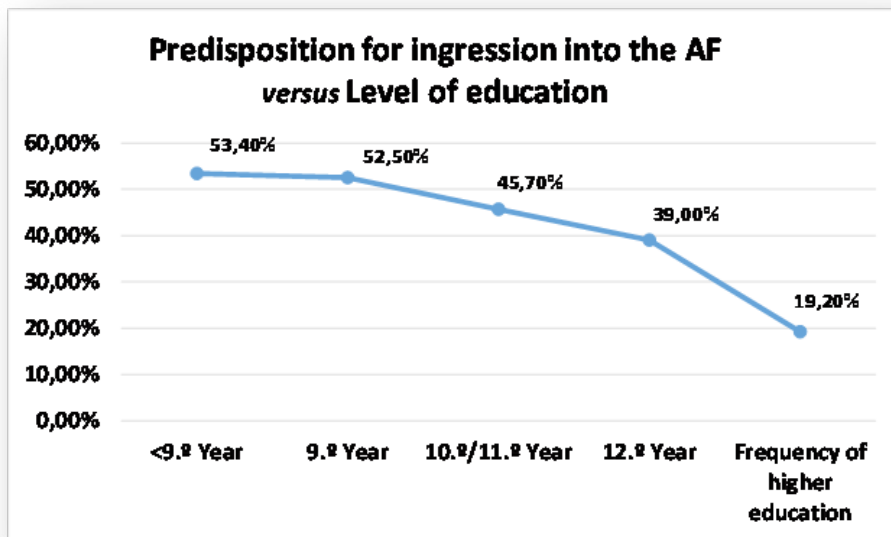


Fig. 3 Predisposition for ingress into the A.F.

Source: Coelho (2011).

Regarding the question of attractiveness, Clotfelter and Peters (1976 cit. by Sousa, 1990, p. 47) state that “... the most important factor that governs the decision of entering and staying in military service is the opinion of the public on that same service.” Furthermore, as Cardoso de Sousa reflects, the concept of vocation or calling is like “...the act of serving or fulfilling a mission on behalf of a cause” (Sousa, 1990, p. 47), although it is recognized that the motives can be a great deal more “instrumental” (e.g. money, improved social status, acquiring different experiences). Some studies have demonstrated that, regarding the role of “employer” performed by the A.F., the current evaluation that the population has of the A.F. is a positive one, and that what is most valued are the “professional opportunities” and the “prestige” of the military profession, with less positive assessments regarding material aspects such as salary and resources available to military personnel (Carreiras, 2009,p.51).

The empiric revision conducted allowed us to understand that the military career at the A.F., as a professional opportunity, gives “prestige”, is a “safe job”, is relatively “well paid”

and, apparently, “quite attractive”, where military personnel have, generally, more benefits than public employees” (DGPRM, 2007; Resende et al., 2008; Carreiras, 2009).

Additionally, there are good “opportunities to acquire a professional education” useful for the LM (Resende et al., 2008; Carreiras, 2009). Employment in the A.F. is “more demanding than a civilian job” (Carreiras, 2009), although, under a technical perspective, there is the notion that it “does not require much knowledge”, or much “professional experience” (Resende et al., 2008).

However, when it comes to recommending ingress in the A.F. to a friend or family member, only 38.9% of the inquired would do so without question, but the remaining 61.1% would not recommend it or would only do so if there were no other alternative (Carreiras, 2009). These apparently contradictory data demonstrate the need for more research and mean that there is still a long way to go for the A.F. regarding greater proximity to society, and young people in particular, and of the dissemination of job offers, which constitute the provision of service in CS of the Portuguese A.F.

Regarding the enhancement of professionalization of the military service and the “2020 Defense Reform” (MDN, 2013), a new model for the “National Defense Day” (NDD) was defined, an event that, after a short suspension, is now reactivated with new measures for its concretion. In 2014, this event was intended for more than 130 thousand citizens (all born in 1995), with 64 thousand women and 68 thousand men⁷ (Coelho, 2014). Still with regard to the NDD, the DGPRM points out some measures that it considers to be “structuring”, that will have continuity in 2015. The following measures stand out: enlargement of the network of locations where the NDD is carried out (growing from 11 places in 2009, to 26 in 2014 and 28 in 2015); rationalization of the transport system; investment in technological modernization; expansion to “specific publics”. The evaluation that the DGPRM has of the execution of the NDD is frankly positive, namely regarding the promotion of the A.F., the awareness for issues of National Defense or the knowledge of the profile of the Portuguese youth (Coelho, 2014).

Despite this positive perspective regarding the NDD, it has not been easy to invert the less positive tendency in the “social representations” of employment in A.F.. Therefore, and given the structural limitations of the demographic base, some of the interviewees considered that other alternatives to guarantee the continuity of recruitment should be structured.

The long term contract system and the special contract system (LTCS/SCS), provided by law but that have never been regulated, have been discussed as a hypothesis for the fixation of military personnel in specific operational areas which are more critical and/or that require a longer period in the ranks to obtain an adequate return of investment of the education/training of contracted military. This system, under Law n. 174/99 of 21st September (LSM, 1999), should only take place in an “...operational situation in which the level of education and training, the kind of academic rehabilitation and technical demands make it desirable to guarantee a prolonged provision of services” (AR, 1999, p. 6544). It is in this sense that Decree-Law

⁷ Of which 107 thousand are residents of the mainland, 7 thousand are from the autonomous regions and 18 thousand live abroad.

n.130/2010 of 14th December "... institutes the system of special contracts for the provision of military services, applicable to the category of officers, in the operational areas of medicine, aircraft piloting and religious assistance", with a duration between 8 and 18 years (MDN, 2010, art. 2, n. 1), and these officers in SCSS can ascend to the post of 1st lieutenant/captain (MDN, 2010, art. 11): The special admission conditions are registered in Ordinance n. 245/2014 of 25th of November (MDN, 2014, p. 5968).

The inquired consider, however, that the three functional areas that are object to regulation of the SCS are manifestly insufficient to overcome the necessities of the A.F. and that there are many others that should be taken into account, although here the perspectives vary enormously between the three services of the A.F.

