

TITLE

“A Proposed Selection System for Officers of the Irish Defence Forces”.

By Captain Sean Burke

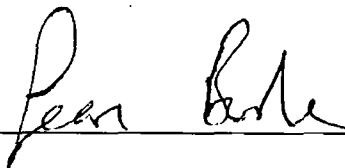
A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for a MA in
Human Resource Management

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Authorship declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award of an MA in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: 

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Acknowledgments.

I would like to offer my thanks to the following:

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My fellow Officers in the DF who participated in the focus groups; and

Particularly my family; Clare, Paul, Karen and Sean who survived the process.

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Abstract

The Defence Forces (DF) has gone through a decade and a half of unprecedented change. Changes have come about as a result of external forces and internal necessity. A number of reports and initiatives impacting on the DF during this period have led to a reduction in the overall strength of the DF and a decrease in the number of Officers vis-à-vis the number of enlisted personnel. A White Paper (WP) for defence, published in Feb 2000, set out Government policy on defence for the medium term (5-10 years). All the reports and initiatives made recommendations for the induction of Officers into the DF. Many of the recommendations made were not implemented. Sustaining Progress 2003-2005 includes a modernisation agenda that specifically requires a change in the induction system for Officers into the DF.

One of the roles articulated in the WP is DF participation in missions mandated by the United Nations in the cause of International Peace and Security. There has been a process of globalisation in international military operations while at the same time new tasks are being generated. Multinational military co-operation requires high levels of interoperability between contributing nations. Logic dictates, in this context, that foreign national army selection systems are examined to gauge international "best practice". A number of accession systems from countries that are current or future partners involved in multinational military missions with the DF have been explored for this purpose.

Internally the pressure for change results from the need to address junior Officer shortages at Unit level, to introduce mechanisms to offset the reduction in the number of applications for cadetships, to provide a more inclusive accession model that encourages service member accession and to reduce the ad-hoc nature of the current selection model.

A selection model for Officers in the DF is proposed that focuses on a "two-tier" system catering for graduate and school leaver entry, increased opportunity for service member entry and clear policies for Direct Entry Officers. The central tenet of this model proposes that all officers must have a University Degree; prior to entry or have the necessary academic standard to obtain a Degree after commissioning. All officers must complete elements of the "one system" of Officer training proposed. The proposal recommends a reduction in the initial Officer training programme from 21 months to a period of 12 to 14 months.

Chapter No 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The proposal document submitted as part of this dissertation on Friday 5th March 2004 included the following elements.

1.1.1 Topic

The Selection of Commissioned Officers for the Irish Defence Forces.

1.1.2 Research Idea

To assess alternative international models for the selection of Military Officers against the current Irish Defence Forces system.

1.1.3 Research objectives/questions

- *To seek the views and opinions of serving Officers in order to assess and to compare the perceptions of the current system to the proposed elements of alternative systems.*
- *Develop a selection system for Officers based on the findings of this research.*

1.2 The objective of this dissertation is to propose a new selection system for Officers in the Defence Forces (DF). Over the last decade and a half the DF has gone through a period of unprecedented change. There have been a number of reports and initiatives that have impacted on the DF precipitating these changes. Within the many reports and reviews there are a number of recommendations dealing specifically with the induction of Officers into the organisation. The number of accessions to the Officer Corp. from the enlisted ranks has not increased during this period despite a number of recommendations to facilitate service member accession. The most recent initiative is the Sustaining Progress Social Partnership Agreement 2003 – 2005 wherein a modernisation agenda specifically requires that a new induction system be implemented for DF Officers. Coupled with the changes resulting from these reports and initiatives, changing social and economic factors are impacting on the number of applications entered for Cadetship competitions. The buoyant economy has resulted in historically low unemployment rates and the rise in the number of school leavers attending third level education has constricted the traditional pool of potential candidates available.

1.3 The DF, once focused on the internal security situation, is now externally focused. Ireland's International obligations are expanding. The DF are involved in United Nations operations, Partnership for Peace (PfP) and European defence and security co-operation. In this multinational military operations environment Irish Officers must be able to measure up to their international peers. Selection systems used by other national armies, DF current or future partners were used as comparators in this dissertation as a measure of "best practice" in international Officer selection. Drawing on the information gleaned from the comparator countries and through the use of focus groups involving the participation of currently serving officers to ascertain their views, a proposed selection and induction model was produced. This proposed model for the selection and induction of officers for the DF is presented in the recommendations chapter of this dissertation.

1.4 Outline

Chapter No 1 is the Introduction and overview of this dissertation.

Chapter No 2 provides the context by setting the scene. The role and structure of the DF is presented. The role of the Officer is explored. The internationalisation of the military role is introduced and the various reports and initiatives impacting on the DF are outlined focusing on particular recommendations for the induction of Officers into the organisation.

Chapter No 3 presents a literature review to discuss the uniqueness of raising military forces, the military as a profession is defined and the strategic importance of Officer selection is explained. The use of the generic term "selection" is explored to provide clarity. At the end of this chapter the various accession streams for Officers into the DF is presented.

Chapter No 4 presents the methodology for the collection of data for this dissertation. The collection of secondary data is presented in chapter No 5. My philosophy for the collection of primary data followed the realism approach. As a result the research was neither purely "inductive" nor "deductive" but rather a combination. The data collection method used was three focus groups. This method led to an understanding of the views and opinions of my fellow Officers who participated in the process.

Chapter No 5 examines the induction systems used by the United States of America, The United Kingdom, Canada, France, Sweden and Australia for the selection and induction of Officers into their armies. Such an examination is valid considering the multinational nature of Ireland's international military operations. This chapter also provided useful information to stimulate debate on changes that could enhance Officer induction in the Irish DF.

Chapter No 6 presents a summary of the primary data gathered as a result of the focus groups process. Three focus groups were conducted to seek the views and opinions of serving Officers to assess and to compare their perceptions about the current and proposed systems. The focus groups were conducted in three phases, the first outlined the drivers of change, the second examined systems used in the comparator countries as against the Irish system and the last phase sought the views and opinions of the participants about the proposed system.

Chapter No 7 presents the conclusions drawn from the process of examining Officer selection in the DF. The future cannot be extrapolated from the past, the number of applications for cadetships has fallen the DF must take action to address the potential shortfall of sufficiently talented personnel to make selection meaningful. A new system for the selection and induction of external candidates and high potential internal candidates has been proposed to address organisational needs and concerns. The central tenet of the proposed system is that all Officers gain accession through one system and that all entrants have, or have the potential to gain, a University Degree. The final part of the conclusion outlines the lessons I have learned during the preparation of this dissertation.

Chapter No 8 recommends a new selection and induction system for Officers of the DF. The model presented takes account of the views and opinions of the participants involved in the collection of the primary data. The proposed system suggests "one system" of training for all Officer candidates irrespective of their entry stream. All Officers pass the same "start-line". The model proposed would replace the current ad-hoc systems in place, reduce inequality, promote graduate and service member entry, retain the school leaver entry stream and promote a policy of a professional "degreed" Officer Corp.

Chapter No 2: Context

The Irish Permanent Defence Forces

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the context within which this research dissertation takes place. I will outline the structure and roles of the Irish Permanent Defence Forces (DF), the role of a Commissioned Officer and the various initiatives that have impacted on the DF over recent years, specifically focusing on those impacting or making recommendations on the systems affecting the selection of Officers and the role of the Officer in the DF.

2.2 Structure and Roles

The DF was established by proclamation of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State on 1st October 1924. Under Article 15.6 of Bunreacht na hÉireann the right to raise and maintain military or armed force is vested exclusively in the Oireachtas. Section 17 of the Defence Act 1954 provides that, under the direction of the President the military command of, and all executive and administrative powers in relation to, the DF shall be exercisable by the Government through and by the Minister for Defence.

2.2.1 Roles Assigned to The DF

The Irish Government, in February 2000, published the first ever White Paper for Defence. The White Paper provides the most recent articulation of the roles set out by Government for the DF. The current roles set out for the DF are as follows:

- To defend the State against armed aggression, this being a contingency, preparations for its implementation will depend on an on-going Government assessment of the security and defence environment.
- To aid the civil power (meaning in practice the assist, when requested, the Garda Síochána, who have primary responsibility for Law and Order, including the protection of the internal security of the State).
- To participate in missions mandated by the United Nations in the cause of International Peace and Security.

- To provide a fishery protection service in accordance with the States obligations as a member of the EU.
- To carry out such other duties as may be assigned to them from time to time e.g. search and rescue, air ambulance service, ministerial air transport service, assistance on the occasion of national or other disasters, assistance in connection with the maintenance of essential services, assistance in combating oil pollution at sea.

“Defence is a core responsibility of a nation State” (DF Annual Report 1999). The first major role assigned by Government to the DF is to defend the State against armed aggression. This is achieved through the maintenance of a contingent military capability. Such capability has been likened to an insurance policy, hopefully never required, but it must be maintained and up to date with the capability to respond effectively if a claim is made.

“To a significant extent, defence is about preparing and maintaining a capability to respond to contingencies and threats. When not engaged in operations any defence organisation concentrates on training and preparation” (White Paper 2000).

2.2.2 Structure

This capability is realised through the men and women of the Permanent Defence Force (PDF). The PDF consists of three distinct components, the Army, the Naval Service and the Air Corps. Each of these components is distinct in terms of their own modus operandi, culture, structure and strategies but share common values, military ethos and the overarching strategies and goals of the PDF. The focus of this dissertation will be on the Army element of the PDF.

The Army consists of a modern conventional combat force comprising of Light Infantry Forces supported by combat support (artillery, cavalry, communications and engineers) and combat service support elements (logistics and administrative support).

The Army is structured along conventional military lines into three territorial Brigade structures^{Note 1}. The Brigades, designated to reflect their geographical areas of operational responsibility, are the 1st Southern Brigade, 2nd Eastern Brigade and 4th Western brigade respectively. Training and logistical support is provided by the DF Training Centre (DFTC) and by various logistics bases located in the Curragh at Kildare and Dublin.

The authorised strength of the PDF is 10,500 personnel (White Paper 2000). Provision had been made in the White Paper allowing for 250 personnel in training over and above the authorised strength. The Minister for Defence, Mr. M Smith TD, removed this provision in 2003.

The actual strength of the PDF, at January 2004, was 10,443 personnel of all ranks. The Army component of the PDF had strength of 8,470 personnel all ranks.

Within the Army, Commissioned Officers make up approximately 12% of the total strength. The remaining 88% of the Army comprises of enlisted personnel, Non-Commissioned Officers and Private Soldiers, see Appendix No 1 Military Rank Structure.

2.3 The Role of the Officer

In the strictest sense an Officer's Commission, obtained from Uachtarán na hÉireann acting on the advice of the Government, requires the Officer to be faithful to Ireland, loyal to the constitution and to obey all lawful orders issued by superior officers.

"All Commissioned Officers of the DF shall hold their Commissions from the President"
(Bunreacht na hÉireann Article 13.5.2)

This fits the stereotypical view of the Army as a command-and-control type organisation wherein authority is formally granted through leadership positions. The implication is that the Officer's role is not complex, orders received through the chain of command are acted on by giving orders to subordinates, and Officers act as the conduit through which things get done.

^{Note 1} A Brigade consists of three Infantry Battalions, Combat Support Units and Combat Service Support elements. (Approx 2,500 personnel). A Brigade is the smallest military unit that combines all arms in a cohesive whole to fight the battle.

2.3.1 Command and Control

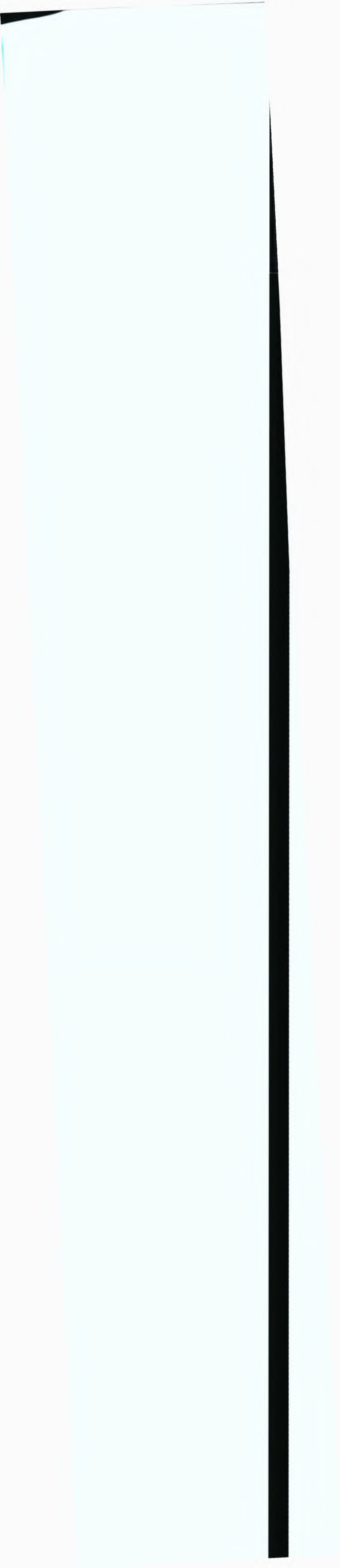
The role of the Officer in a military organisation is to command and control personnel under arms. Command and Control involves management, leadership and direction.

Command "Denotes not only personal authority over others (in the uniquely, military sense) but managerial authority and responsibility for the direction and control of military forces. Officers who hold appointments that have command authority and responsibility are designated Commanding Officers and have special powers and duties imposed on them by the Defence Act which enable them to exercise specific disciplinary authority within the terms of the Act" (Efficiency Audit Group, Working Group on the Military Review. 1992 p.7).

The Commander is responsible for the employment, safety, security, welfare, training, career development, morale, health and fitness and ultimately the lives of the personnel under their command. The Commander is equally responsible for the military equipment and installations under their control and the uses to which they are put.

These responsibilities are carried out in a highly complex organisation governed by a wide range of Defence Force Regulations reflecting the complexity present in the organisation and business of a modern military force, Officers must have a sufficient depth of knowledge of these regulations to function effectively in the organisation. Against this backdrop Defence must be managed as an efficient and effective business able to meet changing demands in an environment where the cost of the defence product is coming under increasing pressure to demonstrate value for money. In this context the Officer must be both a military expert and a business expert having knowledge of military legislation and in addition must have an understanding of other national legislation and initiatives, such as the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), Employment Legislation, Health and Safety Legislation etc that impacts on the DF today.

It is within this legal and legislative environment that a Commissioned Officer performs multiple roles in the normal course of their day-to-day duties.



- Strategic planning and Policy development covering all aspect of organisational activity.
- Human Resource Management (HRM): a strategic approach to HRM in the application of best practice to transform human potential into effective performance.
- Logistics: Provision and maintenance of such materials as are necessary to achieve the mission, weapons, munitions, fuel, rations etc.
- Operations Management: the effective and efficient deployment of resources. Human and Logistics to achieve the task in military operations at home and abroad.
- Training, development and education to provide for the capabilities required to fulfil the roles assigned by Government.

2.4 Overseas Service

In fulfilment of one of the roles assigned to the DF, by Government, service as an Officer carries with it an implied obligation to serve overseas. Overseas service is voluntary for Officers commissioned prior to 1994; Officers commissioned post 1994 are subject to mandatory selection for overseas service. Every Officer in the Army will serve overseas at least once during their commissioned service. The majority of Officers have served on a number of missions, as such service is considered essential for operational and professional development. Overseas service has a significant positive impact on the Officer's future promotional prospects. As of April 2004 approximately 12% of Army Officers were serving overseas. On occasion the percentage of the total Officer Corp overseas on International Peace Keeping and Peace Support Operations can be higher.

