

Summary of Recommendations from the CNGR Implementation Plan: Exploring the Requirements of DOPMA and ROPMA

Ann D. Parcell • Amanda Kraus

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Rodney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

David Rodney, Director
Fleet and Operational Manpower Analyses
Resource Analysis Division

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Summary

Introduction and background

The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CNGR) was chartered by Congress [1] as follows:

to assess the reserve component of the U.S. military and to recommend changes to ensure that the National Guard and other reserve components are organized, trained, equipped, compensated, and supported to best meet the needs of U.S. national security.

In 2008, the CNGR issued its final report, which included 95 recommendations about how to better utilize the armed forces reserve components (RC).

Two of the commission's recommendations suggested changes to the officer promotion system. First, the CNGR recommended changing certain officer promotion eligibility rules in the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) and the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act (ROPMA). Second, it recommended that a single seniority list be maintained for the active component (AC) and RC officers.

At present, the rules in DOPMA and ROPMA tie promotion eligibility to seniority. For most active duty and reserve officers, seniority accrues in real time from the time of their appointments as officers. Guidance that accompanies DOPMA and ROPMA also defines narrow windows of time within which officers must become promotion eligible. If eligible, officers must go before the appropriate promotion board. Thus, promotion timing in the officer personnel system can be quite inflexible. One result is that most officer career paths are about the same length, and promotion eligibility occurs at about the same time, regardless of the career specialty.

To accommodate longer and/or nontraditional officer careers, the CNGR suggests changing the determination of promotion eligibility from seniority to the achievement of competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills, and abilities). Specifically, recommendation 10 of the CNGR suggests the following:

DOD, with support from Congress, should implement a more flexible promotion system based on the achievement of competencies (knowledge, skills, and abilities, or KSAs); under this new system, the timing of and opportunities for promotion should vary by competitive category (career field), depending on service requirements.¹

The CNGR also is concerned with facilitating AC-RC integration. The current system has one seniority list for the active duty officers and one for the reserve officers. By making the achievement of KSAs (earned through either military or civilian-sector experience) the basis for promotion eligibility, the CNGR envisions the Services maintaining just one seniority list that contains both active and reserve officers. Thus, it extends the ideas in recommendation 10 to recommendation 11, which follows:

The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) and the Reserve Officer Personnel Management Act (ROPMA) should, over time, be merged into a single system, modified to base advancement on achievement of competencies—including competencies acquired through civilian employment and education as well as military experience. To facilitate the transition, Congress should amend current statutes to create a single type of commission in lieu of the current regular and reserve commissions, consistent with the elimination of the use of reserve designations for personnel and units.

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1. Here we assume that the CNGR had in mind the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) definition of a competency as “an observable, measurable pattern of knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and other characteristics an individual needs to perform work roles or occupational functions successfully.” This definition is found at www.opm.gov/comconf/postconf01/it/sbarker.ppt. We use the terms *competencies* and *KSAs* interchangeably, as does the CNGR report.

Tasking

CNCR recommendations 10 and 11 would be a significant departure from current DOPMA and ROPMA law and policy. To aid in evaluating recommendation 11, DoD [2] tasked the Services to

conduct an analysis of the Service promotion systems to determine if the requirements of DOPMA and ROPMA are hindering the Services' ability to meet the need for officers with the required knowledge, skills and abilities to fill mission requirements. The analysis shall also consider the effects on the force of varying the timing of promotions among various competitive categories.

The Navy, in turn, tasked CNA to help respond to DoD's request, but it also wanted additional analysis to attempt to identify other factors that influence attainment of an efficient and effective officer management system. The Navy recognized that it may be hindered by DOPMA law or policy that governs areas of the personnel system besides promotion timing, such as the overall shape of the officer corps pyramid, the up-or-out career flow provisions, the 20-year voluntary retirement provision, and endstrength constraints. In addition, the military compensation system is a central consideration for officer management. It is not governed by DOPMA; however, by design, it reinforces many of DOPMA's provisions. Thus, barriers to producing officers with the right KSAs may be related to the compensation system as well as to DOPMA and ROPMA.

Approach

To determine if the promotion timing system described by DOPMA and ROPMA is "hindering the [Navy's] ability to meet the need for officers with the required knowledge, skills, and abilities to fill mission requirements," we would need a description of the Navy officer requirements by KSAs, as well as a description of officers by KSAs. We would also need evidence that there is a shortage of officers with the necessary KSAs. We could then analyze whether the current promotion timing system prescribed by DOPMA and ROPMA is the cause of the shortage.

