

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SOLDIERS – ORGANISATIONAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

Dorota KUREK

**War Studies University, Warsaw, Poland
d.kurek@akademia.mil.pl**

Abstract: *Shaping the image of a soldier is directly related to the activities undertaken in the Polish Army and referred to as post evaluation. Opinions treated as a personal process serve to assess the professional suitability of soldiers, which directly corresponds to the need to shape and take care of a positive image of a soldier. Existing in the army, the criteria for issuing opinions do not always correspond to the criteria used in society, but are the basis for social evaluation of a soldier's image. Bearing the above in mind, the aim of this article is to show the criteria for evaluating soldiers used in the system of official opinion, together with the presentation, on the basis of the results of empirical research, of the criteria considered socially important and necessary in the process of evaluating the activities of soldiers. The presentation of the organisational and social perspective will allow for a better understanding of the factors influencing the existing image (both organisational and social) of soldiers in Poland.*

Key words: evaluation criteria, soldiers, organizational perspective, social perspective, image

1. Introduction

The profession of a soldier is associated not only with challenges and threats resulting from the work environment, but above all with the prestige of work – service (the elite nature of the profession) [1], which enjoys great respect in eyes of the public [2]. The historical legacy as well as cultural conditions cause that over the years the image of a soldier is still characterised by a greater number of positive than negative associations, while the soldiers themselves are assessed positively and trusted by the society. Over the years, however, the way soldiers have been perceived changed, which is due to culture, technological changes, political conditions, involvement in military and non-military activities in the international environment, the country's membership in political-military alliances and the related

need to adapt to the existing and applicable legal solutions, the very social needs associated with the sense of security, competence challenges and the potential of new generations – future soldiers.

Considering the changes taking place both in the Polish Army, society and international environment, the author of the article would like to draw attention to the importance of the criteria for evaluating soldiers, both used in the army in the process of service evaluation and in social evaluation. These are interrelated because the criteria applied in the army are used to evaluate the performance of official duties and to assess competence and predispositions, which is the basis for determining the directions of professional development and thus training needs, while the criteria applied socially are used to

evaluate soldiers as persons responsible and guarding the security of the state and citizens. The more accurate and detailed the organisational evaluation is, the more likely it is that the social evaluation will be positive. Social evaluation of the army's activities also translates into the image of the army itself on the international arena, which has a significant impact on the level of state security and its position.

2. Diversity of evaluation perspectives

Evaluating is a daily activity performed by every person. It concerns things, places and people. The essence of evaluation is to compare the actual state with the ideal, assumed state, which differs depending on the subject, place and time of evaluation [3]. Evaluations can be formalised – in such a case we talk about the existence of employee systems [4] in which all elements of the system are described in detail and accepted from above, and therefore commonly used, or non-formalised – then the evaluation criteria are individual in nature and therefore both their scope and validity are based on, for example, accepted and considered as socially relevant values.

In organisations, the process of evaluating employees is one of the key personnel processes [5]. The evaluation is carried out regarding the work performed and competences necessary for the implementation of specific tasks, and its results serve to rationalise personnel-related decisions in terms of development, transfers, redundancies and promotions [6,7]. The term evaluation, as conceptualised by A. Pocztowski, can be defined as judgements about employees expressed in oral or written form, which are the result of valuing personality traits, behaviours or work effects [8]. The judgements are the result of comparing the features, competences, behaviours or effects of work of a given employee with a set pattern – a standard for a given work position. The standards are contained, among others, in the job descriptions and competence profiles of the job position, and

the comparison allows to identify competence gaps, which can be filled in order to match the employee to the post [9, 10, 11, 12, 13]. Thus, formalised appraisal systems serve to rationalise personnel activities, including shaping the employee's image – one can then speak of the so-called organisational perspective [14], while non-formalised systems are the basis for building the employee's social image – i.e. the image existing in the minds of the public. The variety of evaluation perspectives is associated with the different criteria used and the different evaluation of their value as the basis for building an overall evaluation. Other criteria are considered to be organisationally key – from the perspective of personnel activity and rationalisation of personnel decisions, while others from the social perspective.