Overseas service has presented new challenges to the DF. Chris Donnelly, in a NATO publication, pointed out that there has been a process of globalisation of international military operations while at the same time "new tasks" are being generated "other than war". Multinational military co-operation through the use of crisis reaction forces^{Note 2} staffed by military personnel from different countries with diverse cultures has resulted in "international driven pressures for change and adaptation". (Donnelly 2001) In this multinational environment the one common language is the interoperable military doctrine that all Irish Officers must have a proficiency in prior to overseas service.

^{Note 2} In Dec 2003 EU Defence Ministers backed a plan to set up mobile "battle groups" similar to the French force sent to the Congo in 2003. Javier Solana stated that nine battle groups would be in place by 2007.

2.5 Accessions Irish Officers

The primary source of accession to the Commissioned ranks is through the Cadet School training programme conducted in the Military College based in the DFTC. The word “Cadet” is defined in Defence Force Regulations (DFR) A.3 as a person awarded a Cadetship by the Minister and who is “undergoing a specified course of training with a view to determining the suitability of that person for appointment as an Officer of the Permanent Defence Force”.

Two other methods used for Officer accession are the Commissioned From the Ranks Scheme whereby suitably qualified Non-Commissioned Officers with a good service record have, on occasion, the opportunity to undergo a Potential Officers course on the completion of which they are commissioned as Officers of the DF.

And the other accession method is through Direct appointment, Direct Entry (DE) Officer appointments are used for individuals who have achieved professional qualifications in Medical, Engineering, Legal, Religious fields and other specialist areas. Entry depends upon the occupational speciality, educational background, prior experience and the immediate needs of the DF. Competitions for DE Officers are held on an ad-hoc basis as the need arises for specific appointments.

2.6 Initiatives impacting on the DF

2.6.1 The DF has been, and continues to go, through a period of transition designed to transform the organisation into a “world class military organisation” (White Paper 2000). The change process has involved every facet of the organisation including strategy, structure, processes and the people in the DF. The initiatives impacting on the DF consist of DF reviews and government initiatives.

2.6.2 Initiatives Reports and Reviews:

- The Gleeson Commission on Remuneration and conditions of service in the DF 1990 (The Gleeson Report).
- Efficiency Audit Groups EAG.1 (1991); EAG.2 (1992) and EAG.3 (1994).

- The Price Waterhouse Report on the DF 1994.
- Government White Paper on Defence 2000.
- Strategic Management Initiative.
- Sustaining Progress and the Defence Sector Modernisation Agenda.

2.6.3 The Gleeson Commission Report (1990)

Primarily established to review DF remuneration, its investigations also led it to conclude that the DF was in need of a radical overhaul in its structures, organisation and deployment, financial management systems, facilities and resources, manpower and recruitment policy and personnel management systems. The final report from the Gleeson Commission included several recommendations that impacted directly on the Officer body including:

- The introduction of a merit based system of promotion for Officers;
- Induction into the DF on a regular and planned basis to maintain a steady inflow.

The Commission expressed a concern about the small numbers of enlisted personnel who had been commissioned as Officers in the past. "Since 1962, 20 personnel have been commissioned by way of the Cadet Scheme and 140 NCOs have been commissioned from the ranks" (Gleeson. p41).

Gleeson recommended positive steps should be taken to encourage serving personnel who are eligible to apply for Cadetships and proposed a maximum age limit for enlisted personnel should be 24. The report also recommended that the Cadet Scheme should be re-assessed to identify further changes to the scheme which would increase the number of serving personnel succeeding in obtaining Cadetships. Gleeson did not recommend that a quota of Cadet vacancies should be reserved for Enlisted Personnel.

The scheme by which NCOs may be commissioned from the ranks appeared to Gleeson to be intended largely as a means of selecting experienced NCOs who would be suitable for administrative or logistic appointments. Gleeson recommended an expanded scheme that, coupled with the increase in educational standards amongst NCOs, should result in a significant increase in the number of personnel commissioned from the ranks and that

“Such an arrangement would be of considerable benefit to the DF”. Gleeson recommended that inducements be introduced aimed at encouraging the widest possible candidature among serving NCOs.

Since 1969 Cadet-entry Army Officers have attended third-level courses mainly at University College Galway. The aim initially was to raise the general education standard and participation was mainly in the Arts and Commerce facilities. As the scheme developed Officers graduated in science and engineering disciplines. Gleeson noted “the USAC^{Note 3} scheme is regarded by the military authorities as important and successful and is seen to have achieved the basic aim of improving the general education standard of Officers” (p47). Gleeson considered that the USAC scheme merited close examination questioning whether all Army Cadets should be educated to third level standard at state expense. He considered that as an alternative a greater number of graduates should enter the Cadet Scheme offering incentives such as a differential of 15% over normal pay and commissioning in the rank of Lieutenant. Gleeson recognised that such an arrangement would offset the problem created by the present scheme where officers are away from their Units for three to four years at an important time in their career development.

Gleeson also recommended that the option of a Short Service Commission Scheme should be considered in the context of Officer recruitment in the future (Gleeson 2.2.26).

Many of the recommendations in Gleeson were accepted and implemented particularly in relation to remuneration. Recommendations in relation to Officer accession were not fully implemented; such recommendations continue to add to the debate today in relation to Officer selection in the DF.

2.6.4 Efficiency Audit Group

The Government established the Efficiency Audit Group (EAG) in 1988 to make recommendations on alternative practices and work methods resulting in lower costs and increased efficiency within Government Departments. The EAG completed three studies in relation to Defence in 1991, 1992 and 1994.

^{Note 3} USAC; University Scheme Administration Complement.

EAG 1 (1991) concentrated on the overall structure of the Department of Defence. EAG 2 (1992) focused on the roles of the DF and on the efficiency and effectiveness of internal military administration. EAG 3 (1994); in 1993 having considered the EAG 1 and EAG 2 reports the Government set out revised roles for the DF and that based on the revised roles a radical overhaul of the DF should be taken under the aegis of the EAG.

The EAG completed a series of examinations of the DF. Price Waterhouse Consultants were engaged to review the DF and to make recommendations. Independent military advice was supplied by Canadian Military Officers on the Price Waterhouse team and by the EAG's own military adviser from New Zealand.

While Price Waterhouse highlighted many of positive individual and collective strengths of the DF its final overall conclusion was that "The PDF is struggling to maintain a capacity in each of the roles assigned. Generally speaking it is badly organised, too old, under equipped, under trained and suffering from a lack of recruitment and investment" (PW Review of the DF). This analysis was accepted by the EAG.

Among the issues examined were the number of personnel in the DF and the level of resources provided for them, the balance of Commissioned Officers V Enlisted Personnel and the multiplicity of military Bases throughout the State. In their submission to the EAG Price Waterhouse identified a number of personnel issues that had to be dealt with including:

- Continuous recruitment to reduce age profiles.
- Be properly structured, organised, manned equipped and deployed providing for a rewarding professional career for Defence Force personnel.
- Lower retirement ages for Officers and Enlisted Personnel coupled with a higher rate of turnover in the Officer Corps.
- Total number of Officers to be reduced, more young Officers should be promoted.
- A review of internal Officer training including the duration and composition of military college courses and exploration of the possibility of post-graduate recruitment.

2.6.5 Defence Forces Review Implementation Plan

The Government accepted the conclusions of the EAG and established an implementation Group to prepare a Defence Forces Review Implementation Plan (DFRIP). The acceptance by Government of the conclusions and recommendations of the EAG had a major impact on the DF. The DFRIP was approved in 1996. The major changes implemented included the following:

- The organisation was flattened; a layer of the management hierarchy was removed.
- The number of military units was reduced from 155 to 118 a reduction of 29%. This resulted in fewer units but those remaining were more up to authorised strength.
- Personnel numbers in the DF reduced from 12,750 to 11,500 a total drop of 9%.
- Officer numbers in the DF was reduced from 1,618 to 1,270 a reduction of 23%.
- Five Military Barracks were closed.
- There was a substantial delegation of financial authority to military Officers.
- There was a clearly established recognition of the requirement for all Officers to have a third level educational qualification.

2.6.6 White Paper 2000 (The Government White Paper on Defence February 2000)

The White Paper 2000 set out the policy on Defence for the medium term (5-10 years). The aim of the White Paper is to provide a framework to ensure that an appropriate level of defence capability is in place having regard to the changing defence and security environment at home and abroad. One of the key goals outlined in the development plan is to “Provide sufficient forces and capability to meet needs at home and to make a significant contribution abroad”.

In the description of defence policy the White Paper points to the need to ensure that the DF must be capable of operating alongside military forces from other countries and of responding to the uncertainties and challenges of the changing national and international security environment.

The White Paper provided for an authorised strength of 10,750 personnel including 250 personnel in training. A reduction of 1,000 personnel from the recommended strength provided for in the DFRIP. The White Paper proposed an updated DF Personnel

Management Plan to ensure that the DF keeps pace with the current “best practice”. The plan included the following Officer personnel elements:

- Introduction to a Short Service Commission and graduate entry as part of an overall plan to address the shortage of Junior Officers.
- Regular schemes to commission enlisted personnel as Officers.
- A revision of the Officer promotion system.

2.6.7 Strategic Management Initiative

The Strategic Management Initiative (SMI) commits all Government Departments to the provision of value for money services to meet the needs of Government and the public. The DF has fully embraced the concepts and principles that facilitate the provision of services economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Officer Corps as the managers of the Defence enterprise have had to learn a new language and grasp corporate and business terminology to advance aspects of the SMI such as Business Plans, Performance Indicators, Management Information Framework, Customer Service Action Plans, partnership and e-Public Service Strategies. Today Officers have adapted to the need to be a military professional and a business professional.

2.6.8 Modernisation Agenda

As part of “Sustaining Progress” Social Partnership Agreement 2003-2005 the DF are committed to the implementation of an agreed agenda for modernisation. The sectorial “modernisation agenda” for the DF provides a framework wherein areas to be developed, that are consistent with the terms of the White Paper 2000, can be progressed. One of the priorities identified going forward in the Modernisation Agenda is the necessity for an integrated personnel management system. One of the elements included in the proposed integrated personnel management is the question of Officer recruitment.

“it is intended to introduce an integrated Officer induction and initial training system that will provide for a regular intake of school leavers, graduates and personnel with service in the enlisted ranks of the PDF. The common general initial training period will be reduced

to not less than one year. Graduates will be commissioned as Lieutenants and existing arrangements will continue to apply to personnel with previous service in the enlisted ranks of the PDF”, (Modernisation Agenda).

2.7 Economic and Social Trends

The DF traditionally competes for talent in the “college bound” youth market. This pool of talent has been constricting in recent years due to a period of economic buoyancy that has led to historically low unemployment levels in Ireland. The competition in the labour market has intensified increasing the demand for workers with a college education. The numbers of school leavers attending third level education has increased significantly as a result over the last decade and a half. In 1990 only 28% of those aged 19 years old were in full time education. By the year 2002 that had risen to 50% of 19 year olds in full time education (see table No 1 below). In the year 89/90 there were 68,165 students attending third level institutes by the year 2001/2002 that figure had risen to 124,589. Students achieving qualifications at third level have higher pay expectations than second level students, in 1996 the “college premium” in the USA was said to be 60% over that of a high school graduate.

Age	1990	2000	2002
18	48	61	61
19	28	49	50
20	13	21	22

Table No 1.Percent of persons in full time education.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 MRD Foot divided the ways in which military forces can be raised and organised into four general categories. Conscript armies: such as those that exist in Turkey and Central and Eastern European countries. Conscript-based armies are based on conscripts with a professional Cadre of Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers; citizen armies like those in Sweden, Switzerland, Israel and the army that existed in the former Yugoslavia. All citizens are obliged to serve in citizen armies. The third type for example in Belgium and Germany is a mixture of the previously mentioned systems. Finally there is the voluntary system, such as the present system in Ireland, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the United States of America for example.

3.2 As with any voluntarist organisation the Irish DF must go out into the market to compete for labour during a period of historically low unemployment and a buoyant economy. But there the comparison ends; Huntington said that the vocation of “Officership” meets the principle criteria of professionalism, “The great professions of law, of the church, of medicine, of the military have a number of things in common. Those professions are responsible for their own training and education, career structure and advancement. They are responsible for their own ethos and professionalism”. He also argued “it is readily apparent that the military function requires a high order of expertise” (Huntington 1981).

3.3 Dr Peter Foot argues that even within this group of professionals the military profession is special. Military personnel may not avoid ultimate personal liability if they are to retain credibility in their comrades’ eyes. Secondly the doctor and lawyer will gain wisdom as they grow in their profession; the military require wisdom almost from the first moment of going out as part of their new profession. This places a premium on the education and training of the military. On commissioning the young Officer becomes a platoon commander responsible for a platoon of thirty soldiers. At this early stage in the career of the young Officer they will be expected to show wisdom beyond their years of experience in the forces, this not only goes to the level of training and military education they have received but also to the calibre of individual selected for that post.

3.4 Hardinge argued, “Service careers are very different from most civilian occupations”. This is true of all military organisations, the actual threat to life define the characteristics of the organisation as well as the norms, values and culture whether during daily routine or in times of conflict, the disciplinary rules, rank structure and command system impose a uniqueness of profession on the military. “One of the most subtle yet most potent ways through which cultural assumptions get embedded and perpetuated is the process of selecting new members” (Hardinge 1989).

This points to an organisation that has a high degree of socialisation; in this regard “careful selection” is identified by Pascale (1995) as the first crucial step to effective socialisation and a strong culture. If then as Schein argues “that leadership and culture are closely connected...leaders embed develop and sometimes change culture” then it follows that the leaders must know the rules of the game “the way we do things around here”. In this regard selection must be viewed as strategic.

3.5 Over the course of history, military organisations have laid down criteria for the selection of their soldiers. The use of selection methods is not a new idea; Gideon used two selection tests in choosing 300 men from his army of 32,000 to face the Midianite armies. Those that were fearful and those that kneeled to drink from the river, forgetting about the need to remain watchful, were dismissed. (Old Testament)

In determining those that would command and lead troops, physical power, military skills, nobility and wealth, political power, academic knowledge, personality traits and many other criteria have been used to decide who would lead and who would follow. In the early 20th century, particularly in the British Army, commissions could still be purchased. Officers from a particular class of society were awarded a commission. Aptitude for the job was not a consideration. The situation at the turn of the century was much simpler, in Britain for example, it was as simple as defining the duty of military personnel as “to kill the Queen’s enemies”. Today that definition, with all of its implications for leadership, management, training, technology, equipment, morale, etc, is wholly inadequate for a modern military organisation.

3.6 In today’s armies military commanders are developed and grown from the pool of those chosen to be Officers. Prior to receiving a commission as an Officer those men and

women, particularly in the western world, will have gone through a rigorous and sophisticated recruitment and selection procedure. The necessity for such vigour results from the long-range implications of the selection procedure, entry-level commissioned Officers, at the rank of Second Lieutenant, potentially, may become a General responsible for thousands of soldiers.

Beaumont's argument that a selection process has an "enhanced potential importance" has particular resonance in the military. He noted that the design of a selection system must support the overall organisational strategy (Beaumont 1993). Clearly, in the military context, where the General's are the strategists, the selection of entry-level Officers is critical to the organisation. As Jack Welch pointed out, time spent on selecting the right person for the right job at the right time will have enormous strategic implications. (Welch 2001).