Another aspect regarding the personnel in CS, indirectly connected to the topic of this study, has to do with the need to reinforce the "pyramid base" in the categories of officer and sergeant in a perspective of a military integration of permanent personnel (PP) and non-permanent personnel (CS). Assuming a deterioration of those bases regarding inflow in PP (because of the substantial reduction of entrances in military schools), it would be expectable that the A.F. could resort to reinforcement of citizens admissions for the CS, considering at the outset that some of the positions and functions traditionally assigned to the PP could transit to the military personnel of CS. As the authorized personnel of VS/CS have been progressively reduced, more precisely since 2010, this deficit, conversely, was supposed to be remedied with resource to the military of PP, which has not happened. As some interviewees acknowledge, the first solution would be desirable one: the decrease of inflow of the Naval Academy and the Academies would enable the streamlining and management of the careers of officers and sergeant of the PP from services of the A.F., although the differential would have to be compensated later with a bigger inflow of citizens in the CS, which has the advantage of a smaller timeframe of initial training.

Returning to the structural limitation of the national demographic base and having assumed, even if temporarily, the low attractiveness of the citizens in relation to employment in the A.F. (DGPRM, 2011b), one of its last studies raises another hypothesis, that of recruiting immigrants native to African Countries with Portuguese as Official Language (PALOP) or of other origins, like the Spanish option for recruiting from South America and Equatorial Guinea. Although the services do not perceive this hypothesis as viable in the next years, it should be looked at as one more possibility.

According to sources of the DGPRM (Lopes, 2012) the current rate of recruitable foreigners is between 20000 and 40000 men and women. Figure 4 shows the representation of the main foreign communities in Portugal.

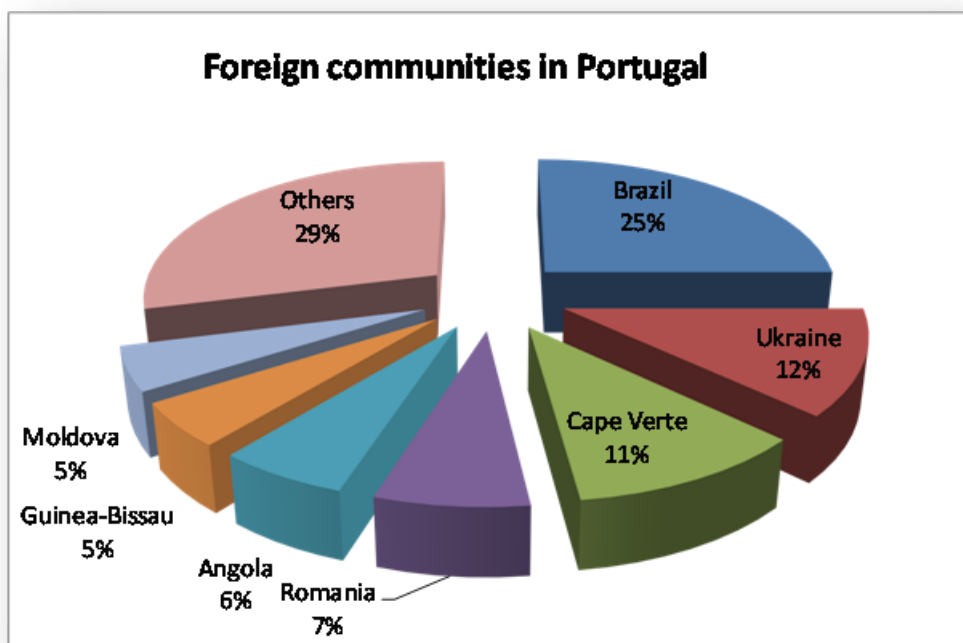


Fig. 4: Representation of the main Foreign Communities residing in Portugal

Source: adapted from DDPRM (2011, p. 12)

In contrast, the option of returning to Normal Effective Service (NES) in times of peace seems viable from the political point of view and would be, in the words of Cardoso (2012), the “recognition of the bankruptcy of the current model of military service provision”.

Returning to the issue of the decreasing quality of candidates for service provision in the A.F., it also has as indicators and consequences, in a primary stage, a considerable increase of rates of attrition throughout the process of recruitment and selection, in addition to an increase in costs. In a second stage, the lack of quality leads to a reduction in the capacity of personnel retention by the services and this aspect starts to have immediate impact following the formulation of applications by citizens, before undergoing classification and selection tests (CST). Table II shows that the attrition rate (the value of the losses of personnel) in the various phases of the selection process before the admission in the services of the A.F., and the losses during the period of initial training are also given.

TABLE II Average attrition rate during the process of election and during the initial training until admission in the ranks

	Marine	Army	Air Force
Unit CS7	12%	23%	28%
CS7	52,9%	54,2%	64,0%
Between the CS7 and the Incorporation	10%	10%	10%
Initial Training	25%	20%	12,5%

Source: Based on the services of the Armed Forces (2014)

After admission into the ranks, the retention issue has equally different incidence in the three services of the A.F., with the Air Force is as the less affected branch and the Army, where more problems are verified, especially in the soldier category. To increase the levels of retention, the services relied, for some time, on the Regulamento de Incentivos (Incentive Scheme) (IS) in force (2000b) and/or sought to resort to an increase in turnover, in accordance with the specific necessities (anticipated and unexpected departures in every year), which also vary in every service. As these two mechanisms either lost their efficacy (in the case of IS⁸) or stopped being applicable due to recent budget constraints, the A.F. saw their intervention capacity substantially reduced regarding the definition of recruitment necessities, an aspect which will be discussed hereinafter.

On the strategic issues relating to the functional perspective and the problematic quantity and quality of the personnel, it is necessary to note that, since 2004, the A.F. have been witnessing a systematic reduction of personnel in VS/CS determined by the Authority(authorized personnel⁹). This reduction tendency was accentuated by the Programa para a Reestruturação da Administração Central do Estado (Program for Restructuring the Central Administration of the State)–PRACE (PCM, 2006) and posteriorly with the Plano de Redução e Melhoria da Administração Central (Plan for the Reduction and Improvement of the Central Administration) – PREMAC (MF, 2011b).

