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SOLDIERS' COMPETENCIES IN THE CIVILIAN LABOUR MARKET

KOMPETENCJE ŻOŁNIERZY ZAWODOWYCH NA CYWILNYM RYNKU PRACY

DOI: 10.15611/pn.2020.2.12
JEL Classification: J01

Summary: The paper discusses the concept of 'competency'. The authors identify the elementary competencies of professional soldiers based on literature and their own pilot studies. They also discuss the use of competencies acquired by soldiers as part of military service (The Amazon Military programme and IBM are used as an example). The example of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) is given as an incubator of competencies used in a market economy. The analysis of source materials and legal acts, an interview and participant observation are used in the work. Interviews with twenty-six managers of companies employing retired officers were conducted as part of a pilot study in the last quarter of 2019 within the project: "Structural and process determinants of the efficiency of public and economic organizations", of which the authors are members. The purpose of the article is to examine the use of competences acquired during professional military service on the civilian labour market. The research problem of the work is: what useful competencies do professional soldiers (officers of the Polish Army) have on the civilian labour market? For the purposes of the work, the following hypothesis was formulated: competences acquired as part of military service may be an asset in the civilian market.

Keywords: competencies, skills, professional soldiers.

Streszczenie: W artykule zdefiniowano pojęcie „kompetencje”. Autorzy wskazali podstawowe kompetencje żołnierzy zawodowych, w szczególności oficerów, bazując na literaturze i własnych badaniach pilotażowych. Omówiono użycie kompetencji nabytych przez żołnierzy w ramach służby wojskowej (na przykładzie programu Amazon Military i firmy IBM). Podano przykład izraelskich sił obronnych (IDF) jako inkubatora kompetencji wykorzysty-

wanych w gospodarce rynkowej. Zastosowano metody badawcze: analizę materiałów źródłowych i aktów prawnych, wywiad oraz obserwację uczestniczącą. Wywiady przeprowadzono w ostatnim kwartale 2019 r. w badaniu pilotażowym w ramach projektu „Strukturalne i procesowe determinanty sprawności organizacji publicznych i gospodarczych”. Wzięło w nim udział 26 pracodawców zatrudniających emerytowanych oficerów. Cel artykułu to diagnoza wykorzystania kompetencji zdobytych w trakcie zawodowej służby wojskowej na cywilnym rynku pracy. Problemem badawczym pracy jest pytanie, jakie kompetencje mają żołnierze zawodowi (w szczególności oficerowie Wojska Polskiego). Sformułowano następującą hipotezę: kompetencje zdobyte w ramach służby wojskowej mogą być wykorzystane i są konkurencyjne na cywilnym rynku.

Słowa kluczowe: kompetencje, umiejętności, żołnierze zawodowi.

1. Introduction

In the era of a knowledge-based economy, employees and their competencies are becoming a primary resource of businesses. Organisations need to fight for competitive advantage all the time, and they can win thanks to the proper selection of staff. Professional soldiers constitute a professional group that becomes eligible for retirement benefits at quite an early age. Their advantage is the huge scope of knowledge and skills acquired during the period of military service.

Soldiers have numerous competencies which can be utilised in the civilian labour market, which need to be precisely defined and promoted. Military service should be a distinguishing feature in one's *curriculum vitae*.

An increasing number of companies are starting to perceive the advantages of employing ex-soldiers and building programmes aimed at utilising their competencies. *Amazon* is in the vanguard of such organisations.

A country that clearly focuses on the transfer of soldiers' competencies to the market economy is Israel. In this country, there is a popular view that innovativeness, characteristic of their economy, is based on universal military service.

2. A review of the definitions and nomenclature of competencies in the source literature

Numerous authors in the field of management have attempted to define the term 'competencies'. Their approaches may be related to experience, knowledge, skills or potential. An overview of employee-oriented definitions of competencies is presented in Table 1.