It is not the choice of strategy or the strategic direction of the organisation that is critical to success; it is the selection of the personnel to support that strategy. Boxall (1994) provided a powerful illustration when he considered the relative importance of the "Choice of Strategy" vis-à-vis the "Choice of People". He discussed General Montgomery's Desert campaign during World War II in North Africa. Boxall noted that Montgomery's campaign focused on supply lines, firepower and soldier morale which proved to be a decisive war-time "strategy". The most important decision however was not Montgomery's combat strategy it was the decision by Winston Churchill to select Montgomery.

3.7 The Initial Selection of Officers

Determines who will be available to serve in command functions in the future. The rate of change in the world order has had a major effect on military organisations in national and international operational activities. This is particularly true in the Irish context wherein the DF have experienced a decade of unprecedented change in its operations at home and abroad.

Therefore, it is important to examine how Officer candidates are selected, examining the current criteria and selection systems for the various entry streams and comparing or

“Benchmarking” those various systems against systems that are used in other modern military organisations.

3.8 The use of the term “Selection”

In the title and proposal document for this dissertation I have used the word “selection” for the consideration of how Officers are selected for the DF. I have used the generic term “selection” to examine the criteria that is laid down at the point of entry to the selection process, elements of the selection system and the induction period which, for the purpose of this dissertation, is taken as the period from when a candidate is awarded a Cadetship to the point where the Commissioned Officer is promoted to the rank of Captain. I am not discussing the actual “point” of selection in other words the point at which the Final Interview Board makes its determination as to a candidate’s suitability or unsuitability for commissioned service in the DF.

3.9 Watson provides a definition that describes recruitment and selection as “processes by which organisations solicit, contact and interest potential appointees”. This definition includes seeking and appointing both internal and external candidates. The DF primarily target external candidates for Cadetships. An intake projection is calculated based on the numbers of Officers leaving the DF in the current year. The authorised strength of the Officer body minus the calculated wastage at the end of the current year results in the number of selectees required for intake the following year to maintain the authorised strength of Officers.

Once sanctioned, usually in December yearly, a competition for Cadetships is launched the following January. Advertising takes place in the national news and media. Serving Officers also attend recruitment fairs and career days in schools and colleges around the country. Approximately fifty Officer-Cadets are recruited each year primarily from the current Leaving Certificate population. A smaller number of graduate and undergraduates are recruited. Qualified enlisted personnel can enter the Cadet competition, an age extension of two years above that of a civilian applies in the case of enlisted personnel. There is no specific internal advertising aimed at attracting suitably qualified enlisted personnel. Applications are vetted and personnel fulfilling the basic eligibility criteria such as citizenship, age, security clearance etc. are called to a preliminary interview.

3.10 This phase corresponds to the definition by Gunnigle and Flood (1990) of recruitment “attracting a group of potentially employable candidates”. The next phase defined by Gunnigle and Flood (1990) is selection, which is the “process of choosing from the group”. They go on to say that good recruitment is a prerequisite for effective selection.

3.11 The DF has experienced a sharp decline in the number of applicants for Officer Cadetships in the last ten years from a high of 2,090 in 1994 to 877 in the 2004 competition, of which only 479 were for Army Cadetships. The lowest applicant level for all Cadetships during this period was 679 in 1999.

The DF is not alone in experiencing such a decline. In the business world the challenges of recruiting people at a time of high growth and historically low unemployment levels have also given rise to concern (Bolles 1999). The US military is also losing its “war for talent” according to David McCormick (The McKinsey Quarterly Sept 1999), the battle to recruit Officers who have the necessary skills needed for today need to be re-thought or “it will lose this war”. Ryne and Barber (1990) offer options that are open to organisations to enhance their recruitment efforts, one is to widen their recruitment net to target “non-traditional” sources, the other is to offer inducements or incentives to applicants.

Taylor (1998) characterises recruitment as a positive activity requiring employers to sell themselves in the relevant labour markets so as to maximise the pool of well-qualified candidates. By contrast he sees selection as a negative activity in so far as it involves picking the best from the pool of candidates and turning down the rest. Selection is a necessary evil but there must be sufficient candidates to afford an opportunity to choose. The quality of candidates needs to be good enough to make such decisions meaningful. “neither praise nor pay can motivate people to perform beyond their capabilities and the best training programme cannot make a silk purse from a sow’s ear” Roberts (1997). It follows, while it may be necessary to widen and offer new or enhanced incentives over the recruitment catchment area, an organisation must not dilute or allow any diminution of the standards sought to support the organisation’s strategic stance as Mintzberg said “strategy is the stream in which a range of disparate activities takes place”. In that vein selection is often strategic.

The purpose of selection “is to match people to work” (Roberts 1997). This phase of the process is “aimed at attracting the “right” candidates who are predisposed to the organisations beliefs and values” (Pascale 1985). Schein argues, “leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin” (Schein 1992). This being the case the selection of leaders for the DF is all the more important to perpetuate the military ethos in the organisation.

The preliminary interviews in the DF result in a high attrition rate relative to the number of applicants. It is at the preliminary stage that the interview board make a subjective reasoning as to the candidate’s predisposition to the organisations beliefs and values. As Schein pointed out “candidates who resemble present members in style assumptions, values and beliefs are more attractive to management” (1992). In the year 2000 for example only 30% of the original applicants reached the Final Interview Stage. In 2002, 35% of the applicants reached final interview. The successful candidates are found to be unsuitable for reasons of not satisfying the preliminary interview board of their suitability, not exhibiting the assumptions, values and beliefs necessary, or failing to meet the qualifying standards; educational, medical, or physical fitness and in some cases by de-selecting themselves.

3.12 Accession in the Permanent DF

There are three main entry streams into the PDF, i. Cadetships ii. Commissioned from the Ranks (CFR) and iii. Direct Entry.

3.12.1 Award of Cadetships

The conditions governing the award of Cadetships is attached as Appendix No 2. Candidates awarded cadetships are enlisted as a Private soldier for general service. Enlisted personnel of NCO rank are reverted to the rank of three star Private, for a period of 21 months. During this period the cadet undergoes training in weapons handling, tactics, arms and foot drill, military engineering, human resource management, communications skills, military law, IT/IS and academic studies which include leadership, psychology, Irish and military history, politics and economics. Cadets are required to take an active interest in sports. Each cadet is also required to qualify as a Physical Training Leader.

3.12.2 Appointment to Commissioned Rank

Cadets who successfully complete cadets training are awarded a Commission by Uachtarán na hÉireann in the rank of Second Lieutenant. The newly commissioned Officers are then assigned to a military unit.

3.12.3 Third Level Education

The Commission on Higher Education (1969) recommended that all Officers should attend University. Second Lieutenants spend approximately 15 months at their new appointments after which the majority are then assigned to a course of study leading to a degree at the National University of Ireland, Galway under the USAC scheme or to a course of study to a Degree/Diploma at some other Third Level College of Education. Personnel awarded a cadetship that entered the cadet programme as a graduate are not assigned to a course of study. Officers participating in the USAC scheme are required to subscribe to a service undertaking, 3 year's service for every one year of study. If they voluntarily leave the DF prior to the completion of the service undertaking they will refund the cost of the Third Level programme to the Minister of Defence.

3.12.4 Service Member Accession through the Cadet Scheme

In 1990 Gleeson noted, "Since 1962, 20 personnel have been commissioned by way of the Cadet Scheme" Since 1990 the number of service members commissioned through the Cadet Scheme was 27 personnel. A number of those Officers were unsuccessful entrants through the school leaver to Cadet route, joined as service members and then successfully negotiated the Cadetship competition. Joining as a service member with the intention of accession is inherently risky in the current system, given the small numbers gaining accession via this route.

3.13 Commission from the Ranks (CFR)

Suitably qualified Non-Commissioned Officers, (NCOs), having completed a Potential Officers Course, are commissioned as Second Lieutenants. The participants on the last Potential Officers Course were commissioned in 2000. A total of 15 candidates successfully completed the course. Conditions governing eligibility included, minimum rank of corporal, at least one tour of duty overseas, being under the age of 31 years old and having a leaving Certificate standard of education with a minimum Grade D in any

five ordinary level papers in one sitting of the Leaving Certificate. Candidates had to have completed a minimum of 3 year's continuous service in the Permanent DF.

3.13.1 The Selection Process

Qualified NCOs submit their applications to their Unit Commander. Nominations by the Unit Commander and Brigade Commander are required to proceed. Candidates appear before a Preliminary Interview Board; successful candidates passing this stage proceed to a pre-selection course held in the Military College. The two-week intensive pre-selection course has the objective of assessing ability and fitness levels of the candidates. Personnel passing the pre-selection course attend a final selection interview board. Successful candidates then complete a nine month Potential Officers Course in the Military College.

3.13.2 Inducements/Incentives:

Officers commissioned from the ranks join the main stream of commissioned Officers, as recommended by Gleeson, CFR's are no longer restricted to largely administrative or logistics appointments. CFR's are commissioned in the rank of Second Lieutenant; they are promoted to the rank of Acting Lieutenant from the following day and are placed on the maximum scale of the pay of a Lieutenant. Though moving immediately to the acting rank of Lieutenant for pay purposes the newly commissioned Officer is junior in seniority to the Cadet class commissioned in the same year.

3.13.3 Third Level Education:

Officers commissioned from the Potential Officers course do not have access to the USAC scheme. The facility of further education under the Refund of Fees Scheme^{Note 4} is available. The course of education undertaken must be relevant to the Officers appointment or must fulfil organisational requirements.

^{Note 4} The Refund of Fees Scheme is available, on application, to individual members of the DF who pursue educational qualifications in their own time on a part time basis from a recognised institution. Personnel availing of this scheme will incur a service obligation.

3.13.4 Education Levels Service Members

In 1990 Gleeson pointed out that only 140 enlisted personnel had gained accession through this stream. He recommended an expanded scheme to significantly increase the number of personnel commissioned from the ranks and that “such an arrangement would be of considerable benefit to the DF”.

Since 1987 only two Potential Officer, (PO) courses have been conducted. In 1992 The 7th PO course commissioned 24 candidates. In 2000 the 8th PO course commissioned 15 candidates. Today there are 53 active Officers commissioned from the ranks representing approx 4% of the total Officer Corp. One of the problems with the CFR programme is the time span between courses; high potential candidates have in the past found that when a PO course is advertised they do meet the specified criteria. When the next competition is held these same potential candidates were too old to compete. For example the time span between the last two courses was 8 years; 7th PO course commissioned in 1992, the 8th in 2000.

In 1990 Gleeson argued that the general rise in education standards among service members should result in “a significant increase” in accessions from the ranks. Since then the standard of education in the DF has risen in line with national trends. In a sample of 341 active service members, 55% of NCOs and 34% of Privates were educated to Leaving Cert and above, see Appendix No 3 Tables No 8 and No 9.^{Note 5} The post 2000 enlistment figure for Privates educated to Leaving Certificate standard is 53%. The percentage of NCOs with Leaving Certificate and above is 79% of those that enlisted after 1990.

3.14 Direct Entry Commissions

Commissioning personnel with specialist qualifications occurs on an ad-hoc basis as organisational needs arise. The conditions governing the competition for Direct Entry (DE) Officers are published for each specific competition and vary in criteria and conditions of service. Recently a seven-week Officers course was introduced for DE Officers. DE Officers are commissioned at the rank of Lieutenant or Captain depending on their appointment on commissioning.

^{Note 5} The standard of Leaving Certificate obtained was not considered in this survey.

3.15 The President of the Representative Association of Commissioned Officers, (RACO) Lieutenant Colonel Paul Allen in his speech at the RACO ADC in November 2003 said that RACO view the “various ad-hoc systems used to train and commission Officers are inherently diverse and inequitable” (Signal 2004 Vol 2, issue 2, P14)

Chapter No 4: Methodology

4.1 In Chapter 3 the uniqueness of military organisations was explored. Even when compared to the “Great Professions” the military, responsible for its own ethos, professionalism, training and development, is special (Huntington, Foot, Hardinge et al). Military organisations have a high degree of socialisation creating more behavioural uniformity among its members than would be present in most organisations.

4.2 This is particularly true of the Officer Corps, the cadet is trained in a military environment and training consists of a twenty-one month residential course creating a group dynamic that binds the class through shared experiences throughout their training. Subsequently, throughout their careers there is a strong intra-class affiliation between the members of a class. There are two classes of cadets in training at a time in the military college. A link is established in a junior class, senior class relationship. Each class passing through the cadetship will have had an inter-class experience with two other classes, the class that went before and the class that comes after. The link therefore is continuous creating a tangible cohesiveness in the body of Officers that pass through the cadet school system.

4.3 Personnel commissioned from the ranks undergo a nine-month residential course in the Infantry School Wing of the military college. This shared experience also creates a group dynamic that results in friendships that endure through the maintenance of a class identity throughout their military careers and beyond.

4.4 Officer training creates the conditions whereby people share interpretations of the military constructed environment pointing in this context to the “existence of community experienced stimuli in terms of generating a shared interpretation” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003 p84). Consideration of this military social construct has guided me in the choice of my research methodology.

4.5 Research Philosophy

There are three views about the research process that dominate current literature: positivism, interpretivism and realism.

4.5.1 Positivism

Often designated as quantitative research, takes the approach that the subject under analysis can be measured objectively rather than being inferred subjectively, through sensations, reflection or intuition (Remenyi, 1998). The researcher is detached from the subject being observed and collects data in an apparently value-free manner “researcher is independent of and neither affects nor is affected by the subject of the research” (Remenyi et al, 1998). The emphasis is on a highly structured methodology that attempts to produce data that lends itself to statistical analysis. Researchers adopting this philosophy tend to prefer working with an observable social reality the end product of such research lends itself to “law-like generalisations similar to those produced by the physical and natural scientists” (Remenyi et al, 1998).

4.5.2 Post Positivism

At the other end of the spectrum of philosophical traditions is phenomenology (post positivism). Phenomenology encompasses the interpretative and realism approaches to research. This approach tries to understand and explain phenomenon rather than search for external cause or fundamental laws. (Easterby-Smith 1991, Remenyi, 1998). The strongest case for this approach is the necessity to discover “the details of the situation to understand the reality or perhaps a reality working behind them” (Remenyi, 1998).

This may be particularly important in this dissertation, as my research will span the Officer body, drawing material from the various traditions of accession into the Officer body. “People may place different interpretations on the situations in which they find themselves” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003 p84). In this “social construction” it is necessary to take cognisance of motives, actions and intentions that have meaning for the participants.

4.5.3 Social Constructionism

Recognises that people are likely to share interpretations of their socially constructed environment. In the military, through training and military education, stimuli are generated to develop a shared interpretation or uniformity in the way military personnel view their group, Unit or organisation. Such stimuli encourage an organisation and the individuals in it to have a high level of socialisation. Intuitively, in the military context, it

is highly probable that these stimuli will “exert an influence on the way in which those affected socially construct their world” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003 p84).

4.5.4 Realism

Makes the assumption that a reality exists that is independent of human thought and belief. This leads to influences at the subconscious level; people are not aware that such influences impact on their interpretations and behaviours. While sharing some philosophical elements with positivism, realism recognises that people are not objects to be studied in the style of natural science.

Realism recognises people have socially constructed interpretations and views. Such interpretation can influence and perhaps constrain the nature of people’s views and behaviours. In consideration of the strong socialisation present in the DF and the need to take social constructionism into account my philosophy for this dissertation will follow the realism approach.

4.6 Research Approach

In following the realism philosophy I find that I neither fall into the deductive or inductive categorisation of research approach.

4.6.1 The Deductive Approach

Develops a theory and then subjects that theory to a rigorous test. With the inductive approach data is collected and theory is then developed as a result of the data analysis.