Between 2004 and 2011, the authorized personnel of the Portuguese A.F. in VS/CS were reduced in about 25%. Since 2011, these numbers have continuously decreased until today. In Table III we will summarize the evolution of authorized personnel in VS/CS in the services between 2004 and 2011.

⁸ Some interviewees (6-38%) consider that the current regime of incentives approved following the Law of Military Service (AR, 1999) and of its Regulation (2000a), is practically bankrupt and, therefore, it is even counter-productive to evoke this mechanism regarding the capture of personnel for the A.F.

⁹ This concept is related to the structure of human resources of the A.F., approved for each year, per service, for the provision of service in VS/CS regarding the various categories.

**Table III Evolution of maximum authorized personnel in
VS/CS between 2004 and 2011**

	Navy			Army			Air Force			Sum/Services		
	2004	2009		2004	2009		2004	2009		2004	2009	
<i>Officers</i>	185	241	30,3%	850	750	-11,8%	570	570	0,0%	1605	1561	-2,7%
<i>Sergeants</i>	44	44	0,0%	1820	1500	-17,6%	40	40	0,0%	1904	1584	-16,8%
<i>Enlisted</i>	2715	2565	-5,5%	14312	13600	-5,0%	3100	3000	-3,2%	20127	19165	-4,8%
<i>Total</i>	2944	2850	-3,2%	16982	15850	-6,7%	3710	3610	-2,7%	23636	22310	-5,6%

	Navy			Army			Air Force			Sum/Services		
	2004	2011		2004	2011		2004	2011		2004	2011	
<i>Totals</i>	2944	2098	-28,7%	16982	12939	-23,8%	3710	2673	-28,0%	23636	17710	-25,1%
	-846			-4043			-1037			-5926		

Source: MDN (2004, 2009 and 2011).

In the framework of the compromise celebrated between the Portuguese State and the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, the “Fiscal Strategy Document 2011-2015” adds to the reductions of Table 3 a 10% decrease in personnel until the end of 2014 (MF, 2011a, p. 45), corresponding to a loss of about 7.7000 military in VS/CS (33%), and a predicted reduction of 1056 (36%) in the Navy, 5337 (31%) in the Army and 1305 (35%) in the Air Force.

The “accommodation of expenditure containment purposes to the specificities of the A.F.” (Coelho, 2011, p. 11) constitutes a true challenge for the A.F. in the area of human resources in the framework of the compromise celebrated between the Portuguese State and the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union, in addition to this reduction by 2014. This tendency is reiterated at the Ministerial Directive for structural reform in National Defense and the A.F.–Reform “Defense 2020”, leading to a reduction of 2.000 personnel in 2014 and 2015, and aims to achieve a personnel of 30.000 to 32.000 military in 2020 (MDN,2013).

With such a pronounced reduction, in such a short time, the comparison exercise between authorized and existing personnel seems to be reduced in its importance, and therefore the comparison should be made between the real necessities of the services and the existing personnel. Given the difficulty in obtaining the figures for all the requirements, we opted for the “authorized personnel” reference (Figure 5).

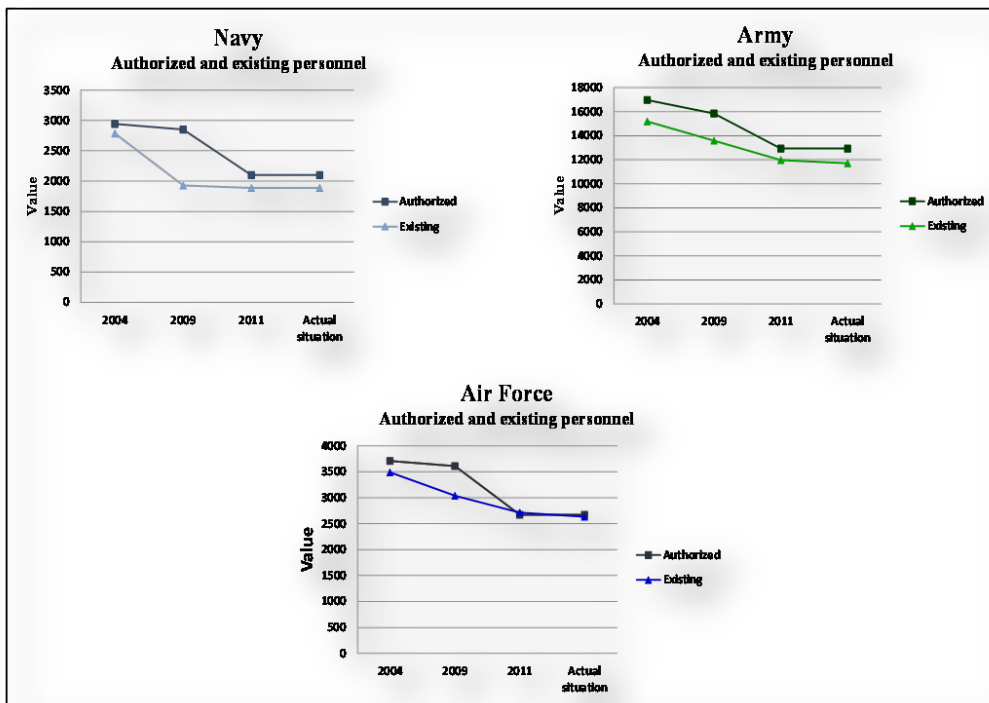


Fig. 5 Evolution of the differential between authorized and existing personnel

Source: MDN (2004, 2009 and 2011). Services of the A.F. (Referred existences in March 2012).

The graphic of Table 6 shows that the evolution of female personnel in VS/CS, since 2004, follows the same general tendency.