In order to utilise competencies in different areas of management, such as [Armstrong, 2016, p. 192] learning, development, recruitment and the creation of remuneration systems, it is necessary to work out a competency structure of the given organisation. Based on the research conducted by the magazine "Competency and Emotional Intelligence", it was determined that there are as many as 553 terms for competencies. Many of them overlap with each other, and a typical number of competencies a single

Table 1. An overview of employee-oriented definitions of competencies

An overview of employee-oriented definitions of competencies
Competences including knowledge, experience, abilities and predispositions for team activities, specific skills required at work and personal culture
Competence is the potential that contributes to achieving specific (desired) results
Competence is the employee's ability to achieve or exceed requirements of the workplace to achieve the expected quality level in conditions of the internal and external constraints of the organization
Competences are demonstrable traits of a person that enable action, require knowledge and skills and behaviour that helps employees achieve results

Source: own work based on [Armstrong 2016, pp. 192-193; Dessler 2019, p. 362; Oleksyn, 2016, p. 146; Smółka, 2016, p. 30].

employee has is around seven (eight in the case of executive staff). Based on a review of the research, it was possible to identify the names of the competencies appearing in the structures of 20% (or more) of the organisations participating in the survey [Armstrong 2016, p. 192]. The different names of competencies established as a result of the abovementioned research are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Different competency names

Competency name	General definition	Percentage of use
Team orientation	The ability to work in a team and cooperate; flexibility towards other team members; the ability to understand one's role in a team	86
Communication	The skill of passing information in a clear and convincing way either orally or in writing	73
Managing people	Focus on HR functions in the organisation; taking care of employees' development and managing their activities; winning trust; willingness to cooperate in order to achieve specific results	67
Client orientation	Permanent care of internal and external clients and their interests; assuring clients that their needs, expectations and wishes are met 100%	65
Result orientation	The need to carry out all activities in a proper way; the ability to set ambitious goals and accomplish them; generating one's own perfection measurement systems; permanent improvement of efficiency	59
Problem-solving	The ability to analyse the situation, solve problems and identify the key issues; the ability to set and evaluate new courses of action; efficiency and working out logical solutions	57
Planning and organisation	Pointing out the relevant courses of action which are feasible in light of the resources available; formulating work plans	51
Technical skills	Having knowledge of a given field necessary to perform work	49
Leadership	The skill of inspiring people to act in order to achieve a given result; stimulating employees' endeavours and commitment; taking care of effective relations with the entire team and its particular members	47

Source: own work based on [Armstrong 2016, pp. 192-193].

The greatest percentage of competency use, above 50%, relates to the following: team orientation, communication, managing people, client orientation, result orientation, problem-solving, as well as planning and organisation. These competencies are mainly interpersonal skills and skills related to achieving results [Armstrong 2016, pp. 192-193].

3. Identification of the primary competencies of professional soldiers

In order to find out the fundamental competencies that soldiers possess, it is necessary to refer to normative acts concerning the performance appraisal of professional soldiers. This is currently governed by the Regulation of the Minister of National

Table 3. Performance appraisal sheet – an excerpt

ASSESSMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH OBLIGATIONS AND TASKS						
CRITERIA FOR FULFILLING DUTIES AND TASKS	Level – number of points					Number of points
	Does not meet the requirements 0	Meets limited requirements 4	Meets the requirements 8	Exceeds requirements 12	Far exceeds the requirements 16	
1. Quality and timeliness of duties performed						
2. Availability						
3. Independence and initiative						
4. Planning and organization of work						
					Total:	
ASSESSMENT OF COMPETENCE AND PREDISPOSITION						
COMPETENCES AND PREDISPOSITIONS	Level – number of points					Number of points
	Does not meet the requirements 0	Meets limited requirements 1	Meets the requirements 2	Exceeds requirements 3	Far exceeds the requirements 4	
1. Responsibility						
2. Determination in pursuing a goal						
3. Accuracy and speed of decision making						
4. Resistance to stress						
5. Communication and team work skills						
6. Compliance with regulations, norms and rules						
7. Care for equipment and property						
8. Personal culture and care for external appearance						
					Total	

Source: [The Regulation... 2014, item 764].

Defence of 26 May 2014 on the Performance Appraisal of Professional Soldiers. The performance appraisal of professional soldiers takes account of [The Regulation..., 2014, item 764]:

- performance of duties or tasks,
- competencies and aptitudes.

Table 3 presents an excerpt of a performance appraisal sheet, containing the set of competencies and aptitudes of professional soldiers.