3. Soldiers in Poland – statistical data and public opinion

Satisfying the need for security is one of the key tasks for which the Polish Army is responsible from the social perspective. Taking into account the geopolitical location of Poland, it is not surprising that the increase in the number of soldiers is of significant social importance, while taking into account the history and traditions of Polish military formations, in the public opinion soldiers enjoy respect and reverence. Taking into account the state as of 31 December 2018, 104,946 professional soldiers were serving in the Polish Army, including: 82 generals, 10290 senior officers, 9708 junior officers, 38269 warrant officers/ensigns and non-commissioned officers and 46597 privates. Moreover, as of 31st December 2018: candidate service consisted of 4,591, National Reserve Forces 4,106 and Territorial Defence Forces consisted of 14,010 soldiers [15].

According to the results of a survey conducted by CBOS in September 2019 [16] the activity of the Polish Army was well evaluated by 74% of the respondents (in March 2019 – 73%), which is the best

result since 2011. The Polish Army in 2019 also enjoyed the social trust of 77% of the surveyed Poles (59% – rather yes, 18% – definitely yes) [17]. A correlation can be seen that the higher the education of the surveyed persons, the more they trust the Army. People describing their views as right-wing rather than left-wing have more trust. Taking into account the years 2006-2019, Poles had the greatest trust in the Army in 2006 (80%), and the fewest people with such views were recorded in 2016 (69% of respondents). The positive image of the army is, inter alia, a result of the implementation of solutions and image policy contained in the decision No. 33/MON of the Minister of National Defence of 5 March 2019 on promotional activities in the Ministry of National Defence (Journal of Laws 2019, item 40). The evaluation of military activity, the trust in this institution and the image of soldiers itself are conditioned by a number of factors, which results in different views in particular social groups.

4. The system for evaluating professional soldiers' service – an organisational perspective

The official opinion is one of the key actions implemented in the field of human resources management in the Armed Forces [18]. The results of the opinions provide soldiers with clear feedback on the way they are perceived and evaluated by their superiors. The opinion, which is a summary of the whole year's work, is also used in planning the professional development of soldiers, including the determination of optimal forms of development, thanks to which it is possible to take into account the needs of the Armed Forces, as well as corps and personal groups. Over the last 28 years, the system for issuing soldier service evaluation has been changing (taking 1992 as a point of reference, the changes occurred in 1996, 2004, 2008 and 2010) [19]. At present, the system for issuing soldier service evaluation is implemented in accordance with the Law on Military

Service of Professional Soldiers, dated 11 September 2003 (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2018 item 173, as amended) and the provisions under the Ordinance of the Minister of National Defence of 26 May 2014 on evaluating the professional soldiers (Journal of Laws of 2014, item 764). The main purpose of evaluating professional soldiers, in accordance with the Law, is: evaluation of soldiers' duties performance at an official post (or official tasks in the case of an assessed person performing service in the personnel reserve), evaluation of competence and predisposition, and evaluation of the directions of further professional development, including the identification of training needs of soldiers [20]. The commander of a military unit is responsible for the preparation and conduct of the process of service opinion making, while outside the country – the national superior to whom a soldier is subordinate during this time [21]. The evaluation is carried out on an annual basis with the use of a uniform evaluation sheet for all soldiers, while the process itself begins on August 15 and ends on October 15 (during this time the process of evaluating the personnel status in units begins). In the process of issuing a service evaluation, the performance of official duties as well as the competence and predisposition of soldiers are subject to assessment. A 16-point system of evaluation [21] is used for assessing duties or tasks, including such criteria as: quality and timeliness in carrying out duties or tasks, availability, self-reliance and initiative, as well as work planning and organisations [21]. In turn, taking into account the competences and predispositions of professional soldiers, 9 criteria are analysed in the process of evaluation, including responsibility, determination in pursuing goals, accuracy and quickness in decision making, stress resistance, communicativeness and ability to work in a team, adhering to regulations, standards and rules, self-development and raising qualifications, caring for equipment and possessions, personal etiquette and