To our knowledge, however, the Navy does not have a repository of KSAs that describe each Navy officer requirement and an equivalent repository of KSAs that describe each officer. Without that, it is difficult to determine whether the Navy has enough officers with the right KSAs. Lacking the ability to identify shortages of officers with certain KSAs, one cannot analyze whether the promotion timing provisions of DOPMA and ROPMA are causing the shortage.

Instead, we employ a next-best solution for addressing the DoD tasking that also incorporates the Navy's broader inquiry. First, we review the development of DOPMA and ROPMA law and policy. Our review focuses on the spirit and letter of the law so that so we have a common understanding of the motivations and terms of the law and policy.

Then, we turn to the sizable literature on military officer personnel management written after DOPMA's passage. Much of this literature focuses on the shortcomings of the current system, including the barriers posed by DOPMA, ROPMA, and other aspects of the personnel system (e.g., the compensation system) for the effective and efficient management of the officer corps. We summarize the limitations of the personnel system described in this literature.

We then summarize the proposed solutions identified by the authors of these studies to overcome those limitations. We examine the proposed solutions in light of DOPMA's and ROPMA's original intent so that the tradeoffs to adopting the solutions are understood.

Finally, to address the question of KSAs directly, we describe how KSAs may relate to the limitation in the personnel system and to the proposed solution. In particular, we show how KSAs may be able to address the stated limitation and what the drawbacks to using KSAs might be.²

2. The literature contains few explicit links between KSAs and the officer personnel management system (and specifically to promotion timing), so this is CNA's interpretation of the effect rather than what was presented in the literature.

A brief review of DOPMA/ROPMA

According to [3] (quoted in [4]), DOPMA, which passed in 1980, was designed to achieve three general goals related to officer management. Congress expected that DOPMA would allow the Services to:

- Meet requirements for officers in various grades at ages and levels of experience conducive to effective performance
- Provide career opportunities that would attract and retain the number of officers of high caliber needed
- Provide reasonably consistent career opportunities among the Services.

ROPMA was passed in 1994 and became effective in 1996. According to [5], ROPMA had three main objectives—to update and consolidate laws governing officers in all the reserve components, to streamline the management of active-status reserve officers, and to achieve uniformity and compatibility with DOPMA, to the extent possible.

In accordance with the third goal, ROPMA applied DOPMA principles to reserve personnel and defined a management system for RC officers that mirrors the AC system defined in DOPMA. Furthermore, taken together, these goals can be seen as a reaffirmation of the original goals and intent of DOPMA 15 years after its passage.

Before DOPMA's passage, Congress and stakeholders wrestled with how to design a personnel system that would best achieve the DOPMA goals. The features of the system that were adopted were informed by historical lessons learned about officer management. Five key features of DOPMA stand today:

1. **Closed system (“closedness”).** DOPMA/ROPMA is a closed personnel system. With a few exceptions, new officers enter the system at low grades, and positions in higher grades are filled by internal promotion. Closedness, especially promotion from within, helps ensure that officers in successively higher ranks have the right experiences. It also helps the development of “officership” as a profession.

2. **A personnel pyramid.** The grade structures created by the DOPMA and ROPMA systems are pyramid shaped. The fact that the AC grade tables allow relatively more field grade officers for a smaller officer force reflects concerns about having a sufficient base of field grade officers in the case of a large mobilization. More generally, the pyramid-shaped structures for both components are consistent with a system in which officers move up through the rank hierarchy with ever-decreasing opportunities for promotion.
3. **A competitive, up-or-out career flow.** The DOPMA/ROPMA system is characterized by a competitive, up-or-out career flow. Officers enter the system at early career points, compete for promotion, and must separate if they are not selected.³ The up-or-out feature of the DOPMA/ROPMA system reflects concerns related to creating and maintaining a sufficient flow of officers through the rank structure. Up-or-out also generates promotion opportunities by creating vacancies at high ranks and promotes professionalism by making promotion based on the competitive, “best-qualified” standard.
4. **Seniority-based promotion timing.** Promotion timing in the DOPMA/ROPMA system is based on seniority as defined by years of service (YOS) and time in grade: officers are eligible to be considered for promotion to each grade when they are within specific promotion zones defined by YOS windows and by seniority within each grade and competitive category. Seniority-based promotion timing ensures that officers flow continuously through the rank system because it requires that officers be considered for promotion at certain points in their careers; they are not allowed to stay in a grade indefinitely. This flow helps to achieve the objective of creating promotion opportunities. Seniority-based promotion timing is also consistent with the objective to meet requirements for officers with levels of experience conducive to effective performance.

3. To clarify, officers who fail to promote to the grade of O5 may stay until 20 years of service but not longer, which allows for vesting in the retirement system.