I will be making no attempt to explain casual relationships between variables and no effort will be made to produce quantitative primary data that can support statistical analysis. Some data will be extracted from secondary sources and even though this data is being used in a way different from that originally intended it could not, in this context, be considered primary data. My research will not include, as Gill & Johnson suggest, a “highly structured methodology to facilitate replication” (Gill & Johnson, 1997). The collection of data from secondary sources to construct my “conceptual selection model” could be termed a “deductive” collection of “best practice” selection methods and I may conduct “straw polls” in the course of the collection of my primary data.

4.6.2 Inductive Approach

Induction or theory building attempts to gain an understanding or a “feel” of what is going on. The inductive approach helps to develop such understanding by considering the way in which humans interpret their environment or social world. This approach allows a concern for the context, in this case the military context, in which the research is being carried out. In this tradition researchers are “more likely to work with qualitative data and use a variety of methods to collect these data in order to establish different views of the phenomena” (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002). My approach to this research therefore will be inductive in the main but will include an element of deductive research.

4.7 Collection of Primary Data

I will be using three focus groups for the collection of my primary data. The use of three groups spanning current accession routes to commission to collect these data will help to “establish different views of the phenomena” (Easterby-Smith et al, 2002).

4.7.1 Focus Groups

There are a number of definitions regarding focus groups within current literature. Generally focus groups have been defined as a small gathering of individuals who have a common interest or characteristic, assembled by a moderator – who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain information about a particular issue. According to Krueger (1994) a focus group is a carefully planned discussion to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. Krueger & Casey (2000) noted that the purpose of focus groups is to promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure in which people can share their ideas, experiences and attitudes about a topic. Participants “influence and are influenced” while researchers play various roles including that of moderator, listener, observer and eventually inductive analyst (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill differentiate between group interviews and focus groups. They make the distinction that group interviews used to identify key themes following a reasonably clear focus are often associated with the label focus group. While my data collection will not involve the development of items to be included on a survey questionnaire, I have got a reasonable clear focus of the data, concerns and issues that may be generated as a result of these focus groups. It is also my intention to use data

collected from one focus group as lead in material or guidance for the next focus group. In this context I am defining the group interviews to be held as focus groups while maintaining the central characteristic of the group interview, defined by Zikmund as “relatively unstructured and free flowing” (Zikmund, 2000).

4.7.2 Background to the use of Focus Groups

The anthropological tradition of researchers collecting data around tribal campfires closely parallels modern day focus groups (Berg, 1995). This seems particularly appropriate in the military context. Morgan (1998) divides the history of focus groups into three periods. The earliest carried out by both academic and social scientists, for example an early-recorded study of the focus group appeared in an article by Bogardus (1926) resulting from work on his “social distance model”. From the Second World War until about 1980 the social science community largely ignored focus groups as a legitimate research practice. During this period the methodology was almost exclusively used in the realm of market research.

In the 1980s and 1990s focus groups became an increasingly popular data collection method (Morgan, 1993). There was a realisation of the benefits arising due to the interactive nature of the data collected. Participants engaged in the process provided access to their “own language, concepts and concerns”. The group interaction can lead to a rich flow of data if interviewees respond to the questions and evaluate points as a group (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2003 p270).

4.7.3 Practical Application of the Methodology

A minimum of two focus groups will be conducted. Each group will have six to ten participants and will last for an hour to ninety minutes. One of the groups will represent a “horizontal slice” of the Officer Corp. This group of officers will have gained accession to the officer ranks through the cadet system, be of equal rank to one another and all are currently undergoing third level education. The second and possibly third group will represent a “vertical slice” of the officer corp. This group will vary in rank and will be representative of the different accession traditions within the officer corps.

4.7.4 Socialisation Immunity.

I am not immune to the socialisation effect of the organisation or indeed the social constructivism mentioned earlier. To prevent or offset the possibility of any influences or perceptions I may bring to the process, I will not put forward my own feelings or perceptions. I intend to intervene or prompt the participants only when necessary to maintain a flow in the discussion. Other than that I will take notes, record key issues and other factors that may influence the interpretation of information, and to record non-verbal messages from the group that may indicate how the group is feeling. (Dawson and Manderson, 1993, Dawson et al. 1991 “A Manual for the Use of Focus Groups”.)

4.7.5 The Focus Group Process

The group will be arranged in a “round table” setting. Each participant will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire to provide background information, see Appendix No 4. A short introduction including the driving forces for change and an outline of the current criteria and selection process will be presented, the participants will be asked for their views about the current system.

A short presentation, see Appendix 5, will then be given outlining current “best practice” in the comparator foreign national armies selected. I will focus on the main differences to be explored between the comparator military systems and the current Irish system. Again the group will be asked their views and feelings about the content of the presentation.

The final phase will be a presentation outlining the model I will be proposing. The group will be asked for their observations and comments. To wrap up I will ask for any points or views the group may have that they feel would add to the debate.

Finally I will take a “straw poll” to ascertain the majority feeling on some of the major points arising from the discussion. I will not attempt to gain a consensus view from the group.

After the focus group has concluded, in military terms, I will conduct an after action review. I will review the notes and write a short brief outlining what I believe occurred in the focus group.

4.7.6 Questioning Style

The questioning style to be used during the focus groups and the interviews will be open-ended. Patton's Theory tells us that "the basic thrust of qualitative interviewing is to minimise the imposition of predetermined responses when gathering data" (Patton, 1987) and specifically, considering I am adopting the realism philosophy, I must be conscious of Kvale's (1993) argument that the greater the structure imposed by the interviewer the less scope there is for the respondents to offer their "constructed reality".

A balance must be struck however between the tension that exists within the "carefully planned" and "permissive" approach, pointed out in Krueger's definition of focus groups "carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment" (Krueger, 1994). To overcome this tension the focus groups and interviews though "carefully planned" must appear to be spontaneous and flow naturally. I hope to achieve this by following Morgan's (1997) advice, that through planning and preparation I can produce "an effective guide" that "can produce a discussion that manages itself". (Morgan 1997).

Chapter No 5: Accession Systems

Used by Selected Foreign National Armies

5.1 Introduction

The Irish DF accession streams were outlined in Chapter 3. To examine the current Officer selection systems used in the DF and to propose a new system it is necessary to look at how other national Armies select their Officers. This serves two useful purposes: The first is as a result of Ireland's commitment to Partnership for Peace (PfP). One of the key requirements for contributing countries is that their military forces are interoperable with the other partner's national Armies. A process known as the Planning and Review Process (PARP) sets out various goals individual countries must meet to enhance interoperability between partners. "The aim is to create the conditions in which different contingents can work together efficiently and effectively in multinational Peace Support Operations" (Dept of Defence 2001). Military personnel from other member states audit agreed goals. Irish Officers are held in high esteem on the international stage; to continue to enjoy such a high reputation the selection and training of Officers must conform to the highest international standards. When working in an international environment the Irish Officer will be measured against peers from other national Army's. In this context it is important to examine the systems used in other partnership countries to ensure Ireland keeps pace with developments and international standards.

The second purpose of examining other systems is to generate ideas and material for use in the collection of my primary data. The material prepared in this chapter will be summarised and presented to the participants of the focus groups to stimulate debate on changes that could enhance Officer induction into the Irish DF.

The material for this chapter was collected from a variety of sources. The NATO Research and Study Group 31 (RSG 31) held an Officer selection workshop in Monterey, California in November 1999; the proceedings were published in August 2000. A follow-up report by NATO's Research and Technical Organisation (RTO) was published in May 2001. Both of these studies were used to gather information about other national military organisations. Other sources included military regulations from various countries and web based research.

5.2 Comparator Countries

The countries used as comparators are: the United Kingdom, America, Canada, France, Australia and Sweden. Ireland had troops serving in East Timor in an Australian led UN mandated mission. In Liberia Ireland and Sweden are in partnership supplying a Battalion Group as part of a United Nations peace keeping operation. Irish troops are currently serving in a NATO led UN mandated operation in Kosovo. The US, UK and Canada are all members of NATO. French troops were deployed in Lebanon with Irish troops. British, French and Swedish Forces are participating in European Defence co-operation. Irish Officers are deployed globally in other international missions working as staff Officers in mission Force Headquarters and as UN observers alongside Officers from the comparator countries. In this context the comparators used are valid.

5.3 United States of America

The commissioned Officer Corps in the US Army has over 66,000 active duty Officers. Officer selection and commissioning in the US is notable for the variety of programs available. There is an emphasis on “growing” military Officers rather than the initial selection process itself. Selection and training are continuous processes revolving around an “up or out” philosophy similar to that practiced by some corporate America sectors.

The criteria for the selection of Officers include age, citizenship, physical fitness, moral character, education and cognitive ability. Given that Officers form the military’s leadership and professional echelon and that financial investment in Officer education programs is high, the selection standards are quite stringent (Eitelberg, Laurence and Brown. “Becoming Brass”. Issues in the testing, recruiting and selection of American military Officers).

5.4 Types of Accession

There are four primary sources of commissioning most Officers are commissioned through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). The second type is through the four US Military Academies; the Army Academy is West Point. The third type is the Officer Training/Candidate School (OCS/OTS) and finally there is a Direct Commission for certain professionals (e.g. Doctors, Lawyers etc). See Table No 2 below.

Source of Commissions 2002	
Academy	17%
<u>ROTC</u>	47%
<u>OCS/OTS</u>	17%
<u>Direct Appointment</u>	4%
<u>Other*</u>	15%

Table No 2

**Officers trained in other services e.g. Navy and Air Force that accessed into the Army (Primarily Marine Corps).*

5.4.1 Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC)

This programme involves approx 475 Military Units co-located with public and private colleges and universities nationwide. Traditionally this is a four-year programme. There are different types of scholarships available to the college student, worth up to US\$16,000 per year along with a stipend of US\$200 per month. Students undergo two to five hours of military instruction weekly and are also required to participate in summer military training programmes. Upon graduation the student is commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and incurs an eight-year service obligation; generally four years active duty and four years reserve duty.

5.4.2 Academy, West Point

This programme in the military academy is a four-year academic and military programme leading to a Bachelor of Science Degree. To gain acceptance into an academy the student must receive a nomination from a member of Congress, a Presidential nomination or a Vice-Presidential nomination. Students must be between the ages of 17 and 22 on entry to West Point. To apply to the Academy applicants must have a score of 920 points on the College Boards Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the score of 19 points on the College Testing Program (ACT). Upon graduation those commissioned are obligated for an active duty period of at least five years.

5.4.3 Officer Candidate School/Officer Training School OCS/OTS

Programs are designed almost exclusively for individuals who already possess at least a baccalaureate degree. This programme exists as a quick commissioning source for college graduates who did not receive military training or indoctrination as part of their undergraduate education. Typically the duration of the training is 10-16 weeks. On completion successful candidates are commissioned as a Second Lieutenants and incur a service undertaking for eight years (at least four years of which is active duty). This source also provides a means for high-potential enlisted personnel to earn a commission. Enlisted personnel entering this programme must be college graduates or have completed study in an accredited college or University and be able to complete a Bachelor Degree in one year or less from commissioning.

5.4.4 Direct Commissioning

Commissions with a minimum of military training, (three to five weeks), providing military orientation and indoctrination, are offered to professionals in fields such as law and medicine because of their advanced degrees and/or work experience. Officers directly appointed are often commissioned at ranks higher than the customary Second Lieutenant.

5.5 Accession from Enlisted Ranks:

The US Army does not conduct specific training programmes to commission personnel from the enlisted ranks. Rather they offer programmes that enable enlisted service members to enter existing Officer programmes. What differ are the preliminary steps leading to those commissioning programmes. Many of the avenues enable enlisted personnel to earn a degree as part of or prior to completing ROTC or OTS/OCS (in the case of OTS/OCS the degree must be completed prior to or within one year of commissioning).

5.5.1 ROTC

The Army (within the three main services Army, Navy and Air Force) has a single unique method referred to as the “Green to Gold” programme (The Navy and Air Force have several different types of programmes for entry to the ROTC for their service members). Under this programme enlisted service members who are considered to have Officer

potential and who have served at least two years active service can enrol in Army ROTC to earn a Bachelor's Degree and to earn a commission as an Army Officer.

5.5.2 OCS/OTS

Criteria for enlisted service members to enter OCS/OTS:

- Passing scores on SAT or ACT is the same as civilian graduate requirements – 850 points on SAT or 19 points on ACT.
- Hold a Bachelor Degree prior to OCS/OTS or complete a degree in less than one year from commissioning.
- Be at least 18 years old but less than 30 years on enrolment – waivers are possible for personnel between 29 years old and 34 years old. The absolute requirement is that the applicant must be able to complete 20 years of active commissioned service before their 55th birthday.
- On commissioning service members are commissioned as Second Lieutenants and are obligated to serve for three year's active service duty.

5.6 Officer Educational Qualifications on Entry and on Active Service.

Over 98% of active US Army Officers have a University degree or higher. See Tables 3 and 4 below. A summary of the entry criteria, training and service obligations is provided in Table No 5 below.

Educational Qualifications 2002 at Entry	
Less than College Graduate	6%
College Graduate	79%
Advanced Degree (Ma, PhD, Etc)	15%

Table No 3

Educational Qualifications Active Service – Officer Corps	
<u>Less than College Graduate</u>	1.7%
College Graduate	58.9%
Advanced Degree	39.4%

Table No 4

Source: Population Representation in the Military Service Annual Report 2003.

Summary of Criteria and Service Obligations				
	Academy	ROTC Green to Gold	OCS/OTS	Direct Appointment
Age Limits	17-22	17-26 (Service Members 18 – 34)	18-29 (Waivers Possible up to 34)	Up to 34 (Extensions available for Medical Pers)
SAT	920	920	850	N/A
Or ACT	19	19	19	N/A
Service Obligations	8 years (5 years’ Active)	8 years (4 years’ Active)	8 years (4 years’ Active – 3 years for Service Member)	Contract (1 – 5 years)
Rank or Graduation	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	Second Lieutenant	Appointment Dependent
Duration	4 years’ Full time	1 to 4 years Depending on Scholarship	10-16 weeks	3-5 weeks

Table No 5

5.7 The British Army

The Regular Commissions Board (RCB), with the exception of some who are professionally qualified – such as doctors, dentists, and lawyers, assess all applicants for commission in the British Army, (BA).

The BA expects all candidates to be sponsored by a particular regiment or Corps. Graduates can make their sponsorship decision during their initial training at Sandhurst. Undergraduates and those personnel awarded an Army scholarship must have a sponsorship in place prior to the selection procedure. Prior to the RCB or on being awarded an Army scholarship all candidates undergo a medical and physical fitness test.

5.7.1 Basic Eligibility Requirements

Nationality: resident of the UK or the Republic of Ireland and are a British or Irish Citizen or a citizen of the British Commonwealth. Education: focuses mainly on graduate entry, 80% of all personnel entering the Officer Corp in the BA are graduates. Opportunities do exist for personnel without degrees to become an Officer. (5 GCSE's or equivalent, 140 University and College Application System, (UCAS), tariff points, degree calibre candidates).

The RCB lasts three days during which time candidates undergo a series of individual and group activities/tests testing their intellectual, practical and leadership potential.

5.8 There are Three Main Categories of Regular Army Officers in the BA

5.8.1 Direct Entry (DE) Officers

These are the mainstream Officers in the British Army. They either came direct from civilian life or from the ranks of the Army. They are commissioned on completion of an 11-month course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. They will normally be under the age of 29 on entry to Sandhurst.

5.8.2 Late Entry (LE) Officers

LE Officers are commissioned from the enlisted ranks of Senior Non-Commissioned Officers and Warrant Officers who have completed 9 years' reckonable service from the age of 21. The age limits are from 30 years to 43 years of age. All Officers commissioned

follow the same career progression, a Short Service Commission through a Special Regular Commission and then onto a Regular Commission. Short Service Commission (SSC): Commissioned at the rank of Captain, all newly commissioned Officers must undergo a three week Late Entry, (LE) Officer's course at Sandhurst. The commission is granted for a minimum of six years. After two years' commissioned service the LE Officer is awarded a Special Regular Commission. Commissions are granted up to age 50, extensions may be granted up to 55. If promoted to Major the LE Officer is awarded a Regular Commission. Not all LE Officers will achieve the rank of Major.