Based on the aforementioned regulation, it should be noted that each member of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland must be in the possession of the above set of competencies. These include a number of interpersonal skills that overlap with the research results presented by the magazine "Competency and Emotional Intelligence" [Armstrong 2016, pp. 192-193]. Hence, it should be noted that professional military service also involves the development of competencies which are necessary for employees in the market economy. In this way, from the very start, former soldiers have a set of competencies to showcase in their *curriculum vitae*. Employers should pay particular attention to these competencies in the process of the recruitment and selection of former professional soldiers and then translate them into the success of their businesses [Suchar 2018, p. 22].

One of the most important is determination in pursuing one's goal, which is equivalent to result orientation. Commanders, as well as managers, must be good organisers and be able to plan the activities of their subordinates. Among the competencies of soldiers and civilian workers, it is necessary to highlight personal development and the improvement of qualifications. These aptitudes are necessary in the rapidly changing environment. Contemporary organisations, both uniformed and civilian, lay emphasis on good communication skills and teamwork [The Regulation... 2014, item 764].

4. The fundamental commanding skills of officers of the Polish Armed Forces in literature and own research

In order to present the basic competences of officers of the Polish Armed Forces that can be utilised in the civilian labour market, source material analysis was used and pilot studies were carried out under the project: Structural and process determinants of efficiency of public and economic organizations of which the authors are members [Knecht et al. 2019].

The qualitative changes that take place in the process of forming the profile of an officer place requirements in terms of social and professional competence. Social competences are the starting point for building added value in the form of professional competences among the commanding staff [Łydka 2016, pp. 39-41]. Both groups of competencies should be grouped into basic and additional. The specification of the competency profile of officers of the Polish Armed Forces is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Competency profile of officers of the Polish Armed Forces

Social competences	Professional competences
Basic 1. Communication 2. Personal culture 3. Active listening skills 4. Assertiveness 5. Resistance to stress 6. Positive attitude to people 7. Self-esteem 8. Control of own emotions	Basic 1. Planning of activities 2. Task performance control 3. Organizing own work 4. Information management 5. Time management 6. Tactical imagination 7. Situational awareness 8. Tactical knowledge 9. Technical knowledge 10. Focus on calculated risk
Additional 1. Team building skills 2. Ability to show enthusiasm 3. Ability to empathize 4. Risk taking 5. Ability to influence 6. Ability to act together 7. Knowledge of history of Poland	Additional 1. Compliance with laws, norms and rules 2. Functioning in an international environment 3. Knowledge of english 4. Knowledge of another foreign language 5. Care for equipment and property 6. Use of specialists' help 7. Delegating tasks and permissions

Source: own work based on [Łydka 2016, pp. 39-41].

These competencies are the same as those of market economy employees. Officers of the Polish Army during military service accomplish basic management functions, and by using some simplifications, they can be equated with those managerial. The basic professional competences of officers are planning, controlling and organizing [Kozmiński, Piotrowski 2020, p. 72]. Personal culture and active listening skills are required from Polish Army officers and cadets. Depending on the position held, the commanding personnel in the military commands a team of several, up to a few thousand people. Leadership, assigning tasks and teamwork are everyday life in the military profession.

Employers who engage retired soldiers commented on the advantages of military service in the context of work in a civilian environment. A five-point Likert scale was used, in which 1 was the lowest and 5 the highest. The opinions of employers are presented in Table 5.

The vast majority of employers positively assessed the qualities of military service in the context of work in a civilian environment. Among the respondents, 33% indicated the grade as very good and 27% as good, but some of the respondents believe that military service does not have useful qualities in the context of work in a civilian environment.

In general, the results of the pilot study indicate the fairly high value of military service among employers. Thus, former professional soldiers on the labour market

Table 5. Evaluation of the value of military service in the context of work in a civil environment in the opinion of employers

Evaluation of the value of military service in the context of work in a civil environment in the opinion of employers	
5	33%
4	27%
3	20%
2	13%
1	7%

Source: own work.

may be a desirable and even competitive group on the labour market. The experience acquired over the years of “wearing a uniform” is appreciated among employers. The fact of being an officer is often a significant advantage in the search for a new job, which gives a good foundation in the application for responsible positions – such as managerial, state or specialist [Kacala, Michaluk 2014, pp. 50-52].