caring for appearance. Similarly to the performance of official duties, competences and predispositions are also given a score, with the 4-point scale adopted [21]. The overall evaluation of the assessed soldier is determined on the basis of the sum of points obtained for both the performance of official duties as well as for competences and predispositions. A maximum of 100 points can be obtained by a soldier, with a score of more than 90 points causing the soldier to receive the final exceptional service score (6). A very good grade (5) is given to soldiers who have scored a total of 75 to 90 points, a good grade (4) is given to soldiers who have scored between 50 and 74 points, a satisfactory grade (3) is given to soldiers who have scored between 25 and 49 points. Soldiers who scored less than 25 points are given a failing grade (2) [21]. The evaluation obtained in the process of evaluation is of significant importance in further personnel activity, which translates into dismissal, designation of another official position, receiving an incentive allowance, designation to a higher position or transition to a higher personnel corps.

5. The social perspective of soldiers' evaluation – results of own research

5.1. Description of the research conducted and the research sample

Taking into account the important role of soldiers as well as the social importance of the soldier's image, the main research problem was formulated in the form of a question: what criteria are used in the Polish Army to evaluate soldiers' activities and their image (organisational perspective) and what criteria are used by the society to evaluate soldiers' activities and their image (social perspective)? *In the research the following hypothesis was adopted: the criteria for the official evaluation of soldiers (organisational perspective) differ from the evaluation criteria used by the society in the process of evaluating soldiers (social perspective).* In order to answer the main research problem, theoretical and empirical research was carried out, including the analysis of documents –

legal acts, on the basis of which the criteria for issuing service evaluation were distinguished. The empirical research was carried out in January 2019 on a sample of 100 people. The group of respondents included 59% women and 41% men aged between 18 and 35.

5.2. Evaluation criteria vs. key competences of soldiers – survey results

Soldier evaluation criteria are a set of factors taken into account by society in the evaluation process. As M. Sidor-Rządkowska emphasises, the legitimacy of all activities related to the evaluation depends on the correctness of the criteria selection [7]. Different criteria can be considered important from an organisational perspective, and different from a social perspective. In order to identify potential discrepancies in the criteria used, the respondents were asked to indicate which criteria should be taken into account in the process of evaluating soldiers. According to the views of the respondents, professional soldiers should be evaluated taking into account the following criteria: teamwork skills (76%), ability to use work tools (75%), level of engagement in service (74%), leadership skills (73%), reliability of work done (65%), manner of carrying out work (65%), progress in professional development (63%), level of motivation to serve (60%) and the achieved results in service (53%). The respondents paid special attention to teamwork, typically technical skills necessary to operate the tools used in everyday service, as well as leadership skills [17], which corresponds to the image of a professional soldier, simultaneously a commander, and therefore an individual with unique leadership qualities. The respondents also emphasised the importance of commitment to service, reliability of work, motivation to work and results achieved, which shows the invariability of social views on the image of a soldier – a hero and a patriot capable of sacrificing life for the homeland (Figure 1.)

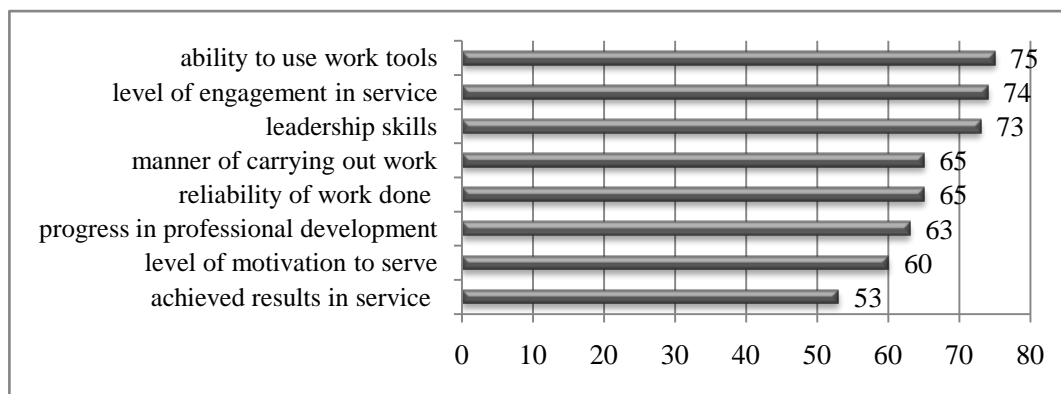


Figure 1: Evaluation criteria – results of research (in %)