5.8.3 Professionally Qualified Applicants (PQAs)

Doctors, Dentists, Pharmacists etc. recruited in October of each year. PQAs must complete a four-week Officers' course in Sandhurst. PQAs will normally be commissioned at the rank of Captain.

5.9 The BA have a number of Army Scholarship Schemes

5.9.1 The Sixth Form Scholarship Scheme

(Equivalent of Leaving Cert Class) aims to attract young people between the ages of 16 and 16 years 6 months. Financial support is provided to the student during their "A" Levels, successful completion of the "A" levels leads to Officer training and the chance to go to University with an undergraduate award.

5.9.2 Undergraduate Awards

Bursary system: Applicants remain as a civilian throughout their University course. They receive £1,000 per year and can participate in paid military training whilst at University. On entering Sandhurst for Officer training the candidate is awarded £3,000. On commissioning as a Second Lieutenant the Officer is obliged to serve for a minimum of three years' commissioned service.

5.9.3 Undergraduate Cadetships

Specifically focused on medical students interested in becoming an Army Doctor. Successful candidates are commissioned as Second Lieutenants for the last three years of their degree course. During this period they receive an annual salary of approx £13,000 per annum, once fully qualified the military doctor serves for six years on a Short Service

Commission. A similar scheme is in place for dentists except they are awarded the undergraduate cadetship for only the last two years of their education.

5.10 Gap Year

A new initiative launched in 2002. Students or undergraduates taking a “year-out” from their studies are given the opportunity to sample military life as an Officer. After four weeks Officer training the “gap year” Officer is commissioned as a Second Lieutenant and assigned to a unit. Appointments can be at home or overseas but the gap year Officer cannot serve in a combat or operational appointment. After one year the candidate can choose to leave the Army or apply through the normal applications channels to become an Officer, applicants are guaranteed acceptance to Sandhurst. The first five “gap year” Officers completed their service in Sep 2003.

5.11 Canadian Forces

The regular Military Force in Canada has a mandated strength of 60,000 members. The strength of the Officer Corp is approximately 13,000 Officers representing approximately 22% of the total force.

5.11.1 Regular Officer Training Plan

There are a number of Canadian forces entry programmes. The primary programme is the Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP). Approximately 400 Officers per year enrol through this programme. The plan includes education at the royal Military College or at a civilian Canadian University. Essentially this plan provides sponsorship for the completion of a University Degree prior to beginning full time Military service. The period of subsidy for entrants from high school or college d’enseignement général et professionnel is four years. After graduation Officer Cadets are awarded a Bachelor’s Degree and are granted commissions as Officers.

5.11.2 Direct Entry Officer

This is the next most common entry programme. This plan allows applicants already holding a University Degree to entry service as an Officer. Approx 200 candidates enter service annually through this plan.

5.11.3 The Continuing Education officer Training Plan

This is a program that allows applicants not possessing a University Degree to join Officer training when there are insufficient candidates through the degree-associated programmes. The Canadians had intended to phase out this programme by 2002 focusing on an entirely graduate entry; in keeping with their stated policy that all Officers must have University education, however, the programme remains active to satisfy annual production targets.

5.12 Educational Assistance

The Canadians have a special subsidised education programme for medical Officers and Dental Officers. Students can, up to the last three years, have their education subsidised; once commissioned these officers must finish an obligatory period of service in the Canadian Forces.

5.13 Accession from the Ranks.

There are two entry models for service members. Through the “University Training Plan” Junior Non-commissioned Officers are selected to earn a Baccalaureate Degree and then proceed to Officer training. The second plan is the commissioning from the rank’s plan; Senior Non-commissioned Officers are selected (Senior NCOs cannot volunteer) commissioned as Officers and then serve in selected occupations. The assessment for both of these plans is primarily based on the service record of the individual.

5.14 Australian Defence Forces

Just over 20% of Australia’s 25,000 Army personnel are Officers. There are four different avenues to a commission in the Australian Army. The Royal Military College (RMC) Duntroon, the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), Graduate Entry and finally the Army’s Undergraduate scheme.

5.14.1 Royal Military College

Non-Graduate entry programme entrants to this scheme complete three 22-week courses over 18 months. On completion of Officer training students are commissioned as Lieutenants. Officers are expected to complete third level education after commissioning. For each year of paid for study there is one year of obligatory service plus one year for example a three year degree results in a four year service undertaking on completion of

the Officer's study. This entry stream is known as Direct Entry. The age limits are from 17 years old to 25 years old. Officer training results in a service obligation of a minimum of six years.

5.14.2 Australian Defence Forces Academy (ADFA)

This programme offers subsidised University education for three years. On graduation the candidate completes one year Officer training at the Royal Military College. The age limits for entry are from 17 years old to 21 years old. On completion of the four years' academic and military studies the cadet is commissioned at the rank of Lieutenant and incurs a nine-year service obligation.

5.14.3 Graduate Entry

The Australian Army appoint fully qualified personnel such as doctors, dentists, nurses, engineers etc. after a six week training course conducted in the Royal Military College. All graduate entry Officers incur a minimum service obligation of six years. The entry age requirements vary by occupation, for Doctors: 17-54 years, Nurses: 17-40 years and for all other graduate officers the age requirements are 17-50 years old. Appointments are advertised as vacancies arise.

The Australian Army offer sponsorship to undergraduates who are completing their studies at other Universities outside of the ADFA. The Army's Officer Tertiary Recruitment Scheme aims to target undergraduates by offering to pay their Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) debts on completion of their studies. The first two candidates joined the scheme in August 2003; the Australians have set a target of 20 candidates for 2004.

5.15 Accession from the Ranks

Service members identified as having the potential to become Officers are encouraged to participate in the ADFA programme. Service members must be able to complete the obligatory period of service for an Officer before the compulsory retirement age (55 years old).

The Australians also have a Senior Non-Commissioned Officer and a Warrant Officer commissioning scheme. Unlike the Canadian Scheme personnel may apply for the

scheme. Personnel commissioned in this way are appointed, as Special Service Officers in order to meet specific employment needs in the Army. They are employed in particular Officer appointments. The Army takes the view that their experience and training is sufficient, without further training, to enable them to serve in these appointments. Officers commissioned, as part of this scheme, must fulfil a service obligation of two years.

5.16 French Army

The French Army has been going through a process of "restructuration and professionnalisation" of its forces. This process started in 1996, has seen the number of personnel in the Army cut from 236,000 to 138,000, mostly regular troops. This process involved a shift from the traditional conscription base to a voluntary full time professional Army. (In 1996 there was 132,000 conscripts). There are approx 16,000 Officers in today's French Army representing just fewer than 12% of the total force. There are four entry programmes for French Officers. External Recruitment, Internal Recruitment on Competition, Internal Recruitment on File and Direct Recruitment. The numbers of Officers enrolled under each programme is approximately 25% of the total annual intake (approx 300-350 each year).

5.16.1 Direct Entry (Direct Recruitment)

Direct Entry is considered the most prestigious programme. Selection is based on an academic programme. Successful applicants enter the service academics Saint-Cyr, l'Ecole Navale, l'Ecole de l'Air and l'Ecole Polytechnique. 320 – 350 new Officer cadets per year enter as Direct Entrants. This three to four-year programme leads to an engineering degree or University Degree. The Officers commissioned through this scheme are eligible for the highest ranks in the French Army.

5.16.2 Internal Recruitment

Internal Competition Semi-direct, Non-Commissioned service members (NCOs) enter competition for accession to the Officer ranks. Age requirements 22 to 30 years. The selection of personnel is based on their military file.

5.16.3 Internal Recruitment on File

Late Entry Senior NCOs between 30 to 35 years old. Personnel are selected and recommended for accession based on an evaluation of their military record. Senior NCOs

must pass an examination on military subjects. The career of internally recruited Officers is limited to the junior Officer ranks, Lieutenant and Captain and to the first rank of senior Officer; Major, if the necessary courses are completed. The French military place a strong emphasis on military awards and decorations. Over 50% of Officers in the French Army are drawn from existing service members.

5.16.4 Contract Officers.

Specialists and General Officers. Specialists include Doctors, Lawyers and Civil Engineers. General Officers serve in first-line leadership roles such as Platoon Commander – Age 22 – 28 years of age. Short-term contracts for one year can be renewed for up to five years. Long-term contracts for specialists: eight years renewable for up to 20 years.

5.17 Swedish Forces

Sweden has compulsory national service in defence for all citizens and permanent residents between the ages of 16 and 70. Within this system all Swedish men between the ages of 19 and 47 are liable for military service. Some individuals are not required to carry out basic military training. Some, based on a process of selection, will be channelled into other defence areas. Women enter service on a voluntary basis. The length of service for conscripts depends on the task they have been selected for. The majority serve between seven and fifteen months. 15,000 personnel were conscripted for national service in the Armed Forces in 2003.

5.17.1 Conscription

This is the basis for Officer selection. There are three categories of Officers in the Swedish Armed Forces, Regular Officers, Reserve Officers and Conscript Officers. When fully mobilised the Army has approximately 200,000 personnel, during peacetime professional Officers, approximately 11,400, form a Cadre around which the combat Units are organised.

During the enlistment procedure conscripts complete a number of tasks and psychological analysis. Based on results conscripts enter service at different levels. The best 4% are selected for company level, the next 4% are selected for platoon level and the following 20% are selected for the section level, the remainder will serve as private soldiers. Those

selected at company and platoon level train to become conscript Officers. Most of the personnel that apply for a Regular Commission come from the pool selected at company and platoon level. To be successful the applicant must obtain higher than average grades during their military service.

5.17.2 Officer Training

Conducted in Stockholm (Karlberg) over a two-year programme. The first year is joint training for the three services, Army, Navy and Air Force. The second year focuses on military training for the Army Cadets. Officers are commissioned as Second Lieutenants on completion of training. 400 Cadets entered this programme in 2003.

5.17.3 Education

Every career course that an Officer completes in the Swedish Army renders credits towards a University Degree. The career Officer programme awards a total of 80 credits, subsequent programmes are Tactical programme (one year), 40 credits, the Staff programme (one year) 40 credits and the Advanced Command programme (two years) 80-100 credits. In this way Swedish Officers can obtain a University Degree through in-service training. Officers can opt to pursue courses at civilian Universities.

5.18 Conclusion

The NATO Study came to the conclusion that “There is no internationally valid model solution”. Officer selection is rooted in the cultures, traditions and legal framework of individual countries.

5.18.1 Cultural Differences

Between, for example, the USA, France and Sweden often determine the selection process. In America they practice the “up or out” philosophy; selection is based on the ability to perform as a Lieutenant. It could be said therefore, that selection is a continuous process, if not selected for the next higher rank the Officer is discharged. The French offer what is termed as a “nice career” (Lagache 1999) to 50% of their Officers internally recruited from service members. The French also overtly describe one of their entry streams as “the most prestigious”. This is the only stream guaranteed to provide life long employment and high rank. In Ireland the DF offer life long employment, up to the compulsory retirement age dependent on rank, but there are no guarantees of reaching the

highest ranks. In Sweden conscription is the base those commissioned can remain in service until the compulsory retirement ages.

5.18.2 Basic Eligibility

All of the countries examined apply basic eligibility criteria such as citizenship, security clearance, physical fitness tests and medical examinations for entry. France has recently introduced an ability and psychometric procedure for entrants to the academy stream; this brings France into line with the other comparator countries.

The age requirements sought by all of the countries vary significantly. By and large most countries set the requirements according to the various streams. The lowest age groups are set for school leavers entering programmes offering military and academic programmes leading to a commission and degree. Graduates and service members are given age waivers and the trend in most countries allows personnel up to their late 20s to enter Officer training. Specialist graduates have much higher age limits.

5.18.3 Service Commitments/Obligations

Most countries insist that candidates must be able to fulfil service obligations prior to their compulsory retirement age. Most countries apply a mandatory obligatory service period for all streams on commissioning. In addition countries that provide “paid for education” seek undertakings of service in respect of such education, in most cases a year for a year. The DF has no mandatory obligatory service period for Commissioned Officers. Service undertakings are applied in cases where Officers avail of “paid for education”. The DF apportions three years for every year of education completed. This is the highest service undertaking sought among the comparator countries.

5.19 Variety of Accession Streams

All of the countries examined, except Sweden, have more than one method of accession. Generally they all follow a similar model, accession routes for civilians and service members. All of the countries that follow this model have clear paths and assistance programmes for their service members to encourage high potential service members to obtain the necessary academic qualifications to enter existing Officer programmes. In this respect the Irish DF diverges; there is no educational programme specifically aimed at service members to encourage them to seek accession and the commissioning from the

ranks scheme is ad-hoc; there is no clear policy as to how many places are available on, or when, the next course will be conducted. Most countries have specific programmes for Senior Non-Commissioned Officers, except Ireland and Sweden. The Officer training given varies but tends to be much shorter than other accession methods. Some programmes are restrictive in terms of promotional opportunities and specific appointments that are to be held on commissioning. Similarly most countries have clear policies and laid down procedures for recruiting specialists as Direct Entry Officers. The DF advertises on a case-by-case basis applying various different conditions for each competition.

15.19.1 Educational Standards

All of the countries have a military college or academy offering programmes combining academic and military studies. France, Ireland and Sweden do not compel Officers to obtain a University Degree. Ireland and Sweden offer career programme military courses that lead to a degree or advanced degree when Officers reach senior Officer status. The other countries aspire to a totally graduate entry, different approaches are used to this end, third level qualifications can be obtained before, during or after Officer training. All of the forces take in graduates directly. In most countries Officer training is shorter for graduates than for school leavers. This applies particularly to Doctors, Dentists and other Specialists. Most of the comparator countries enlist mainly civilians, except France and Sweden, to become junior Officers. Typically, enlistees go through an initial training phase including both academic and military training. Australia and Ireland have the longest initial Officer training courses and civilian academic training occurs after the Officer is commissioned.

The number of accessions in Ireland is small when compared to other countries e.g., France 1,500, Sweden 400, USA 6,500 per year. Ireland recruits on average 60 Cadets per year. Ireland, given the small size of the DF, cannot implement many of the grandiose systems used by larger forces with significantly larger budgets. Many of the general aspects of the systems used in other countries are already present in the Irish DF system. To enhance the Irish System elements of the examined models could be adopted economically, ensuring that the Irish DF keep pace with “best practice” used by our current and future partners in international military operations.

Chapter No 6: Primary Research

6.1 Introduction

Three Focus Groups were conducted for the collection of primary data. To obtain a vertical and horizontal slice of data from the Officer body one of the groups consisted of junior Officers only and the other two groups comprised a mixture of ranks from Second Lieutenant up to Commandant.

A total of 18 Officers participated in the Focus Groups, six in each group. The sessions were held in military installations but were conducted in an informal environment to facilitate a free flowing frank exchange of views. The seating was arranged in a round table format, there was no seating plan.

Each of the participants was asked to complete a short background information sheet, see Appendix 4. The participants were not required to fill in their names on the sheets. None of the participants objected to filling in the sheets.

It was important to maintain a focus on the objectives of the dissertation and to take an approach that recognised that this methodology for gathering data and analysing information is an ongoing and evolving process. To this end questions were prepared allowing sufficient flexibility to facilitate a free flowing dialogue and to give the impression of spontaneity. After each of the Focus Groups I analysed my notes then summarised the main points arising. After the first Focus Group I changed my approach allowing more time to concentrate on the proposed model. Each Focus Group lasted for approximately one and a half hours.