In the further part of the interviews, employers were asked about the competencies obtained during military service, verified in practice, which had an impact on the employment of retired officers. The aggregate responses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Competencies acquired during military service affecting the employment of a retired officer

Competencies acquired during military service affecting the employment of a retired officer	Number of responses (%)
Knowledge corresponds to the profession performed on the civilian labour market	80
Experience in management/managerial positions	60
Personal culture, respect for others, tact	56
Skills in planning and organizing own work and subordinates	52
Communication	48
Positive behaviour towards people	28
Initiative in action	20

Source: own work.

The most valuable competencies of retired officers acquired during the service for employers are knowledge and experience. This knowledge, however, must correspond to the tasks performed at the workplace in market economy conditions, obviously slightly different from the role fulfilled in the army. Employers also value personal culture, tact and skills in planning and organizing work. To sum up, the competences indicated by the employers are in fact close to the social competences and the professional competence profile of officers of the Polish Armed Forces.

5. Utilising the competencies acquired in the course of service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in the civilian labour market

To improve the effective use of veterans and ex-professional soldiers in the civilian labour market, in our opinion, it is necessary to establish their competency profile. In the course of their service, soldiers graduate from universities, take part in various training courses, command (lead) teams and carry out tasks in difficult conditions.

Entrepreneurs who recruit former soldiers should peruse their *curriculum vitae* in search of not only civilian education, post-graduate studies or qualifications acquired just in the course of the readjustment process. It is also necessary to look for skills which soldiers learnt during their long-term service. Employers should pay attention to their psychophysical profile, particular character traits and efficiency. Former soldiers have competences formed outside the civilian environment.

This part of the paper is an attempt to define the professional profile of a former soldier on the basis of the regulations and documents governing the course of military service, as well as interviews. Candidates in possession of these qualities are able to work on different posts which in many cases outweigh the experience gained from practice in the civilian labour market. Of candidates with civilian predispositions; they can be a significant attribute.

According to D. Grzelak, Head of the Central Employment Support Centre, veterans and former professional soldiers should be described as [Internet 4] "well-organised persons focused on effective action". They are characterised by their considerable potential, which employers do not always notice.

According to General R. Polko, former commander of the special forces unit GROM, soldiers demonstrate flexibility and mobility. Both of these qualities are necessary in running modern and dynamic businesses. The former GROM commander illustrates the above traits with the situations in which soldiers do not oppose the orders to travel to the other end of the world [Internet 3]. The Armed Forces teach punctuality in a way that no other institution does; this quality is rare in the civilian environment. Moreover, General Polko points out that "there is a rule in the modern army: I will complete the mission even if I am the last survivor. Everybody is aware of the mission and is flexible when the plan is no longer up to date and needs to be modified. The soldier is accountable for the results". This means that soldiers will always pursue the goal and carry out the tasks assigned to them.

In the self-assessment of non-commissioned officers of the Polish Armed Forces regarding the knowledge and skills that these corps should demonstrate, efficient team management ranked first [Assessment of the Professional Qualification... 2012, p. 26]. Depending on the position held, the commanding personnel in the military commands a team of several, up to a few thousand people. Leadership, assigning tasks and teamwork are part of everyday life in the military profession.

The Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland are strongly oriented towards developing leadership competences among officers and non-commissioned officers. This is confirmed by Chief of the General Staff, General Rajmund Andrzejczak: “I expect the commanders to take initiative and orientate on the target, not on the mechanical execution of the order defined in every detail. The world is complicated, the war will not start with the diplomatic note on the border. Therefore, I need people who can recognize the crisis and will not wait for a detailed order, but by understanding the situation, they will take a conscious risk” [Chilczuk, Górka 2018].

Another competency acquired by commanders is the efficient utilisation of the functions of human capital. In the course of everyday work, each of them has to motivate their subordinates to be better and better in their activities. A commander has a wide range of tools prescribed in the Act of 9 October 2009 on Military Discipline commanders, which provide their subordinates with both financial and non-financial incentives. The accomplishment of objectives and the execution of assigned tasks are contingent on the commanders’ skills in terms of motivating subordinates. Being a superior, an officer is in charge of an annual performance appraisal, which is equivalent to employees’ appraisal in the civilian environment [The Regulation of the Minister... 2014]. This function is extremely important in managing human capital, which relates to a review of the results of work, determining staff shortages, and exerting influence on people’s motivation.