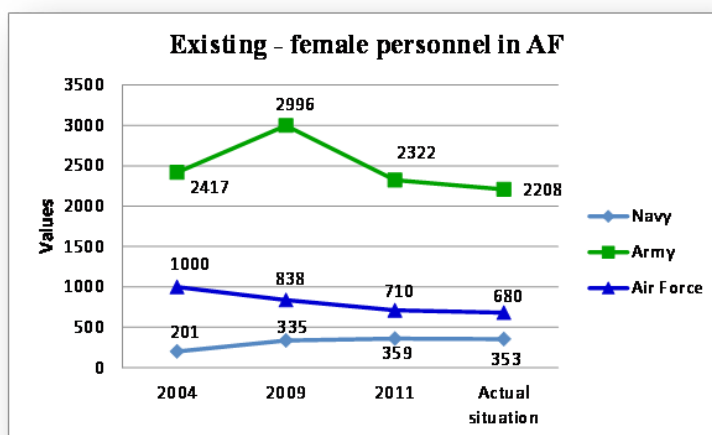


Fig. 6 Evolution of female personnel in CS/VS

Source: Based on information obtained by the services of the A.F. (2013).

The drastic decrease of authorized personnel has, as is shown in figure 5, enabled a reduction in differential in relation to applications, hiding, simultaneously, a reality that is more and more worrying: the reduction of recruitment levels, whether it arises from the weakening of the national demographic base, or they originate in the loss of function of military attractiveness in the context of the labor market. On the other hand, the new “necessities” (that are being reconstructed with a constant reduction of authorized personnel) seem to have the virtue of dislocating, artificially, the politic debate on resource shortage (internal functional perspective) for the budget contention and rationalization of personnel in forms of service provision in VS/CS (external discourse), relegating the structural problems into the background.

3. Functional Perspective on the Education and Training Of Military of the Non Permanent Personnel of the Portuguese Armed Forces

Let us analyze the education/training system outlined for performance in the services of the A.F., dwelling upon some of its key aspects.

The end of the conscription regime and the adoption of an exclusively professional model (or semi-professional, as some analysts call it) has led to new education benchmarks, or rather, to the adaptation to those benchmarks, justified by the same assumptions that led to the new model of military service provision (e.g. new and more diffuse threats, sophistication of equipment and materials in technical terms, new mission typologies). Nowadays, despite the continued need well defined skill profiles for the performance of specific duties, it is important that training is not confined to feeding those specificities. The variety in contexts of military operation and the volatility of situations in which they might be involved in, increasingly demand transversal competences that enable functional versatility (multi-skilled soldier) and a great situational conscience.

The systemic model, advocated by NATO to address the issues of education and training of military personnel in preparing for the fulfillment of the different missions and duties, remains current and, as such, may form the basis for the analysis of the training model in force in the services of the A.F. for contracted military passing through the ranks. From this model of American development (USA), we will highlight some aspects of the “Future Soldier” program, the so-called multi-skilled soldier:

- The soldiers of the future must have capacities of adaptation, versatility and mental flexibility, and problem-solving abilities, necessary qualities inherent to the concept of “adaptive leader”;
- The training programs should focus on the development of capacities or attributes of adaptation, self-learning and problem resolution;
- Training should not be limited to mere preparation to carry out the tasks required for specific duties within predefined settings, but ensure training to transfer

competences (internal resources such as knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes) for different contexts and situations;

- The competency based approach presupposes the ability to do things, whatever they may be, through the mobilization of those existing internal resources;
- The most relevant aspect of the future “versatile soldier” is centered on the capacity of carrying out missions in an autonomous way, an aspect that will facilitate a faster psychological transition from one kind of mission to another, potentiating the emergency of more flexible, agile and adaptive units and forces. (Nelsen II and Akman, 2002).

More specifically, the training and professional development of citizens passing through the ranks of the Portuguese A.F. in the form of volunteer and contracted service provision follows, essentially, the matrix adopted for the PP in the technical-military dimensions (reasons for training) and behavioral (orientation for the mission). However, professional development is considered a much more limited perspective, contained solely between the “base” posts of each category and relative to a period of provision of effective military service that will last a maximum of seven years: one in VS and six in RC (EMFAR, 1999; MDN, 2000a). Accordingly, from the point of view of military organization and in relation to the specific performance of duties in the military context, the education and training provided aim to satisfy the specific functional needs dependent on the positions enrolled at the base of the officer, sergeant and soldier careers, and from those likely to be played by the military in VS/CS.

As a rule, to the general technical and military training and socialization in terms of the military context, there follows a specific training period (specialization) more or less extended according to operational area, the category of the future military officer and the service of the A.F.. Frequently, the military organization recruits trained technicians, to whom it provides, afterwards, technical-military training. More recently, some services defined, for the ranks of officer and sergeant, a leadership module (the case of the Army), which is provided during this initial technical-military training. It is expected that the education and training, formal and informal, in the duties/positions (on-the-job training) helps to conclude the “rest” of the formative path, offering the experience and the necessary automatism to complete the training of new professionals.

When we think of training conception and planning, the competence profiles (e.g., position profiles) should be the primary reference from which the education/training bench marks for the future military personnel in VS/CS should be constructed. What occurs is that, as some interviewees point out, those profiles are also often formally non-existent, very incipient or rather incomplete, despite the efforts in recent years by the services of the A.F.. Technically, if what should be done and under what circumstances is not known with precision how can a suitable education/training for the empowerment of citizens to exercise these duties be planned?

In another perspective, an important part of the education provided in a military context is not aligned with the necessities of the market (nor does it have to be, necessarily, at least in a first analysis) and, therefore, it is a non-certified and not externally recognized training. Around 56% (nine) of the interviewees consider that the updating of the benchmarks of the various courses provided to VS/CS should take into account the alignment with the labor market (benefiting from comparability and the transfer of competences between work contexts), still answering, however, to the specific operational needs of each service of the A.F.

There are still many unanswered questions regarding these two aspects and their desirable compatibility, and continuing to keep these questions on the agenda is of importance. Does the current training model fully serve the interests and necessities of the A.F.? What is the real incentive that currently constitutes the training provided by the A.F. in terms of recruitment and personnel retention? And what are the advantages of this training (and professional experience in the ranks) when the citizen returns to the labor market? To what extent should the A.F. adhere to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the National Qualifications Catalogue (NQC)? Some of these new questions will be discussed in the following section.