6.1.1 A summary of the background information collected from the participants is presented in Table No 6 and Table No 7 below.

Rank	No of Officers	Accession Method			Male	Female
		Cadet	CFR	D/E		
Commandant	3	2	1		3	
Captain	4	4			4	
Lieutenant	9	7	1	1	7	2
2 nd Lieutenant	2	2			2	
Total	18	15	2	2	16	2

Table No 6 Accession Method

Rank	Advanced Degree	Degree	Cert Diploma	Leaving Cert	Total
Commandant	1	1		1	3
Captain		3	1		4
Lieutenant		3		6*	9
2 nd Lieutenant				2**	2
Total	1	7	1	9	18

Table No 7 Educational Qualifications

* Five Officers on Degree programmes, One Officer completing Cert/Diploma.

** Both Officers qualified for Degree programmes Sep 2004.

6.2 First Focus Group – Monday 17th May 1900hrs –2030 hrs.

6.2.1 Background Information

All of the participants are lieutenants, (four male and two female). Accession background – All participants came through the Cadet School system. Educational Qualifications - All currently participating in the USAC Scheme, NUI Galway. Service Undertakings. Three years for every year at USAC, commencing from the completion of their studies. Previous Military experience - only one of the participants had previous military experience with the Reserve DF. Age Group - 20-25 years old.

When given the opportunity to indicate their reasons for becoming officers no particular pattern emerged, some of the reasons given, common to most participants, were – secure employment, service to the State, educational benefits, overseas service and a challenging career.

6.3 Format used for the Focus Group

I divided the proceedings into three phases. The first was a short presentation on Power Point, attached as Appendix 5, which covered three main areas:

- The necessity for change;
- The factors impacting on induction; and
- Comparisons with other National Armies.

The second phase was an exploration of the group's feelings and perceptions about the current system used for induction of Officers into the DF, comparisons with other national systems used, the necessity for change, and the group's suggestions for the implementation of a new system. The third and final phase involved a discussion about the proposed system put forward as part of this dissertation.

6.3.1 Phase One

After each area in the presentation the group were invited to ask questions or to make comments about the material. The first two areas of the presentation provoked little discussion. Of principle interest to the group in the first area was the modernisation agenda, whilst the group were aware of the general thrust of the agenda, they were not specifically aware of the implications for induction of Officers into the DF. Another point that aroused interest, in the second area, is the changes to the pension arrangements. These changes will not affect the participants. The changes affect only those personnel awarded cadetships after 2004. The group were in general agreement that the implementation of the Pensions Commission report could have a negative impact on the attractiveness of the DF Cadetship. The third area of the presentation resulted in significantly more discussion. All of the participants, although having some knowledge of foreign systems, did not realise the diversity of the systems used by other armies. The purpose of presenting this particular area was to stimulate ideas for the later discussion. The first phase of the process took approx 25 minutes.

6.3.2 Phase Two The second phase commenced with the question:

Q: If you were to be given a blank sheet of paper to devise a new selection system for Officers of the DF what would it look like?

One of the first responses to this question was a defence of the current cadetship training. The respondent pointed out that a fellow Officer had recently travelled to Sandhurst, upon return that Officer felt that the standards reached in the cadet school were much higher than witnessed in Officer training in England. The other participants were in total agreement that the standard of training in the Cadet school is very high.

One of the main criticisms of the current system is the time span between Cadet training and USAC. All of the participants felt there was a discontinuity as a result. They all felt that the USAC scheme should start immediately after commissioning.

Q. Considering the other systems we have seen can anyone suggest possible solutions?

One of the participants suggested that we adopt a totally “integrated approach” Cadetship should run concurrently with an academic programme lasting for three years instead of the current 21 months, the Commission to be awarded as part of the graduation. Maynooth was mentioned as a possible Institute partner.

Two of the group interjected that such a system would involve too much pain. One said “Grief in the morning and afternoon”. “A beating in the Cadet school in the morning and brain-meltdown at the college that afternoon”.

Further discussion took place about the merits of such a system, fully qualified “degreed” officers after three years available to Units. The award of generalist primary degree in business and/or management would facilitate specialisation later to suit organisational needs etc. At the end of this discussion all the participants felt there was merit in the examination of such a system.

Q. What about shifting the focus to an entirely graduate entry criterion. Then there is no requirement for the DF to cater for civilian academic studies?

There was an immediate response about the implication of such a suggestion. The entire group railed against the abolition of the USAC scheme.

One participant felt there should be a “two tier system”. Graduate entry is necessary for organisational reasons and has obvious benefits but unless pay and conditions substantially improve the probability of getting graduates, who inherently have higher expectations, to fill the number of Cadetship requirements every year was very low. Therefore the intake of school leavers every year would continue out of necessity. One participant opined that there is too much emphasis on academic qualifications in the military. The rest of the group disagreed; they felt education was very important to support the projection of the Officer Corp as a professional body. If we are to be benchmarked against “Joe Bloggs” we must score well to attract and retain high calibre people.

On balance the group reached a consensus that the two-tier system should remain e.g. school leavers and graduates.

Q. What about the age groups for entry?

Initially the group focused on one particular entry stream (Cadetships filled by school leavers). They all felt that the upper age should be raised to 24-25 years old.

I pointed out that the current upper age limit for PDF service members and graduates is set at 26 years old and that personnel Commissioned From the Ranks (CFR) are eligible up to 31. The group felt this was too old considering the physical demands placed on the Officers.

Q. What do you think of the current selection system generally and specifically the use of modern selection tools such as psychometric testing and the competency based interview?

All of the participants had a positive view about the current system, none fully grasped what psychometrics was about but most understood the concept of the competency approach. They all felt that rather than identifying the best candidates these tools were most useful at identifying those that definitely should not be selected. None of the group was aware of the values placed on these tools. I told them that previous interview boards had allocated 25% of the total mark for psychometric testing and 20% of the total mark for competencies. There was general agreement that the allocation of 25% of the marks for psychometric testing should be revised downwards.

A point was raised by one of the participants about the bonus mark of 6% (in the final selection interview) a bonus mark of 6% is awarded for graduates or members of the PDF, members of the RDF or personnel who take an Irish oral test. Candidates cannot qualify for a total bonus of more than 6%. It emerged that two of the participants benefited from the 6% bonus for taking the Irish oral test; one of the participants was a previous member of the RDF so also qualified for a bonus of 6%. The other participants did not receive any bonus.

All of the participants felt the bonus system was inequitable “a graduate only gets 6%, I got 6% for passing a basic oral Irish test”. The participant that was a former member of the RDF said “I got 6% for a few weeks training with the RDF”; a serving member of the PDF with fulltime service would get the same. Everyone felt there was no balance in the current bonus system, either the bonus should be staggered e.g. smaller bonus awarded on a cumulative basis, Graduate and service member RDF etc. or scrapped altogether.

Q. Are there any general points anybody would like to add?

One of the participants felt that the USAC scheme should be more focused towards organisational needs. Focus on courses to fill particular appointments, the others agreed. Another participant pointed to recent Direct Entry competitions saying that with a focused approach some of those appointments could have been filled by internal recruitment. Some young officers nearing completion of their studies would have been qualified shortly after those vacancies were filled from external sources. Another participant interjected that “we should use what we have”.

Another area of contention was the recent focus by the DF on languages, particularly in light of our participation in P&P. Students on courses with a one-year European language placement, as part of their foreign language course, are not permitted to travel Europe. All of the participants felt this was “folly”. All of the participants felt that the current duration of “service undertaking” for education (three years for every one year of study) is excessive.

6.3.3 Phase Three

The final phase of the focus group was a description of my proposed model.

Q What do you think of the proposed model?

The initial response was not as enthusiastic as I had hoped. The upper age limit was raised as an issue. The group welcomed the two-tier system that allows a continued route for school leavers. They agreed that the system reduced the ad-hoc approach present in the current accession models. The group also felt the proposed model had the advantage of being more equitable. They liked the idea of 3rd level education arriving sooner in the

Officers developmental cycle and they considered the clarity of the system to be beneficial. The group were wary of the concept of a Late Entry Commission Scheme suggesting that any such appointment should be red circled. The group agreed the proposed system would provide greater access for service members and also agreed with the principle that the educational requirements must be the same for all. All of the participants favoured the use of a “Basic Military Training Test”; everyone entering Officer-training must pass the “same start line”. On the point of “Quotas” for the various streams most of the participants were opposed to the imposition of quotas because they are “inherently discriminatory”. When finally asked if the participants would support the outlined proposal all of the participants responded positively.

6.4 Second Focus Group – Thursday 20th May 2004

6.4.1 Background Information

Six Participants – two Commandants, three Captains and one Lieutenant. Accession streams: four Cadet school Officers and two Officers Commissioned From the Ranks (CFR). Educational qualifications: three of the Cadet School Officers and one Officer Commissioned From the Ranks educated to degree level. Service undertakings: the three Cadet school Officers undertook mandatory service obligations of three years’ service for every one year of “paid for” education. The Officer Commissioned from the Ranks completed a degree prior to being commissioned. The degree was pursued on an “own time, own cost” basis therefore no service obligation accrued. Three of the Cadet school Officers had experience in the Reserve DF. Age Group: mixed, one officer under 30 years old, four are between 30-40 years old and the sixth officer is over 40 years old.

6.4.2 I changed my approach for this focus group moving quickly through the presentation stages. The participants asked a number of questions seeking clarification about the comparator countries. I then presented a conceptual model for the induction of officers in to the Irish DF and invited comment from the group.

6.4.3 By and large the response was positive for the proposed model. One of the participants questioned the proposal to send Officers directly from Commissioning to third level education. In his opinion when that happened the young Officer had no experience serving in Units, finished university then returned to the Unit. Shortly

thereafter these individuals were promoted to Captain. This caused major problems in the Units “Officers have to serve as Lieutenants to gain experience”. The other participants agreed with this reasoning but pointed to the fact that this occurred in the past during a period of accelerated promotion to Captain. They noted in the proposed model Officers attending the USAC scheme must serve six years prior to promotion to Captain. They felt that with summer assignments to Units and at least two years’ full time posting to Units after graduation there is sufficient developmental time for the young Officer in the model prior to promotion to Captain.

Q. Would the reduced length of Officer training have an impact on the development of the young Officer?

Responses from the participants: Yes, it definitely would, if such an induction system were introduced it must be just “one cog” within a system that has a philosophy of continuous development. There must be “general Officer development courses such as a Young Officers’ Course and development must be Corp. specific”. “The induction system must be part of a personnel management system that works and career management must be high on the agenda to ensure every young Officer goes through the necessary development cycle”. “The PMS and career management structure must be effective at every level there after to ensure career progression for those that have the potential.”

Q. What are your feelings on the educational standards proposed?

There was a divergence of opinion on this question some of the group felt that if the organisation places a “premium” on education and particularly degrees it must “pay” to support that position e.g. higher rates of pay for entry level graduates. Another point raised was that there should be additional weightings for particular degrees, for example if the organisation needs engineers or graduates with the sought after qualifications there should be a higher bonus awarded for such qualifications in the final interview. This participant liked the proposed model but felt more flexibility was needed and that a “review” system must be built in with specific time lines to examine if the system was actually meeting organisational needs.

Q. Is the proposed system more equitable allowing equality of access?

The general feeling of the group was that the proposed system would reduce the inequalities of the current system. One of the participants felt that there was a possibility that discrimination could arise at a later date; for example, an individual having passed through a certain accession stream would favour that particular stream when considering promotions. The rest of the group however, felt that the proposed system was more transparent therefore reducing the possibility of discrimination. “All Officers, apart from Direct Entry Officers, must complete the central Officer training collectively”. The original speaker insisted that individuals setting promoting criteria may “write the rules following their own experience”, rules written to “fit” particular streams. Other members of the group remarked that this goes back to the previous point about the need for a fully integrated PMS and career management structure. One member of the group suggested that if a HRM specialist is appointed at Brigade level it would be their task to provide the necessary clarity and transparency through career guidance.

There was general agreement that given the right incentives and support, service members should have greater access to accession to the Officer Corp. The majority of participants felt that the laid down criteria must apply to all applicants, “there are programmes available that could be enhanced to encourage more PDF members to achieve the necessary academic standards required for entry”. One dissenter felt that experienced Non-Commissioned Officers have potential without necessarily having academic qualifications and can contribute successfully to the organisation.

Q Do you think the proposed model would be successful?

All of the participants responded positively as long as an integrated approach is adopted.

6.5 Third Focus Group – Tuesday 25th May 2004

6.5.1 Background Information

Six Participants – one Commandant, one Captain, two Lieutenants and two Second Lieutenants. Age group: three under 25 years old, two under 35 years old and one over 40 years. Accession method: five cadet school Officers and one Direct Entry Officer. Education – three participants have degrees one with an advanced degree, two participants are on degree programmes and the final participant has a diploma. Two of the Officers had previous experience in the Reserve DF; one Officer was a service member prior to entering the Cadet school. The Direct Entry Officer and one of the Cadet school Officers entered service as graduates.

6.5.2 As with the second focus group I moved quickly through the first and second phases of the process to allow the maximum time to deal with the central issue, a new induction system for Officers of the DF.

Q. Does the proposed system facilitate equity of entry?

In general all of the participants agreed with the concept of “one system for all” some members suggested that the “Basic Military Training Tests” (BMTT) recommended in the model should apply to Direct Entry Officers with the only exemption applying to Medical Officers. There was agreement from all of the participants that all Officer streams should complete some form of military basic training. All civilian entrants should complete the Basic Military Training (BMT) section and pass the BMTT. The total training period for Direct Entrants resulting from this proposal would be three to four months. “The current fitness tests make allowances for age, this could be applied to Direct Entry Officers over 30 years old for BMTT purposes”. All general service enlistment Officers should pass the same level of physical fitness test.

One of the participants felt that the age bracket set for general service Officers in the model is too high. The group were split on this issue, half of the participants thought the upper age limit should stay at 29, and the other half thought the upper age limit should be lowered to 26 years old.

One participant thought that the age differential was too big between the lower and upper age limits, this could result in a generation gap within a class “you could for example have a married man at 28 or 29 training with a 19 year old”. All of the participants agreed this would be a disadvantage but they remained split on the upper age limit issue. No consensus was reached on this issue.

Q. What do you feel about the focus on graduate entry to alleviate the current young officer shortages in Units?

One of the graduate entry officers said he was unhappy in his previous employment and knew of many other graduates in the same position. He felt that like many others he choose what he felt was a prestigious third level course, got a good job with good pay but then realised the job was not for him. He now feels like he has made the right choice and was very happy to have had the opportunity to enter the DF as an Officer. He stated that the Army should use a more focused approach to target graduates shortly after they graduate or those already in employment.

All of the participants agreed that there should be more emphasis on graduate recruitment. There was also agreement that a “two-tier system” should be retained, as proposed, to induct school leavers to make up for shortfalls if there were insufficient graduate and PDF applications to meet production requirements.

Q. What do you think of the suggestion for a common Officer-training programme for graduates, school leavers and service members?

All of the participants agreed with his concept. They also saw the logic of distinguishing between those Officers opting to attend USAC from those who opt not to attend. “Graduates expect a higher wage than school leavers by commissioning them at the rank of Lieutenant it gives them an added incentive.” “There will be a perception of higher status if graduates are commissioned at the higher rank.” Service members who will not be attending USAC should have the “same benefits as graduates in terms of pay and rank” this should be an incentive for PDF personnel to seek accession.

One of the participants asked if there would be any differential in pay during training “would graduates get paid more in training?” also “do service members take a drop in wages during training?” I had not considered this area. I asked the group for their suggestions.