Soldiers are characterised by resistance to stress more than any other professional group [Pępowaska 2016]. A considerable percentage of the current or retired soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces actively participated in the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan [Internet 1]. Those experiences should be utilised as a kind of *know-how* of problem-solving in stressful and stress-inducing situations.

An important quality which soldiers possess is responsibility. Soldiers, and in particular commanders, are responsible not only for their own life but also for the lives of their colleagues. Notably, responsibility is taught at all levels of the armed forces. It is responsibility for persons, property or execution of tasks, as defined in a number of documents. The most important of them are the military part of the Criminal Code [The Act of 6 June 1997...] and the Act of 25 May 2001 on Financial Liability of Soldiers [The Act of 25 May 2001...].

Soldiers constitute a professional group with a special ethos and principles of conduct (“soldiers are bound by discipline and loyalty to other soldiers”). They must observe “ethical principles” and “norms of community life; their behaviour is supposed to be dignified, polite and tactful” [The Regulation of the Minister 2014...]. Soldiers are obliged to comply with the rules prescribed in the Honour Code of the Professional Soldier of the Polish Armed Forces (The Honour Code). In addition, it is worth noting the communication concerning research into public confidence in the armed forces, which shows that this institution is trusted by as many as 79% of Poles [Communication on Research No. 18/2016...]. It should be concluded that soldiers

are honest and courteous people capable of intercommunication. Therefore, it can be assumed *a priori* that former commanders meet this description.

Furthermore, soldiers should be considered as employees who are able to work in companies based on knowledge management. Throughout their whole military service they need to enhance their qualifications and competencies, thus taking part in training courses and tuition [The Act of 11 September 2003...]. This is verified in the course of performance appraisals, which also include determining the training needs and development directions with respect to each particular soldier. Each soldier can boast a broad portfolio of courses in different areas.

It is worth noting that the Polish Armed Forces lay emphasis on learning foreign languages, which refers to both soldiers and civilian workers. The majority of soldiers take part in language courses (mainly in the English language) and are certified based on [Internet 1] *NATO Standardisation Agreement – Language Proficiency Levels (STANAG 6001)*.

Commanders are creative people, distinguished by their strategic thinking and decision-making skills. They should be considered as individuals versed in the process of management – soldiers apply this process on a daily basis in the form of the commanding process [*Tactical Planning of Operations...* 2006]. Soldiers are good organisers; they are capable of planning and are punctual. Their daily work is performed in a highly formalised and hierarchical organisation. Owing to that, they are able to prepare documents and find their feet in highly bureaucratic institutions. Due to the nature of military service, they are deemed as specialists in crisis management and security issues. Throughout their long-time service together, soldiers build an extensive network of contacts and develop strong emotional bonds. These acquaintances may be used in trade relations and during work in the civilian environment.

Most of the discussed competences are the same as those listed in the research presented in the subsection on the fundamental commanding skills of officers of the Polish Armed Forces in literature and own research. Further research on the competence of retired soldiers are conducted under the project: “Structural and process determinants of the efficiency of public and economic organizations”, AWL Wrocław 2019.

The professionalisation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland changes the fundamental perception of the job of a soldier. The number of ‘random’ people in this profession is declining. The willingness to join the army is a conscious decision. Soldiers are entrusted with modern equipment of considerable value, which a layman is not able to operate. Soldiers must act and be trained under great time pressure. These skills are also very important in the market economy, where innovative solutions and technological novelties are being implemented.

Nowadays, one can observe positive changes in the approach to hiring former soldiers for high and prestigious positions. The media must work in favour of former soldiers and veterans in the labour market. Enhancing the image of the army as well

as showing its professionalism, innovativeness and cutting-edge technology to society are the fundamental determinants in this way. Undoubtedly, assistance in this field is also provided by programmes dedicated to soldiers, launched by foreign companies. They fully utilise the skills and competencies which soldiers acquired during the service, thus raising their status in the labour market.