4. The Social and Citizenship Perspective on the Training Provided in a Military Context

The compulsory military service, within the cultural conditions of its time, rendered incalculable services to the Nation's level of literacy, civic and cultural training, and the professional, and even social promotion of many generations of young men. (Azevedo, 1997, p. 94-95).

We will now address the social and civic issues related to human growth and the problem of socio-professional reintegration of ex-military personnel of VS/CS after leaving the ranks.

When moving from the military training models for permanent personnel to non-permanent personnel—voluntary and contractual systems—with a short passage through the ranks, although, as we have seen, the same general orientation is maintained in what concerns the technical-military aspect (reasons for training) and the behavioral aspect, there also arises a special concern with issues of socio-professional reintegration regarding the moment where citizens leave the ranks and return to the labor market.

For the vast majority of citizens who pass through the ranks and enroll in the voluntary and contractual schemes, the expectations of a career in the A.F. (e.g. from PP) are greatly reduced, and are replaced by a striking social and citizenship orientation dedicated to the socio-professional reintegration upon their return to society and the labor market. In this respect, apart from the operational perspective that serves and feeds the specific needs of performing activities and tasks in a military context, there is, and has existed, albeit with some limitations in recent years, a concern of the military organization in educating citizens

for the “social thing” in general and for the acquisition of transversal and specific skills to facilitate the return to the external labor market, helping to raise the level of employability of each citizen passing through the ranks. We will now address both aspects.

4.1. Training for citizenship and life

In addition to the social responsibility of security and defense of the population and its assets, the A.F. have an educational and formative role, complementary to the action of the State (Martins, 1982). We recall the importance of “Regimental Schools” (Narciso, 1999, p. 91) and emphasize the social role of the A.F. among the population throughout the recent Portuguese history, contributing to a certain social “maturity” and “growth” in young people, who at one time worked as a “ritual of entry into adulthood” and more recently a “socio-economic emancipation” (Santos, 1985).

Currently, in a different situation, with distinct goals and in a time where the A.F. and Society experienced some distance, it is important to understand what the role of the military organization is for the citizens passing through the ranks, in the new formative national context, arising from the evolution of the educational system. The incentive scheme for military service in VS/CS, seeking to meet the need to raise personnel, has been a shy replacement of the link between the A.F. and the “specific daily-routine” of Society in the context of training, greatly hampered by its low level of execution. At the same time, within the current financial constraints, the document analysis revealed that the services of the A.F. have done a very commendable job to step up levels of certification and external recognition of the training provided, with the Centro de Novas Oportunidades (Center for New Opportunities) (CNO) serving, for some time, as an important mediator in relation to the less qualified contracted military personnel.

Of this research results another perspective on the part of the military institution and under the conceptual point of view and image projection, which will be important to strengthen the value of the A.F.: as a school of leadership and civic and military virtues; as a reference on a national basis regarding behavioral training (value codes and valued practices by Society); as a place of awareness for the exercise of citizenship (concepts of camaraderie, sharing, support, mutual respect, preservation of the environment). This goal should, however, according to interviewees, be shared with the political power, which is responsible, ultimately, for the exact definition of the locus that the A.F. should take on this project and the scope and depth of their involvement. In the 2014 edition of the NDD, besides the information regarding the military components of defense, attached to the A.F. Lservices, non-military components were introduced to the program (e.g. National Republican Guard, National Civil Protection Authority, Committee for Citizenship and Equality of the Sexes; Intervention Service for Addictive Behaviors and Dependences) (Coelho, 2014).

With the opening of physical and, above all, of the informational borders, the mental frameworks that inform the concept of citizenship tend to change and slacken, adding to the national dimension, the European dimension or others. An identical evolution can be

assumed regarding the original concept of sovereignty, admitting, currently, some sharing of sovereignty in exchange for other income, security-related, economic, financial or otherwise. It is in this context that, as mentioned by some interviewees, in the last years “... the A.F. have been recruiting and employing thousands of citizens, giving them back to Society with more aptitude for the exercise of citizenship” but also for their “...socio-professional integration/reintegration into Society and the labor market”. This last perspective is developed with some depth in the next topic.

4.2. Support to the socio-professional reintegration of ex-military citizens

To a greater or lesser degree, depending on various psychological and sociological conditions, the majority of young men that one day joined the Army come out of it civically more valued. (...) there are few who, going through a period of re-adaptation in a civilian environment, do not acknowledge this. (Lucena, 1983, p. 165).

Although the citation above refers to a different temporal context, when the military conscription system was still in force in Portugal, the fact remains that, despite some constraints and dysfunctions at the level of implementation of the regulatory provisions in force (e.g. IS), essentially, the central idea remains current in what concerns the preoccupation and conviction of the valorization of citizens passing through the ranks of the Portuguese A.F.. This also is the perception of the majority of interviewees (10 – 63%), who consider that the A.F. is “a school for life.”

With a new Military Service Law (AR, 1999), an “incentive policy” was defined, based on an Incentive Regulation, with successive amendments (MDN, 2000b) that, besides encouraging the admission to the A.F. in the forms of provision of military service in CS and VS, was intended to help prepare, subject to adherence to certain conditions, the socio-professional reintegration into society and the labor market outside the military context, which should tend to happen for the higher qualifications and experience in specific professional areas. The predicted dimensions in the initial version of the IS for the “support” of citizens are shown in the diagram of Figure 7.