The Officer present who was a service member said he lost military service allowance but stayed on the same rate of basic pay during the Cadetship. Another participant knew three service members who passed through the cadet school, two were discharged and re-engaged as Cadets on the Cadet pay rate, the other remained on his service basic pay.

The group agreed in general that service members entering Officer training should not lose pay during their training period (except perhaps military service pay). Graduates must have the same rate of pay as any other civilian entering.

Although the group agreed about this issue many of the participants did feel that all candidates would benefit in the longer term and that if necessary service members should be willing to take some loss of pay during training to ensure the system was to be seen as equitable for all.

Q. Is it absolutely necessary for all Officers to have a degree?

The group felt that to maintain a professional Officer body it is desirable that all Officers have a degree. The issue of the timing of the degree was mentioned, the younger Officers in the group felt that the period between commissioning and entering third level was too long.

One of the other participants suggested that all Officers should complete their development at Lieutenant then complete degrees when they are Captains. The rest of the group disagreed feeling that such an approach would lead to shortages of Officers at the Captain rank, simply moving the problem up a rank instead of solving the shortages of Officers now being experienced at the Lieutenant rank.

Another participant felt that third level education should be more focused towards organisational needs. “The current list of courses is too narrow.” Another Officer said he

believed the concept behind the “generalist approach” is that all officers should have a broad based experience and education. The academic education of an Officer is “not vocational”, specialisation should occur after a primary degree is obtained.

One of the other participants felt the lack of focus results in Officers picking degrees with the minimum work and the maximum saleability outside of the DF, most of the other participants disagreed with this view.

The general feeling from the group was that to maintain parity with other western military organisations and in terms of military-civilian comparators the Officer body should be a “Degreed” professional body.

Q. Are there any other points the group would like to raise?

The issue of Short Service Commissions was brought up. One of the participants suggested that such an approach would address the “immediate shortages of Officers in Units. Another participant asked about programmes to assist high potential service members in achieving the necessary academic standards to be eligible for accession.

One of the group recommended a selection process over at least two days similar to the Regular Commissions Board in England (Group Activities). This participant felt that such an approach would result in a higher probability of selecting the right candidates rather than just a reliance on a single structured interview. The other members of the group felt this proposal merited further investigation.

All of the participants indicated that they supported the general thrust of the proposed model. They remarked that the shorter training period would have to be offset with compulsory career development after commissioning. The proposed model does address some of the current problem areas: shortages of Lieutenants in the units, ad-hoc approach to induction and inequities in the current system.

6.6 Findings

The views expressed by the participants in the focus groups regarding their attitudes towards the proposed model of induction proved to be very consistent. Where divergence of opinion emerged it generally followed a pattern that could be identified in terms of differences within the group.

6.6.1 Methodology

To arrive at the findings presented I conducted an analysis of the full transcripts from each of the focus groups. This analysis resulted in the summary presented earlier in this chapter. To arrange and present these findings, describing them in a way that applies to this study, I analysed the full transcripts then grouped the views expressed into a number of pertinent areas. Reading through the notes I marked comments or views expressed. If I noticed a particular inflection in tone or body language that may have had a particular significance I recorded this on the original notes. Any such notation lead me to analysis those points in greater depth to try to understand any deeper meaning. In this way I produced a set of results describing what I believe the results mean in relation to my objectives.

6.6.2 Entry Educational Criterion

All of the participants were in favour of having a two-tier system, inducting graduates and personnel civilian and military with the necessary academic qualifications.

6.6.3 Training

All of the members of the focus groups agreed that there should be a central, core Officer training programme applicable to all entrants and that such training should be carried out collectively. Some of the participants suggested that the Direct Entry Officers (excluding medical personnel) should complete the BMT module and pass the BMTT proposed in the model. All of the participants favoured the proposal that service members need not complete the BMT module but must complete the BMTT to ensure all personnel entering Officer training are at the same standard.

6.6.4 Educational Qualifications

Most of the participants expressed the view that the Officer body must be a “degreed” professional body. Personnel civilian or military must be graduates or have sufficiently high academic qualifications to enter into and complete a University Degree programme post commissioning. Some of the participants felt that there is an over emphasis on academic qualifications and that there are plenty of personnel without degrees who can and do make a significant contribution to the organisation. The majority of participants felt that Officers entering USAC should enter their academic programme earlier than the current cycle.

Understandably this division of opinion arose between those Officers present that hold degrees (irrespective of accession stream) or are on degree programmes and those Officers without degrees. This issue raised some “lively” discussion. No consensus was reached; the majority favoured a degree for all Officers policy.

6.6.5 Service Member’s Accession

The groups recognised that changes to the age requirements would facilitate greater assess for service members. The change in the induction system would also negate the need for Potential Officer courses in the future; all Officers would be trained collectively in “one system”. All of the participants were in agreement with this concept and with the suggestions made by members of the groups that: service member accession must be based on the same educational criterion as other entry schemes, service members must pass the BMTT to enter Officer training. There was also a consensus that there should be no quota system applied in respect of the number of service member entrants.

6.6.6 Late Entry

The participants were evenly divided on the question of Late Entry accession for Senior NCOs. The majority of Officers felt they would need more information about the specifics of such a scheme to make a more informed decision. Most of the participants felt a Late Entry Scheme does merit consideration for the future.

Age requirements: The participants were divided on this issue, the younger group favoured lower age limits than those proposed in the conceptual model, the more mature Officers agreed with the proposed age requirements. Physical fitness in later years of

service was cited as the main reason for objecting to the upper age limits, it was felt that the older Officer would be at a disadvantage later in the Officer career progression. Another reason given was the potential generation gap that could arise within a group-completing Officer training.

Interestingly the younger Officers participating proposed a higher entrance age for the cadet stream 24 – 25 years old. Most of the Officers agreeing to this proposal are in that age group.

6.6.7 Direct Entrants

The participants had several suggestions about dealing with the issue of Direct Entrants. In general there was agreement that criteria must be laid down rather than the ad-hoc approach used at present. Appointments could be “Clustered” and criteria laid out for each group. The other suggestions were diverse, reflecting the diverse nature of this accession stream. In some cases disquiet was expressed vis-à-vis internal and external recruitment of specialists. All of the Officers appreciated that organisational necessity requires that specialist officers are recruited and recognised the important contribution they make to the organisation. Some of the participants felt however that when there are qualified or nearly qualified serving Officers available to fill specialist appointments the organisation should “use what we have” rather than external recruitment.

6.6.8 Promotion

All of the participants agreed that Officers with degrees or service members who opt not to attend USAC should be commissioned at the rank of Lieutenant then promoted to Captain after four years. Personnel attending USAC should be commissioned at the rank of Second Lieutenant, serve two years in that rank followed by four years in the rank of Lieutenant then be promoted to Captain.

6.6.9 Pay and Conditions

There were some contradictory views expressed in relation to entry pay. Most of the participants agreed that, as an incentive to graduates and service members, there may have to be a pay differential during Officer training. The graduate and service member (opting out of USAC) would also be commissioned on a higher pay scale, by virtue of the higher rank at commissioning. A contradictory view expressed by most of the participants was

that personnel should be willing to take a “short term hit” in anticipation of the longer-term benefit. Other participants felt that service members should not take a drop in pay during Officer training.

6.6.10 General Points

Individual participants offered some useful suggestions that were discussed. The issue of Short Service Commissions to alleviate the current junior Officer shortages was brought up but received little support from the other participants. The majority of participants agreed that the bonus points awarded for the final interview should be reviewed to provide more equity. The allocation of 25% of the total interview marks for psychometric testing was thought to be too high by many of the Officers and the general recommendation was that this should be revised downwards. An interesting suggestion was put forward about group activities over two or more days during the selection process; many of the participants considered this suggestion worthy of consideration. The suggested military-academic programme, which found favour in the first group, got no support from the other two groups.

6.7 Conclusion

Overall I found the use of focus groups to be a worthwhile exercise. The amount and wealth of information collected and the willingness of participants to put forward their views candidly exceeded my expectations. I was particularly happy that I was able to involve Officers representing every accession route. I did find it difficult, within the short time available, to summarise and analysis the extensive notes generated as a result of this process. Within the time constraints allowed I have analysed the information and arrived at results, which I feel are a true reflection of the reaction from the participants to the proposed model put forward.

Over all the reaction to the proposed model for induction was very positive. I will be making some adjustments to the original model having taken the views and perceptions of the participants into consideration. More importantly I will be adding some recommendations that were generated by the Officers participating in the focus groups. I believe that had I used a different methodology, for example a questionnaire, these suggestions may not have come to light because participants would have been restricted to answering the questions I had set, offering views on my queries, rather than putting

forward ideas of their own. From this perspective I consider the use of this methodology a success. I was able to extract data and present findings, describing them in a way that applies to this study that led me to a recommendation of a new selection system for the DF.

Chapter No 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

Accession of Officers into the DF in the past has served the organisation well. The past however cannot be extrapolated into the future. The DF has dealt successfully with a raft of changes over the last decade and a half, displaying an ability to adapt to change whether it is precipitated by external forces or internal necessity. The induction system for Officers into the DF has to change as a result of current internal and external forces. The modernisation agenda dictates that the induction system for Officers must change. This coupled with the need to address; junior Officer shortages in Units, a reduction in the number of applicants for cadetships, the necessity to introduce a selection and induction system that provides equity of access and equality within the Officer Corps and a system that produces Officers that can continue to measure up to their peers in a multinational military environment. Combined these forces provide the impetus for change.

7.2 Further Research

Elements of the proposed induction system need further exploration. The introduction of a Late Entry Scheme would have to be investigated fully to establish the merits of such a system. A study would have to be carried out to “cluster” the Direct Entry appointments into appropriate groups. An under-graduate scheme offering scholarships to medical personnel similar to schemes used in some of the comparator countries also warrants further research.

7.3 “Best Practice”

The NATO Study came to the conclusion that “There is no internationally valid model solution”. Officer selection is rooted in the cultures, traditions and legal framework of individual countries. The DF can use ideas generated as the result of a comparison with other Armies but those systems cannot be transposed directly onto the DF Officer selection system. The exploration of the systems in the comparator countries provided useful insights. Elements of those systems can be adapted and integrated into the DF system.

7.4 Academic Standards

Our peers in the multinational military environment are demanding higher academic standards in their Officer Corps. Logic dictates that the DF must adopt this principle as an indicator of “best practice” for the selection of Officers. As was noted in earlier chapters most of the comparator countries aspire to a totally graduate entry system, different approaches are used to this end, third level qualifications can be obtained before, during or after Officer training. Some of the countries have had to maintain programs for less than graduate entry to maintain production levels. To appeal to graduates in a time of economic buoyancy and a tight labour market the DF must make adjustments to the induction process to make it more attractive to potential candidates. The “two – tier” system must be maintained to cater for the intake of school leavers to make up production shortfalls. Candidates seeking accession through this route must have sufficiently high academic qualifications to qualify for selected University Degree courses.

7.5 Leveraging Internal Human Capital

Most of the foreign national armies examined have clear policies on accession routes for their service members. The DF must adopt clear policies that provide a route for accession for enlisted personnel. The current CFR scheme should be abolished, the courses are held too infrequently and potentially good candidates miss out. The standard of education has risen within the enlisted ranks. High potential individuals, once identified, should have access to educational programmes to enable them to obtain the necessary academic qualifications for accession. The educational standard established for Officer accession must apply to all entry streams. All Officers must cross the same “start line” and complete the same Officer training. Broadening the age bands and offering academic support coupled with clear policies and opportunities will result in an increased number of personnel gaining accession from current service members. There should be no quota system established, such a system is inherently discriminatory. Service members need not complete BMT but they must pass the BMTT to cross the aforementioned “start line”.

7.6 Direct Entry

All of the comparator countries have clear policies in relation to DE Officers. For the more sought after professions, such as Doctors and Dentists. The other nations offer under graduate scholarships to attract applicants. To reduce the “ad – hoc” nature of this accession stream in the DF appointments should be “clustered” to provide a basis for

establishing common entry criterion for DE Officers in terms of qualifications, Officer training and conditions of service. If a Late Entry Commissioning Scheme is introduced it should be considered under the heading of a Direct Entry Internal Commissioning Scheme thereby allowing special conditions of entry and service to be applied to Late Entry Officers.

7.7 Training

Relative to the comparator countries Ireland has the longest training period for the induction of military Officers. Most of the comparator countries use one system of combined Officer training for accession for civilian candidates and service members. This leads me to the conclusion that the DF should reduce the period of Officer induction training and implement “one system” of training for all officers. Officer training should be modularised. All accession streams must complete at least one module that is common to all commissioned Officers. The majority of Officers in the proposed model complete all or most of the recommended modules. The Officer training is shortened to approximately twelve to fourteen months; Officers are then available to join their Units sooner, addressing the current shortage of junior Officers in Units.

7.8 Conclusion.

The accession of Officers into the DF has to change to meet present and anticipated challenges, if as an organisation; we wish to remain a “world class military organisation”. The proposals in this document have by and large found favour with the majority of participants in the focus groups. Some of the recommendations have been adapted from the systems used by the comparator military organisations used in this study. The system recommended in Chapter 8 reduces the “ad – hoc” nature of the current accession systems, enhances the potential for the accession of service members, and provides equity and equality within the Officer Corps. The proposed system is a far-reaching and robust selection and induction system for Officers of the DF that will, if all or parts of the system are introduced, serve the organisation well into the future.

7.9 Learning Experience

I found the preparation of this dissertation beneficial. The insights gained from the collection of the secondary and the primary data in particular brought me on an interesting journey. Along the route taken I learned about the accession models used in the comparator countries and through the use of focus groups I collected the views and opinions of my colleagues. It was difficult at times to stay within the boundaries I had set. I often found myself straying, reading material that was peripheral to my objectives, so focus was important. Keeping references is vital; I started with the best of intentions diligently recording all references. When finishing off the dissertation I found myself scrambling to find all of the references used. Time was a constraint although in hindsight I feel I would have expanded the work to fill the time rather than increase the quality of the final product. In conclusion the production of this dissertation has resulted in a recommendation for the selection and induction of Officers into the DF that I personally feel is a proposal worthy of consideration by the DF.

Chapter No 8: Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

Following on the research presented in this dissertation I have developed a conceptual model for the induction of Officers into the Irish DF, see Appendix No 6, which contains the following proposals and suggestions.

- A two-tier induction system that encourages graduate entry and provides entry for school leavers with the necessary academic qualifications to undertake a third level degree.
- Broadens the age thresholds allowing greater access to service members and graduates.
- Recommends “one system” of training for all Officer candidates. Thereby ensuring consistent standards of training and reducing the potential for inequality within the Officer Corp.
- Reduces the initial training period for Officer candidates to approximately 13 months, and accelerates the academic entry programme for Officers attending third level education.
- Recommends a BMTT that must be passed by all candidates prior to Officer training, everyone crosses the same “start-line” (excluding group 1 Direct Entry Officers).
- Service members, in recognition of their previous service period in the PDF, are awarded bonus points in the final interview, do not undergo BMT, but must pass BMTT, and are promoted to Lieutenant on commissioning, if they are not attending full time third level education under the USAC scheme. High potential service members to be encouraged to gain the necessary academic qualifications for accession by enhancing existing education schemes for PDF members.
- Suggests a more balanced approach to the use of the bonus scheme at the final interview stage of the selection process.
- Proposes a “clustered” system for the induction of Direct Entry Officers. Such a system would reduce the “ad-hoc” nature of the current Direct Entry model.
- The Direct Entry system to incorporate an internal competition for senior NCOs for specifically identified appointments.

- Argues against the introduction of a Short Service Commission.