Taking into account the two areas subject to the process of issuing service evaluation, i.e. the fulfilment of official duties and the possessed competences and predispositions, the respondents in the course of the conducted research were also asked what competences soldiers should have. The legitimacy of the question is due to the fact that the indicated competences constitute the basis for social evaluation of soldiers. The respondents indicated the importance of the following competences: resistance to stress (92%), ability to cope with crisis

situations (91%), courage (89%), ability to use work tools (83%), ability to make decisions (82%), decisiveness (80%), responsibility (77%), ability to submit oneself to higher command (73%), foreign language skills (69%), analytical skills (68%), discretion (67%), conscientiousness (67%), availability (67%), self-reliance (63%), ability to motivate (62%), assertiveness (54%), work organisation skills (54%), ethical behaviour (51%) and creativity (50%) (Figure 2).

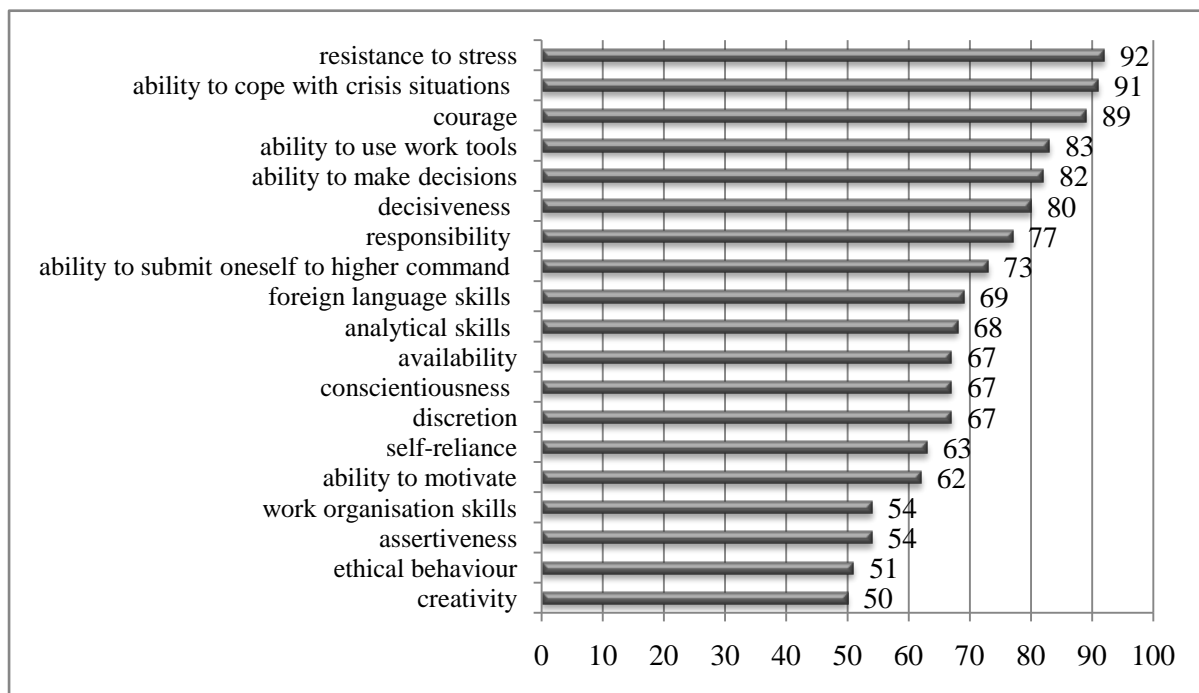


Figure 2: Key competences – results of research (in %)