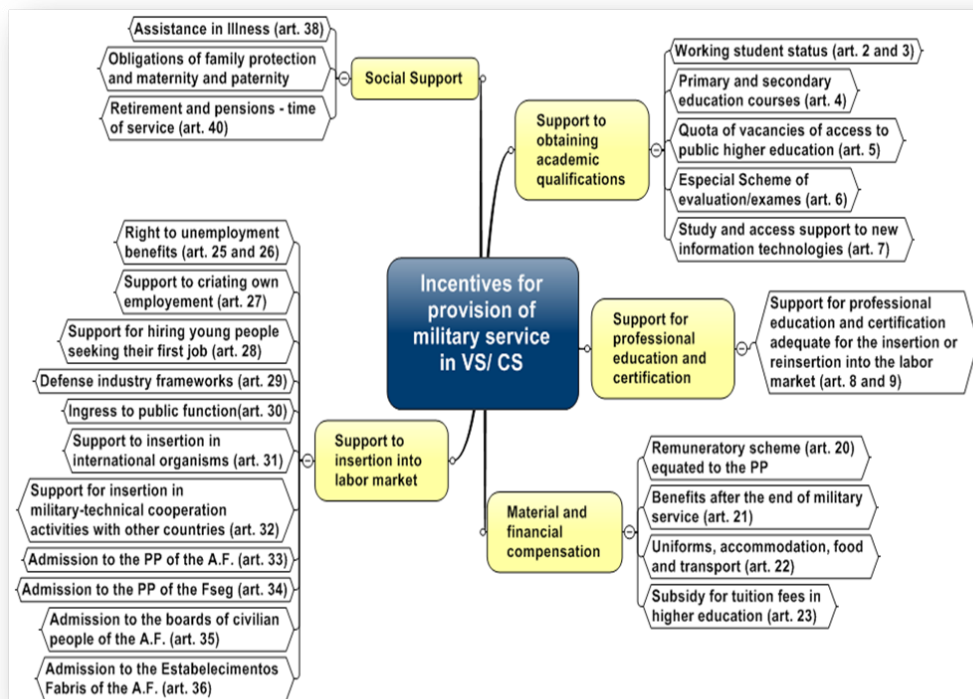


Fig. 7 Dimensions entered in IS for compulsory military service in VS / CS

Sources: MDN (2000b); Portuguese Army (2012).

The State, through the services of the A.F., according to IS, has made the commitment, before the citizens enrolled military service or to whom it had provided this service, to provide civic, technical and physical valorization, with impact on their employability and support for reintegration into the LM (2000b). However, due to the financial availability of the Portuguese State, the model of incentives, still formally in force, is now almost inoperative and practically exhausted. Thus, the investment has been channeled mainly for vocational training and respective external certification, increasingly required by candidates, although, as reviewed above, it is clear that there is still a long way to go in this area.

To remedy the problems identified and to consolidate the current model of provision of military service, during the last years, the then DGPRM and services of the A.F. have adopted some strategies and developed specific initiatives on disclosure, recruitment, retention, enhancement of training/skills and employability in general. Examples:

- The implementation of the NDD and the respective Promotion Centers (PCNDD), an exercise that, after being canceled for some time, was recently reactivated and

whose goal is to “...sensitize young people to the theme of National Defense and disseminate the role of A.F.in ...[contributing] to the civic education of Portuguese citizens and ... [enabling] a connection between civil society and the military.” (MDN, 2008-2012 – MS 2/3, 2008, p. 4).

- Creating a “Military Service” newsletter, for general dissemination of VS/CS events and service initiatives and “... to inform the various areas covered by the new [current] model of military service ...” namely, military duties, recruitment, incentives for military service (Coelho, 2008 cit. by MDN, 2008-2012 – SM 1, 2008, p.1).
- The creation of the Centro de Informação e Orientação para a Formação e o Emprego (Center of Information and Orientation for Training and Employment) (CIOFE), as a “...contribution of the A.F.to Society ...supporting the military and former military personnel in their transition to a professionally active civilian life,” fundamental to the “...reintegration into the labor market, enhancing and maximizing the skills acquired during the passage through the ranks and that now constitute an added value in educational and professional development.” (Teixeira, cit. by MDN, 2008-2012 – MS 2, 2008, p. 7);
- The implementation of a specific program –the Sigma Project (“From the Defense to the Company”) – set up under the CIOFE designed to make the connection between the Defense (former military job seekers) and companies, responding to their requests/requirements, particularly in the leadership area; in spite of the structuring nature of this idea, launched in late July 2011, and supported by protocols, it did not have the desired results, and it is crucial that in the future there are similar, consolidated, projects of outplacement;
- Celebrating protocols with the Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional (Institute for Employment and Professional Training) (IEFP), Centros de Emprego (Employment Centers) (CE), Instituto Português da Juventude (Portuguese Youth Institute) (IPJ), Local Authorities, among others, aimed at encouraging admission into the A.F.in VS/CS;
- Reconfiguring the legal and procedural framework of the Military Duties, especially from 2000 onwards, and with greater acuity after 2004, to consolidate the professionalization of the military service, facilitating the lives of citizens and improving the effectiveness, efficiency and quality of public services in this area –of note: the new model of Military Census, automatic (without the presence of the citizen) and universal (not discriminating gender); the new model of the Cédula Militar (Military Licence) (small solid plastic card; obtained from the NDM); the centralization of the Census process of citizens in the NDM; Integrated Database (CIPORG), managed by the NDM, with data from all military personnel in VS/CS from the census until they leave the ranks and join the external LM (MDN, 2008-2012 –MS 6, 2009, p. 2);

- Entrepreneurship as reintegration policy, where, for example, are integrated the programs “Defesa Empreende” (Defense Entrepreneurs) (regarding technical support to self-employment) and “Incubadora da Defesa” (Defense Incubator), which aim to enhance reintegration and the Defense Technological Base (Coelho, 2014);
- The development of various market studies and reports from various research activities related to the military personnel in VS / CS, intended to: characterize the national LM and determine the implications of the acquisition of human resources for the A.F.; survey the perceptions of young people regarding the issue of defense and the role/results of successive NDD; evaluate the processes and recruitment structures of the services of the A.F.; analyze the experiences of other countries (e.g., recruitment models); assess the reasons for enrollment in the A.F. and of abandonment during and after initial training; analyze the social representation of the A.F. (Cardoso, 2012; Cardoso et al., 2009; Carreiras, 2009; DGPRM, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011a, 2011b.)

After the Acordo de Cooperação Interministerial nas Áreas de Educação e Formação da Defesa Nacional (Inter-ministerial Cooperation Agreement for the Areas of Education and Training of the Defense), signed between the NDM and the Ministry of Education (ME) and the Ministério de Trabalho e Solidariedade Social (Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity) (MTSS) in 2006, a strong focus on training and development/qualification, to which we refer, led the DGPRM to set several goals for this area, predicting a dual purpose –to enhance performance in the A.F. and to prepare for the integration/reintegration in the external LM.