6. The *Amazon Military* programme and IBM as an example of using the competencies of veterans and former professional soldiers in the civilian labour market

Amazon is a multinational company that is in the vanguard of utilising former soldiers' competencies, qualifications and wide range of skills. First and foremost, their HR policy distinguishes officers, who are in the greatest demand. The programme is also dedicated to non-commissioned officers. Particular attention is paid to their experience and course of service in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland and NATO structures [Zieliński 2019]. Building career paths in this American company reflects the military style, and the guiding motto here is "the opportunity to command your small army" [Internet 8].

Veterans and former soldiers are treated by Amazon's management as talented employees, having the skills of [Internet 5] managing a team, contact with modern technologies and efficiency. These qualities are appreciated in the contemporary global economy and are very useful in the context of supply chain management.

The *Amazon Military* programme was launched in the USA and is being dynamically developed. The company's management assume that by 2021, they will have employed 25 thousand veterans and former soldiers, as well as their family members. To cite Jeff Bezos, the former soldiers' competency profile includes "creativity, large scale thinking, action orientation, and the generation of relevant results". The founder of Amazon stresses that "soldiers' experience in managing people is priceless. This programme has been implemented in Europe since 2017" [Internet 5].

After successful completion of the recruitment stage, the human resources allocation process at Amazon starts from the position of an *Area Manager*. In his or her capacity as a manager, the former soldier initially leads a team of approximately 50-100 people. The best employees stand a chance of promotion as soon as half a year after being hired and may take up the position of an *Operations Manager*. The scope of duties in this post is related to the conduct of operational projects, both domestic and international, and it involves managing a team of two hundred people. The next steps on the career ladder in one of the most successful companies in the world can be attained after another two years. The employee is then promoted to the position of a *Senior Operations Manager*, in which they manage half of an e-commerce logistics centre. The last stage of professional development in this

organisation is the management of an entire logistics centre and the job title of a *General Manager* [Prus 2019].

Amazon was inspired to launch a programme dedicated to soldiers by the following thesis: *to operate efficiently, we need to develop logistics*. The company's management came to the conclusion that soldiers were unrivalled in terms of their qualifications in effective and efficient logistics management. In line with this idea, it can be argued that soldiers are ideal candidates for positions in large enterprises [Internet 2].

IBM, together with the Casimir Pulaski Foundation, introduced in Poland "an original program for veteran soldiers from various types of armed forces and military universities" [Laurisz 2018]. The "Veteran's Days" program aims to highlight the potential of former soldiers [Internet 9].

"IBM appreciates the involvement of Polish soldiers and army employees in missions outside our country. After serving, the soldiers are due respect and recognition" [Laurisz 2018]. Former soldiers from the General Command of the Armed Forces, Operational Command of the Armed Forces, Warsaw Garrison Command, Territorial Defense Forces, Military Police, Military Arts Academy and the Army of Land Forces took part in the training [Rzepecka 2020, p. 116].

This illustration highlights the fact that former soldiers' competencies are increasingly appreciated by large global corporations. Similar thinking is starting to prevail in other companies too, including [Internet 8]: Boeing, McDonald's, Starbucks and UPS.

7. An example of the Israel Defense Forces as an incubator of competencies used in the market economy¹

Israel is a country that should be considered as a model of using soldiers' qualifications, competencies and skills in the market economy. This situation is described in a book from the "New York Times" bestseller list entitled "Start-up Nation. The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle". The authors of the book, Dan Senor and Saul Singer, express the view that innovativeness, entrepreneurship and the high level of technology in Israel's economy are strictly related to its citizens' compulsory military service.

Based on expert interviews and participant observation, the authors present the virtues of soldiers in the labour market. They describe the functioning of the whole system and provide relevant examples.

Upon becoming adults, young people in Israel are pondering the advantages of particular military units rather than thinking about which field of study to choose. At the age of seventeen, Israelis appear before a recruitment board in order to take part in a series of tests to determine their assignment.

¹ Based on [Senor, Singer 2013, pp. 103-122].

In that country, elite units of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) are domestically deemed as the equivalents of Harvard, Princeton or Yale – the best U.S. universities. The military unit in which a potential job candidate served is information about the selection process they had been part of, the skills they possess, and the experience they gained. It could be concluded that the academic past is less important than the military past. Gil Kerbs, one of the respondents interviewed by the authors and a former Israeli intelligence soldier, says that the basic question during all job interviews in this country is: “Where did you serve in the armed forces?”