The respondents also indicated the importance of knowledge of the law, negotiating skills, communication skills and empathy. It can be assumed that in part the indicated competences result from the social myth about the image of a soldier, which is closely related to the history of Polish military formations, additionally fuelled by literature references and media messages. It should also be emphasised that in the opinions of the surveyed, the knowledge of foreign languages is important as a key competence of soldiers, which results from their membership in international structures, including NATO, as well as the related cooperation in the international environment, manifested, among others, by participation in military exercises such as Defender-20.

5.3. Research conclusions

The main objective of the research was to identify the criteria for evaluating soldiers used in the Polish Army – the so-called organisational perspective and the criteria used by the society in the process of evaluating soldiers – the so-called social perspective. Achievement of the objective of the conducted research became possible as a result of the analysis of documents – legal acts regulating the functioning of the system of judging professional soldiers, as well as by conducting empirical research.

Firstly, general evaluation criteria related to the performance of official duties were compared. In the regulation governing the system for issuing evaluations, it was indicated that soldiers should be consulted taking into account four criteria (taking into account the application of the cohesion i - it is seven criteria). These criteria were compared with the results of empirical research. As a result of the comparison, it was established that:

a) quality and timeliness in carrying out duties or tasks is a criterion used in the army, but from a social perspective, the manner of performing work and its reliability are more important,

b) availability – this criterion was indicated by the respondents as the competence of the soldiers, while in the army it is a criterion used to assess the fulfilment of duties,

c) self-reliance and initiative – the respondents indicated self-reliance as an important competence of soldiers, while initiative was not indicated as a key criterion for evaluating work, whereas in the army, the indicated criteria remain crucial in relation to the performance of official duties,

d) work planning and work organisation – respondents described the organisation of work in the research as a key competence, but did not indicate the importance of planning.

Analysing the comparison, it can be seen that the organisational and social perspective is different. The respondents indicated the importance of a number of criteria that are not taken into account in the process of issuing evaluations in the Polish Army, such as e.g. leadership skills, level of engagement in the service. In addition, it can be noted that some of the criteria indicated by the respondents as important in the evaluation are in the second group of the evaluation criteria – competences and predispositions, and these are: ability to work as a team and progress in professional development. When comparing the competences and predispositions of soldiers, it can be pointed out that from an organisational perspective nine competences are important (11 taking into account the *and* conjunction), three of which the respondents also viewed as important, and these were: resistance to stress, responsibility and decision making skills. From a social perspective, theoretically less important are such criteria as: care of equipment and property, as well as personal culture and appearance, which does not mean that they are not taken into account when evaluating soldiers. These criteria can be considered socially obvious

and therefore not indicated by the respondents. It is worth pointing out, however, that from a social perspective, leadership competence, the ability to submit oneself to higher command, or knowledge of foreign languages are important, which does not directly result from the criteria used in the process of evaluating the service, and therefore is not tantamount to the fact that these criteria are not used, especially in the process of being appointed to higher posts.

6. Conclusions

The organisational and social perspective of the evaluation of soldiers differs in terms of the criteria adopted. Such a conclusion, based on the results of the conducted research, allowed for positive verification of the research hypothesis. Therefore, it can be concluded that the criteria considered important in the army in the process of evaluation do not fully correspond to

socially important criteria – and the other way around. The situation is similar with regard to soldiers' competence. According to the author of the article, taking into account the positive social evaluation of the Polish Army and the high level of trust in the army, it is worthwhile to consider introducing changes to the evaluation criteria used, by adding socially important criteria, which would allow for more intentional shaping of the soldiers' image in the long term, taking into account social needs. The possibility of distinguishing between competence criteria and criteria related to the performance of official duties should also be considered, adding to this group further criteria resulting from the research carried out, which would allow for a more complete evaluation of soldiers' service, while at the same time increasing the possibility of intentional shaping of a positive social image of soldiers.