In addition to these objectives, the DGPRM defined two major vectors clearly assigned to the employability of VS/CS military personnel leaving the ranks: enhancing the performance capability of tools to support socio-professional reintegration (e.g., CIOFE), improving links to the services of the A.F. and employers; and monitoring the trajectory of former military personnel during the socio-professional reintegration process.

The services of the A.F., in turn, have exerted an effort to increase the formal qualifications of military personnel under contract and in volunteering systems leaving the ranks, using for this purpose, for a time, the Cursos de Educação e Formação de Adultos (Adult Education and Training Courses) (CEFA) and the Reconhecimento, Validação e Certificação de Competências (Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences) (RVCC), educational and/or professional, among other tools. Given the developments, some of these systems have, as is well known, an indefinite immediate future.

Lately, safeguarding the connection to the specific functional needs of the Military Institution, much of the training provided to the VS/CS in the A.F. has been reformulated in order to guarantee modularity of content, comparability with the NQF (MTSS, 2007) and integration into the NQC with regard to vocational training, whether it is a basic or expert qualification. Although some services have assumed the purpose of certification at an earlier

date due to internal operation reasons, interviewees recognize, in general, that the results of the investment, in “certification and external recognition of the training given” in the A.F., despite all the work that had already been done, are still below what is required and desirable (or of what can be done) to make the training given in the A.F. more relevant and attractive, whether in relation to performance in the organization, or, most of all, to the subsequent reintegration into the LM.

Similarly, the DGPRM presented the following challenges for the CS (especially in relation to the category of enlisted): Alignment with national frameworks to enable certification; Meeting the needs of the A.F. and enhancing employability; Ability to act in an interconnected way with national training structures “(Coelho, 2014).

Notwithstanding the efforts made by NDM and the services, the themes that continue to arise are at the level of conceptual orientation and top decision aspects that raise a new set of questions. Are the results and approaches that have been used the best solution to combat the previously reviewed problems? Should a certain “line of continuity” with the current paradigm be privileged, or should other solutions to combat the real structural problems be pursued? What exactly should be the role of A.F. in the new national training context regarding the military personnel who, temporarily, passes through their ranks? Since the current IS is depleted, what incentives for citizens should be integrated in a new model to be adopted regarding the provision of non-permanent service in the A.F. and what new conditions should these incentives lead to, in terms of the external labor market? To what degree does this “big investment” by the Authority and the services, consisting in the certification and external recognition of the training provided by the A.F. (especially with regard to enlisted) ignore the issue of the development of the national educational system towards the vocational training path, which is intended precisely for the target audience of recruitment for the VS/CS, rendering, in the short term, the training offer of the A.F. irrelevant for the LM?

5. Contributions of the Integration of Other Countries

This section briefly presents the results of the analysis of some models and management practices of other countries in the area of research and evaluates the possibility of doing some benchmarking of best management practices, applicable to the resolution of problems and national dysfunctions.

For analysis of other models we selected eight countries¹⁰: Germany (GER), Belgium (BEL), Canada (CAN), Spain (ESP), USA, France (FR), the Netherlands (NL) and the United Kingdom (UK). The evaluation process of experiences from other countries, subject to adaptation to the national reality, began with the construction of an instrument for the collection and analysis of information with an underlying definition of three major analytical dimensions, each with multiple categories: dimension 1– general characterization;

¹⁰ Criteria which governed the choice: EU membership and / or NATO; have opted for the professionalization of the A.F. model; can jointly constitute a heterogeneous group analysis.

dimensions 2 – diagnosing problems and dysfunctions; and dimensions 3 – strategies and initiatives for the resolution of problems and dysfunctions.

The analysis of the problems and dysfunctions of the analyzed countries shows that those are similar to the ones diagnosed in the national situation. The following aspects are highlighted:

- Reduction of the natural demographic base of recruitable citizens;
- Decreased levels of recruitment in the three services - the number of candidates in recessionary economic conditions is less than what is required;
- Unawareness about the A.F. - purpose and missions;
- Inaccurate information on the military career, the required qualifications, employment options, benefits and compensation;
- Tendency for a growing “de-simplification” regarding security issues and the defense, which are reflected in failure to join the A.F.;
- Reduced attractiveness of the military career – it is not mentioned in the main professional options; misalignment between the values and the culture of the military institution and the dominant values practiced by Society;
- Frequent gap between the assigned military duties (operational areas) and the personal aspirations of the military personnel;
- Fear of removal from personal, family, and civilian life and general concerns of familial nature which are sometimes difficult to identify and classify;
- Competition from the external LM; relatively lower salaries to the private sector (especially regarding the Enlisted category);
- Low employment rate.

Regarding strategies and initiatives for the resolution of problems and dysfunctions, the following collected ideas are highlighted:

- Designing a stable and safe working vision, enabling young people to avoid labor precariousness and volatility;
- Investment on advertising campaigns – TV/Internet/media; investment in the digital medium (management and advertising); identification of target audiences and better focus of advertising; provide advertising campaigns addressed to the social support network of potential candidates – family, friends, colleagues, etc.;
- Carrying out recruitment activities in schools and youth welfare services and employment; investing on visits by children/young people to barracks and ships – periods of familiarization; performing professional/mentoring guidance in high schools;
- Planning specific programs (e.g., the enlisted are sent to their old schools/hometowns to talk to young people about life in the A.F.; assign bonus for enlistment);

- Jointly promoting the three services, admitting some openness to recruitment strategies by service;
- Providing additional preparation courses to improve the quality of applicants wishing to access the A.F.;
- Opening recruitment to minority groups (e.g., immigrants);
- Adapting requirement standards for the entry into the organization (e.g., physical, psychological and technical components differentiated by operational areas);
- Developing plans for mentoring and host programs (e.g., with personalized correspondence) aiming to reduce the number of dropouts before the initial training;
- Establishing new minimum educational requirements to reduce attrition during initial training; timely adopting subsidy retention schemes during the provision of services;
- Providing greater flexibility/range of contracts (e.g., duration depending on training needs);
- Programming research to help solve problems in cooperation with universities;
- Enhancing employability in the transition to civil society (e.g., sponsoring the attendance of certified training/technical training programs; certifying further military courses);
- Providing a legislative reform with real impact on recruitment, selection and socio-professional reintegration.