8.2 Proposed Model for the Induction of General Service Officers into the DF - Recommended Criteria and Requirements

8.2.1 General Service Officers

1. General Qualifications

- Be not less than 18 years old and under the age of 26 years old for candidates with less than a degree level education.
- The upper age limit is extended to under 29 years of age for candidates who are PDF service members with a minimum of two years' satisfactory service and to holders of a third level degree.

2. Educational Qualifications.

- Candidates must have obtained a recognised degree; or
- Have achieved the minimum number of CAO points^{Note 6} to qualify for selected university degree courses at the National University of Ireland Galway. A candidate's educational qualifications must include as a minimum, a grade D3 in Ordinary/Higher level papers in each of the following subjects:
 - Mathematics;
 - Irish and/or English;
 - A modern European language and/or Latin and/or Greek.

3. Medical and Physical Standards. All candidates must pass the prescribed medical examination and physical fitness tests.

4. Basic Military Training (BMT). All candidates, except PDF service members, must complete BMT. All candidates, including PDF service members, must pass the Basic Military Training Tests (BMTT).

^{Note 6} The CAO points for selected degree courses at NUI Galway in 2003 were as follows, Arts 405, Commerce 420, Commerce with French 495, Science 325, and Engineering Un-denominated 465.

5. Final Interview Bonus Points. Candidates can qualify for the award of up to 10% bonus of the total marks available at the final interview. Eligibility for the award of bonus marks is as follows: (Bonus marks are cumulative up to the maximum of 10% of the total marks available.)
- a. Graduate 4% bonus;
 - b. Service member bonus scheme up to 4%. (See below);
 - c. Proficiency in Irish 2% (candidates must sit an oral Irish test to qualify).
6. Service Member Bonus Scheme. Qualifying service members of the PDF or RDF can qualify for bonus marks as follows: (Note the service member bonus scheme is not cumulative, only one bonus applies to each individual.)
- a. Service member PDF, Private 3 Star 2%;
 - b. Service member PDF, NCO 4%;
 - c. Service member RDF Private 3 Star 1%;
 - d. Service member RDF NCO 2%;
7. Third Level Education and Service Obligations.
- a. On the successful completion of Officer training Officers holding a degree will be commissioned at the rank of Lieutenant and will incur a service obligation of five years' active service.
 - b. On the successful completion of Officer training Officers not holding a degree will be commissioned at the rank of Second Lieutenant and will be assigned to a course of study leading to a degree at National University of Ireland Galway. Officers attending a third level institute as a commissioned Officer incur a service obligation of nine years active service.
 - c. Special provisions for personnel who were service members of the PDF.
 - i. The provisions at 7.b. above apply to service members of the PDF who qualified for officer training under the provisions of Para 1.a. General Qualifications. (No degree, under 26 years) Service members can "opt

out” of third level education voluntarily, in this case the provisions of Para 7.a. above and Para 7.c.iii. below apply.

- ii. The provisions at 7.a. above apply to service members of the PDF who qualified for officer training under the provisions of Para 1.b. General Qualifications. (Degree holders)
- iii. Service members, PDF, between the age of 26 years of age and under 29 years of age will not be assigned to a course of study under the USAC scheme. Officers not pursuing full time third level education under the auspices of the USAC scheme will be commissioned as lieutenants and incur a service obligation of five years. Officers will be expected to pursue a course of study leading to a degree in their own time utilising the “Refund of Fees Scheme” Additional service undertakings arise, in addition to the original service obligation, from the Refund of Fees Scheme.

8. Promotion

- a. Officers commissioned at the rank of Second Lieutenant will serve two years at that rank followed by two years in the rank of Lieutenant. Officers with a total of six years’ satisfactory service will be promoted to the rank of Captain.
- b. Officers commissioned at the rank of Lieutenant will serve four years at that rank. Officers with four years satisfactory service will be promoted to the rank of Captain.

9. Pay Rates

- a. All civilian entrants enter service on the same rate of pay.
- b. Service members PDF retain the rate of service pay they had on entry to Officer training and for the duration of Officer training.
- c. On commissioning there are only two rates of pay applicable
 - i. Second lieutenant. 1st point on the scale.
 - ii. Lieutenant. 5th point on the scale. (Reaching maximum point on Lieutenants scale before Captain)

8.3 Direct Entry Officers

Appointments to be clustered into three “groups” specific qualifying criteria, e.g. age, academic qualifications, service obligations, promotion and pay rates to be established for each of the groups.

- a. Group One. External Competition (for example Doctors, Dentists. Clergy).
- b. Group Two. External Competition. (For example Engineers, Technologists).
- c. Group Three Internal Competition between Senior NCOs (Specifically identified appointments. Internally advertised competition).

Group One and Three: should be promoted to Captain on commissioning. The age requirements would be extended for these two groups I propose up to 45 years old. They would be required to undergo the Officer orientation module of Officer training. Compulsory retirement ages, perhaps up to 60 years of age may be applicable.

Group Two: The age requirements for this group should be lower than that applied to groups one and three, I propose up to 35 years old. This group have to undergo BMT and pass the BMTT (the only differentiation will occur in the physical fitness test, conforming to the current age bracket minimum requirements) followed by the Officer orientation module of Officer training. On commissioning this group should be commissioned at the rank of Lieutenant followed four years later by promotion to Captain.

8.4 Short Service Commissions (SSC)

The numbers of Officer accessions annually are too small to introduce SSC. The rationale behind this idea was to address Officer shortages in the Units. Implementation of this proposal, focusing on graduate entry, broadening the age requirements and encouraging high potential service members to gain accession coupled with shorter officer training, less candidates availing of third level education and quicker processing of Officers through their academic cycle, will, if successful, negate the original reasoning behind the suggestion to introduce a SSC scheme.

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RANKS in the DEFENCE FORCES

Commissioned Ranks

- Cadet
- Second Lieutenant [2/Lt]
- Lieutenant [Lt]
- Captain [Capt]
- Commandant* [Comdt]
- Lieutenant Colonel [Lt Col]
- Colonel [Col]
- Brigadier General [Brig Gen]
- Major General [Maj Gen]
- Lieutenant General [Lt Gen]
- Officer Induction Training
- Officer In Training
- Platoon Commander
- Company Second in Command
- Company Commander
- Battalion Commander
- Corp Director
- Brigade Commander
- Deputy Chief of Staff
- Chief of Staff

Enlisted Ranks

Private Soldiers

- Recruit
- Apprentice
- Private 2 Star [Pte]
- Private 3 Star [Pte]
- Soldier in Training
- Specialist Trade
- Line Private
- Line Private

Non Commissioned Officer Ranks

- Corporal [Cpl]
- Sergeant [Sgt]
- Company Quartermaster Sergeant [CQMS]
- Company Sergeant [CS]
- Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant [BQMS]
- Battalion Sergeant Major [BSM]
- Section Commander
- Platoon Sergeant
- Company Quartermaster Sergeant
- Company Sergeant [CS]
- Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant.
- Battalion Sergeant Major

* Equivalent to the rank of Major in other Army's

CONDITIONS GOVERNING THE AWARD OF
CADETSHIPS IN THE DF 2004

General Qualifications

- a. Be a citizen of Ireland
- b. Satisfy the Minister of Defence as to character
- c. Be over 17 years and under 23 years old.
- d. The age limit extended to less than 26 years old for enlisted personnel and for Graduates.

Educational Qualifications

- a. Have a recognised degree or
- b. 3 Grade C3 Higher Level papers and Grade D3 in Ordinary/Higher Level papers. These qualifications must include, as a minimum a grade D3 in Ordinary/Higher Level papers in each of the following subjects, Maths, Irish, and/or English and a modern European Language and/or Latin and/or Greek.

Medical and Physical standards: Candidates must be in good mental and bodily Health

Selection Procedure:

- a. Preliminary Screening Interview
Candidates are required to consent to a security clearance check conducted by An Garda Síochána.
Successful candidates proceed to the next stage of the selection process.
- b. Psychometric tests: Aptitude testing and personality questionnaire.
- c. Medical and Physical Examinations
- d. Physical fitness test
- e. Final Assessment
Structured interviews (competency based interview). The results of the psychometric tests will be used as input for the structured interview.

If a candidate does not pass any of the stages screening interview, security check, medical and physical examination or physical fitness test they will not move on the next stage.

SAMPLE OF EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS
ACTIVE SERVICE MEMBERS

Education NCOs	Enlisted Between 1980 - 1989		Enlisted Between 1990 - 1999		Enlisted Post 2000		Totals	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
3 rd Level			9	31%			9	14%
Leaving Cert	12	33%	14	48%	1	N/A	27	41%
Cert*	12	33%	4	14%			16	24%
No formal Quals	12	33%	2	7%			14	21%
Totals	36		29		1		66	100%

Table No 8 Non Commissioned Officers

Education Pte's	Enlisted Between 1980 - 1989		Enlisted Between 1990 - 1999		Enlisted Post 2000		Totals	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
3 rd Level			1				1	
Leaving Cert	24	18%	36	48%	33	53%	93	34%
Cert*	47	34%	31	41%	24	38%	102	37%
No formal Quals	66	48%	7	11%	6	10%	79	29%
Totals	137		75		63		275	

Table No 9 Private Soldiers

*Cert, Group Cert/Junior Cert, GSCEs

FOCUS GROUPS, PARTICIPANTS
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

RANK _____

AGE GROUP

20 – 25	26 – 30	31 - 35	36 - 40	41 +

ACCESSION METHOD

CADET SCHOOL	COM F/RANKS	DIRECT ENTRY

**EDUCATION
ON ENTRY**

Leaving	CERT/Diploma	Degree	Adv Degree

**CURRENT
EDUCATION**

Leaving	CERT/Diploma	Degree	Adv Degree

PREVIOUS MILITARY EXPERIENCE

PDF	RDF	OTHER

SERVICE UNDERTAKING

	No OF YEARS
Contractual	
Educational Undertakings	

Necessity for Change

- Gleeson Commission 1990.
- DF Review Implementation Plan (DFRIP).
- Defence Forces White Paper.
- Sectorial Modernisation Agenda.

Necessity for Change

- Gleeson Commission 1990.
 - Review Cadet Scheme to encourage more applicants from the PDF.
 - Raise the Upper age limits for Cadetships.
 - Review the Current CFR Scheme to increase the number commissioned FR's.

Necessity for Change

- Defence Forces Implementation Plan.
 - Entry Age School Leavers 18 – 21.
 - Extended to 23 for PDF, 24 for Grads.
 - Explore feasibility Short Ser Com.
 - CFR scheme as Recom Gleeson.
 - Introduce CFR late Scheme.

Necessity for Change

- Defence White Paper Feb 2000.
 - Implement new IPMS.
 - Reiterates Gleeson and DFRIP.
 - Introduce Short Service Commission and Graduate Entry as part of plan to address Officer shortages.

Necessity for Change

- Modernisation Agenda.
 - Implement new IPMS.
 - New Induction System for Officers.
 - One Year Officer Training common to all streams.

Necessity for Change

Official side position.

- By and large University Grads.
- End of USAC.
- Pay review to reflect Grad Entry.
- CFR's to supplement Grad Entry (Joint Trg)
- 12 Month Cadet Cse.
- Transitional Phase CFR Comps on an exceptional basis.

Comparisons with other National Armies..

• USA (2002)

	%	Age	Trg	Ser/Ob
ROTC	47	17-34	1-4Yrs	8yrs(4 + 4)
Academy	17	17-22	4 Yrs	8yrs(5 + 3)
OCS/ OTS	17	18-34	10-16 Weeks	8yrs(4 + 4) (3yrs O/R)
Dir/App	4	Varies	3-5 Weeks	Varies
Other	15	N/A	N/A	N/A

Comparisons with other National Armies..

• USA (2002) Education

	On Entry	Active Service
Less Than College Graduate	6%	1.7%
College Graduate	79%	58.9%
Advanced Degree	15%	39.4%

Comparisons with other National Armies..

• BA (2004)

- Direct Entry. Mainstream Officers. Civilian and Military Entrants. Age 17yrs 9 Months – under 29yrs. (85% Graduate entry) 11 Months Officer Trg
 - Sixth Form Scholarship.
 - Undergraduate Awards.
 - Undergraduate Cadetships.
 - Military Training Six Months.

Comparisons with other National Armies..

• BA (2004)

- Late Entry Officers. 30 to 43 yrs old. (min 9 yrs service) Sen NCO/WO. SSC to SRC to Reg Commission (Major). Commissioned as Capt. 4 weeks Trg at Sandhurst within one year. (340 personnel 2004)
- Professionally Qualified Officers. 4 weeks Trg at RMC. Scholarships and Bursaries available for Doctors and Dentists serve as 2nd Lt for 2-3 years. Elective with the Military.

Comparisons with other National Armies..

• Canada

- Reg Officer Trg Plan ROTC approx 400 Per year.
- Direct Entry (Graduates). Approx 200 per year.
- Officer Continuous Trg Plan. OCTP (plan to phase out)
- Subsidised Special Education Approx 15 per year.
- Commissioning from the Ranks Plan.
 - Nomination program, Sgt or above, Min 10 years service. Must be able to complete Min required service before CRA.

Comparisons with other National Armies..

• Australia

- Direct Entry 17 – 25 Yrs old, Service Obligation Min 6 Yrs. Non Graduates (18 Months Trg RMC).
- ADFA. 17 – 21 years old. Service Obligation 9yrs. (3yrs University + 1 Year RMC.)
- Graduates Direct Entry. 6 Weeks Trg RMC.
- Officer Tertiary Rec Scheme, Sponsored Undergraduates, 1 year Trg RMC.

Comparisons with other National Armies..

- Ireland
- Cadets 17-22 Yrs, (extended to 26 PDF and Grads). Trg 21 Months.
- CFR's (2000 15 Students) 24-31 Trg 9 Months. No USAC.
- DE's Variable conditions of Service.
- Service Obligations arise from Undertakings for Education.
- Pension Changes Apr 2004.

























PROPOSED INDUCTION SYSTEM

	BASIC MIL TRG 2-3 months	BMT TESTS 2 Wks Pre Trg	OFFICER TRAINING Modularised 10 - 12 Months ?	ORIENTATION MODULE 3 - 5 WEEKS (before or after ?)	1 st LT 2 Yrs USAC Off's	LT 4 Yrs
SCHOOL LEAVER	→	→	→	→	→	→
SERVICE MEMBER USAC		→	→	→	→	→
SERVICE MEMBER NON USAC		→	→	→		→
GRADUATE	→	→	→	→		→
DIRECT ENTRY				→		→
LATE ENTRY				→		

PROPOSED INDUCTION SYSTEM

- Leaving Cert Entry; 17 - 24.
- Graduate and PDF Entry; 17 - 29.
- All entrants must pass the BMTT.
- USAC officers commissioned at 2nd Lieutenant. (3rd level Education to start immediately after Commission)
- Non USAC Officers Commissioned at Lieutenant.
- Service Obligations,
 - USAC; 9 years from Commissioning.
 - Non USAC; 5 years from Commissioning
- Review of Marking Scheme, Final Interview.
- Officer Trg Modular.
- Late Entry Commission Scheme?

PROPOSED INDUCTION SYSTEM

	BASIC MIL TRG 2 – 3 months	BMT TESTS 2 Wks Pre Trg	OFFICER TRAINING Modularised 10 – 12 Months	ORIENTATION MODULE 3 – 5 WEEKS (before or after OT)	2ND LT 2 Yrs USAC Offr's	LT 4 Yrs
SCHOOL LEAVER						
SERVICE MEMBER USAC						
SERVICE MEMBER NON USAC						
GRADUATE						
DIRECT ENTRY						
LATE ENTRY				