References

- [1] Świderski K., *Uwarunkowania społeczne kariery zawodowej oficerów Wojska Polskiego*. Studium socjologiczne, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2015, p. 123-127.
- [2] Gronek K. A., *Prestiż społeczny Sił Zbrojnych RP a morale żołnierzy*, Bezpieczeństwo, Obronność, Socjologia, WCEO, no 4/2015, 2015.
- [3] Król H., Ludwiczyski A. (ed.), *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi. Tworzenie kapitału ludzkiego organizacji*, PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 275.
- [4] Filipowicz G., *Zarządzanie kompetencjami. Perspektywa firmowa i osobista*, Oficyna a Wolters Kluwer business, Warszawa 2014, p. 236.
- [5] Azad I., Sabzevari H., *Performance appraisal bias and errors: The influences and consequences*, International Journal of Organizational Leadership, no 4, p. 287, 2015.
- [6] Kumpikaitė V., *Human Resource Training Evaluation*, Engineering Economics, no 5(55), p. 30, 2007.
- [7] Sidor-Rządkowska M., *Kształtowanie nowoczesnych systemów ocen pracowniczych*, wyd. IV, Oficyna a Wolters Kluwer business, Warszawa 2013, p. 15-16.
- [8] Poczowski A., *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi. Zarys problematyki i metod*, ANTYKWA, Kraków 1998, p. 143.
- [9] Jastrzębowska-Tyszkowska A., Skarżyńska K., *Kiedy zadowoleni z pracy są także zadowoleni z życia? Rola kompetencji pracownika i jego dopasowania do środowiska pracy*, Psychological Journal, 22, 2, pp. 173-182, 2016.
- [10] Brandstätter H., *Emotions in everyday life situations: Time sampling of subjective experience*, [in] F. Strack, M. Argyle, N. Schwarz (ed.), *Subjective well-being: An in-terdisciplinary perspective*, England: Pergamon Press, Oxford 1991, pp. 173-192.

- [11] Caplan R.D., *Person-environment fit: Past, present, and future*, [in] C.L. Cooper (ed.), *Stress research*, Wiley, New York 1983, pp. 35-78.
- [12] Furnham A., *Work and leisure satisfaction*, [in] F. Strack, M. Argyle, N. Schwartz (red.), *Subjective well-being: An interdisciplinary perspective*, Pergamon, New York 1991, pp. 236-260.
- [13] Locke E.A., *The nature and causes of job satisfaction*, [in] M.D. Dunnette (ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology*, Rand-McNally, Chicago 1976, pp. 1297-1349.
- [14] Lakstigala I., Balina S., *Current Approaches To Public Administration Employee Evaluation*, Journal of Economics and Management Research, Vol. 7, p. 103, 2018.
- [15] *Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Poland*, GUS, Warsaw 2019, p. 138.
- [16] Komunikat z badań nr 118/2019 pt. *Ocena działalności instytucji publicznych i mediów*, CBOS, September 2019, p. 10.
- [17] *Zaufanie Polaków do instytucji*, KANTAR POLSKA, May 2019.
- [18] Kurek D., *Criteria for assessing the officers of selected uniformed services in Poland*, Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Śląskiej, Seria: Organizacja i Zarządzanie, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej w Gliwicach, Zeszyt 128, pp. 243-261, 2018.
- [19] Kurek D., *Doskonalenie systemów opiniowania funkcjonariuszy wybranych służb mundurowych*, ASzWoj, Warszawa 2018.
- [20] Law on Military Service of Professional Soldiers, dated 11th September 2003 (uniform consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2018 item 173, as amended).
- [21] Ordinance of the Minister of National Defence of 26 May 2014 on evaluating *the professional soldiers* (Journal of Laws of 2014, item 764).
- [22] Brandebo M. F., O'sterberg J., Berglund A. K., *The Impact of Constructive and Destructive Leadership on Soldier's Job Satisfaction*, Psychological Reports, Vol. 122(3), pp. 1068-1086, 2019.