6. Conclusion

This article results from a critical review of the current situation regarding the object of study, supported by a mainly qualitative research strategy and conducted through documentary research and a survey interview.

Ten years after the end of the conscription system and the adoption of an exclusively professional model, the object of this study focused on the evaluation of the ability of obtaining and retaining personnel by the Portuguese A.F. and on an analysis of the value of the current training/development framework adopted for the military personnel in VS/CS, whether with regard to the specific operational needs of the Portuguese A.F., or to the human and socio-professional growth of citizens passing through the ranks.

Of the documentary analysis and interviews conducted with managing entities with expertise on the topic of research, to which the resulting contributions of the analysis of experiences from other countries were associated, a set of assertions will be highlighted, after a discussion, which may help answer the great pre-formulated research questions and the objective set for this study.

The current conceptual and legal model of military service in VS/CS in the Portuguese A.F. is roughly similar to existing models in most European countries, enabling, when well managed and supported politically, the military organization to permanently maintain a short term regeneration capacity of personnel to meet specific needs. This form of service, which will always exist for a limited period, is complementary to the model of military service with permanent personnel, and should therefore be looked at from a combined perspective for the pursuit of shared benefits.

Regarding the issue of personnel, more general but structuring issues have been addressed, the quantity and quality of human resources and their capture and retention in the ranks. It was made clear that, thanks to the counter-cycle trend of the country, which is motivated by issues related international economic and financial commitments, there was an increase in applications (still insufficient), although this increase has brought a reduction in the quality of candidates, which led to an increase in the attrition rate beginning at the period of applications. On the other hand, due to economic and financial constraints, the A.F. have witnessed a systematic and pronounced reduction of the designated “authorized personnel” in VS and CS, which, given the number of scheduled abandonment in the coming years, will be virtually impossible to replace. In another sense, this drastic reduction of authorized personnel, has resulted in a less noticeable imbalance between actual needs and stocks (more accurately in the category of enlisted and Army services) and, consequently, this issue is perceived, including by some military elements, as in less need of an urgent solution, in spite of its structuring nature, and eventually a consideration of less traditional solutions will be advised.

As for training benchmarks that have to be applied to military personnel in VS/CS, the double perspective reflected in this research - functional and social – should be maintained. From there, the need emerges to prepare for the return to the labor market and social life in all its dimensions, namely citizenship. This framework for training was, for a long time, a mere adaptation, with subsequent amendments, of the conscription formation model. In the last years, despite the necessary improvement, the benchmark for training of military personnel in VS/CS has evolved to incorporate in a progressive and more objective way, closer to the paradigm of competences associated with the performance of new functional profiles and the NQF. Although there are dissimilarities within the services of the A.F., justified by their specific functional characteristics, it should always be the competency of the profiles required for each case that determines the models of education/training, the specific training content and even the learning methodologies, with the purpose of acquiring transversal and specific skills crucial to the different contexts and situations.

While the functional perspective serves and feeds specific needs of operation(activities and tasks) in the military context, the social perspective and citizenship underlies the education of citizens for the “social thing” in a broad sense and the acquisition of transversal (and some specific) skills to help enhance the employability of each citizen and facilitate the return to the external LM when the military personnel in VS/CS leaves the ranks.

Given the economic and financial constraints mentioned, IS, still formally in force, has lost all effectiveness by shifting its action, especially towards professional certified training, which appears to be a current and future large investment of the NDM and services of the A.F. But this investment seems clearly insufficient to reverse a situation of fragility in the short/medium term, with regard to the acquisition and retention of military personnel in VS/CS. In a supplementary way, we recall one of the questions formulated earlier, which should be answered with consistency, on the “great investment” by the Authority and services in relation to the accreditation and external recognition of the training provided in the A.F. versus the evolution of the national education system’s “vocational path”, admitting that the training offer of the services is likely to become irrelevant for the LM, in the long run.

From the point of view of the projection of the institutional “brand image”, the concept of “national reference School” should be one of the foremost goals to be achieved: a behavioral training model; a “school of leadership and discipline” of civilian and military elites, based on values and social practices of reference; a school of certified professional training; the possibility of recognition and certification of professional experience. Additionally, there should also be no mental reservations to representing the Portuguese A.F. as a gateway to the labor market, a different job option: an attractive and competitive career, a new experience in the service of Portugal. The manner in which this promotion is done will make all the difference.

The documentary analysis and interviews conducted during the research made it clear that this issue is not exclusive to the A.F., nor should it be left solely to their care and responsibility. In this sense, it is suggested, as a corollary of the study, that, in addition to the more profound study that this topic requires, the analysis and search for solutions take into account a broader perspective in terms of participation of the State and of an active citizenship for defense and security. It is advisable to find structuring solutions that go beyond the latest initiatives led by the Authority and the A.F. and that, rather than mitigate the current problems and dysfunctions, can anticipate and prevent them.

We also leave here some contributions from the evaluation of the experiences of other countries on very similar issues to those diagnosed for the national situation, which may possibly be a source of benchmarking.

Far from intending to exhaust this subject, this research aims to contribute to a debate of the different factors associated with it, admitting, due to lacunae in this study, that other research are conducted, whether as a complement or to specify and/or confirm the data now presented, namely: (a) the research could consider, separately, an analysis by category, gaining in detail, objectivity and consequence; (b) the issue of the CS should be considered in all its extension, without reservation, in each service, in each category and under the various classes, weapons and services and specialties; (c) the study should be complemented in the future by quantitative research strategies, involving large numbers of military personnel in the VS/CS of the three services of the A.F.; (d) the issue of benchmarking deserves further reflection, comparing in particular the nature of the problems with the socio-cultural context of integration/application within each country.

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