In Israel, soldiers are considered as “mission-oriented leaders and people capable of solving problems”. Courses taken in the best units mean prestige not only in the military but also in the civilian environment.

The IDF give young people an exciting opportunity to prove themselves and show their mettle. Young people serving in the military cooperate with their peers on a scale that is unrivalled elsewhere. A few years of compulsory military service and annual training sessions while in the reserve give people the chance to build their network and nurture it afterwards. These acquaintances turn into business contacts and willingness to cooperate.

It can be concluded that military service is incomparable to any experience gained during university studies. In the military, one is “forced to think three or four chess moves ahead [...] in everything you do [...] in the battlefield [...] and in business” [Senor, Singer 2013].

Military service means contact with people from all social backgrounds. Building proper relationships and interpersonal relations is indispensable in the armed forces. Former Israeli soldiers use these skills in their negotiations with suppliers and clients.

While operating in an urban area, young commanders often take on the role of mayors of small towns, managers of reconstruction of buildings, negotiators and diplomats. They are at the same time administrators of multi-million assets and heads of security services.

Veterans and soldiers fighting on the frontline realise the significance of the decisions they make in a way few others do. A mistake in warfare may cost human life. There are few people so much prepared for leading their companies through difficult times as these soldiers are.

It is noteworthy that numerous prominent scientists and most successful company founders in Israel are former soldiers. A suitable example could be the NICE System. This multinational has developed a call monitoring system used by eighty-five companies from Forbes 100. It was set up by former soldiers of the Talpiot programme – the most elite unit of the Israeli army. Another example is Compugen – a leader among companies dealing with genetics and production of medicines.

8. Conclusions

Numerous authors in the field of management have attempted to define the term "competencies." Their approaches may be related to experience, knowledge, skills or potential. Competencies are used in various areas of management, including learning, development, recruitment or creation of remuneration systems. Currently, the most frequently used competencies are the following: team orientation, communication, managing people, client orientation, result orientation, problem-solving, as well as planning and organisation.

As part of the professional military service, members of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland acquire numerous competencies that are necessary to work in the market economy. In this way, from the very start former soldiers have a set of competencies to showcase in their *curriculum vitae*.

According to officers, the commanding competencies which play the greatest role include a sense of responsibility as well as setting out requirements for oneself and for one's subordinates. These are traditional aptitudes typical of uniformed services. Officers add that the essence of good command and control is fairness in conduct and self-discipline.

Entrepreneurs recruiting former soldiers should try to find in them the skills which they acquired during their long-term service. Employers should pay attention to their psychophysical profile, peculiar character traits and efficiency. Veterans and former soldiers have qualifications and competencies that are impossible to acquire in the civilian environment.

Amazon and *IBM* are both multinational companies in the vanguard of utilising former soldiers' competencies, qualifications and wide range of skills. Veterans and former soldiers are treated by Amazon's management as talented employees, having the skills of managing a team, contact with modern technologies and efficiency. These traits are appreciated in the contemporary global economy and are very useful in the context of supply chain management. Former soldiers are therefore ideal candidates for work in e-commerce logistics centres and hubs.

Israel is a country that should be considered as a model of using soldiers' qualifications, competencies and skills in the market economy. Israelis express the view that innovativeness, entrepreneurship and the high level of technology in Israel's economy are strictly related to its citizens' compulsory military service.

For years, private companies have been developing the social competencies of employee managers, and this practice confirms the effectiveness of this type of impact. In the matter of interest to this study on employing ex-officers in the civilian market, it can be added that the army effectively use these opportunities. On the one hand, the development of social competences results from demands of departmental documents, while on the other it should be assumed that command is a special kind of form of managing people within an organization [Predel 2016, p. 49].

In Poland, professional soldiers are subject to training before retiring, in order to prepare them for specific occupations on the civilian labour market. Soldiers can also participate in military-paid internships. This increases their employability after leaving the service.

The problems discussed in this article are becoming more and more widely discussed in scientific literature, press and Internet articles, corporate programmes dedicated to soldiers and scientific research. The use of the competence potential of retired soldiers is a topical and important issue.

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