5. **Uniformity across Services.** In general, the DOPMA/ROPMA system is uniform across the Services. DOPMA's provisions reflect how Congress and military leadership believed that officers should be best managed at the time it was passed. According to [3], "DOPMA established a common officer management system built around a uniform notion of how military officers should be trained, appointed, promoted, separated, and retired."

Few reviews of DOPMA and ROPMA take issue with DOPMA's objectives. However, the features of the system that were put in place to achieve the goals—closedness; the personnel pyramid; the competitive, up-or-out career flow; seniority-based promotion timing; and uniformity across Services—were a source of debate at the time of DOPMA's passage and are frequently the target of criticism today.

Results

A substantial literature on military officer personnel management considers the system's shortcomings and offers suggestions for improvement. We summarize these shortcomings as a way to describe how DOPMA and ROPMA may be keeping the Navy from filling mission requirements with officers holding the required KSAs. We then summarize the suggested solutions and the potential gains and losses to the current personnel system if the solutions were adopted. Finally, we describe how a KSA-based promotion timing system relates to the identified limitations of the personnel system.

Our review of this literature yielded four main limitations:

- DOPMA's inflexibility in the midst of changing supply of and demand for officers
- An inflexible compensation system
- Navy culture and practice regarding promotions
- AC-RC integration challenges.

DOPMA's inflexibility in the midst of changing supply of and demand for officers

A sizable literature suggests that the personnel system defined by DOPMA is simply too static and inflexible to be effective in a dynamic environment. DOPMA's rigid pyramid structure and grade limitations, uniform career lengths and career paths, and inflexible promotion timing rules are not capable of responding fast enough to changes in officer supply (typically seen through changes in officer retention) or to changes in officer demand (typically seen through changes in requirements).

Specific limitations

DOPMA's ability to accommodate large changes in requirements was tested almost continuously during its first 15 years—by the military buildup in the 1980s and by the subsequent drawdown in the early 1990s. It proved to be an inflexible management system through those periods of significant change.

Since the drawdown period, the requirements for Navy officers in the middle and senior grades have increased, while the requirements for junior officers have not. This is particularly true for certain officer specialties. If the personnel system permitted, these changes might be accommodated by selectively lengthening careers. However, DOPMA's prescribed personnel pyramid, guidelines for promotion timing and opportunity, and the 20-year vesting point in the retirement system impose officer career lengths that are about the same over time and across officer specialties.⁴

Likewise, a relative increase in middle and senior grade requirements may also require an increase in officer continuation. Moreover, these additional requirements may be more effectively filled by officers with a broader range of experiences. A number of studies explore alternative career paths as a way to improve retention and/or broaden officer experience. This approach includes allowing officers

4. The retirement system is not technically part of the DOPMA/ROPMA system but is instead part of the compensation system that supports DOPMA/ROPMA; we discuss this in the next subsection.

to leave active duty temporarily and then return to active duty, as well as allowing officers who stay on active duty continuously to occasionally fill positions that are not considered to be due course in their respective career specialties.⁵ Again, however, DOPMA's various provisions for the personnel pyramid and for promotion timing and opportunity make alternative career paths difficult to achieve.

Proposed solutions

The proposed solution to the DOPMA/ROPMA system's inability to respond to large changes in requirements is to allow for gradual adjustments to the grade table. There are also modifications to DOPMA law and policy that are needed to overcome the current limitations on longer careers and alternative career paths. They include changing the mandatory retirement dates, widening the promotion windows that are currently defined in policy, and allowing adjustments to be made to the seniority calculation.⁶

One proposed solution is to abandon seniority-based promotion timing entirely and replace it with a KSA-based promotion timing system for the AC [6]. If KSA-determined promotion eligibility were able to be implemented for the AC, the timing of promotions could potentially differ for individual officers and across officer specialties, which could facilitate longer careers and alternative career paths.

Gains and losses to the current personnel system

There is the potential for making the personnel system more manageable in the face of external changes by allowing for more gradual adjustments to large-scale requirement changes. Potential gains could result from a better match of career length to the training/experience requirements for, and the type of work done in, each competitive category. The potential gains from alternative career

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5. Some of these ideas are now being tested as pilot programs or have been put in practice as alternative career paths. They include the career intermission pilot program and specialty career paths.
 6. The 20-year vesting rule in the military retirement system that is not actually part of DOPMA would also have to be modified.

paths include improved productivity, improved retention, and greater breadth of experience for officers.

If KSA-determined promotion eligibility could be implemented for the AC, this could allow longer careers and alternative career paths. The potential gains would be as described above: improved productivity, better retention, and greater breadth of experience.

Some of the features of DOPMA, however, may be challenged by these solutions. In particular, the features of DOPMA were intended to create similar experience profiles for officers of the same grade across competitive categories and across Services. Uniformity would be challenged if some competitive categories had longer careers (and likely different promotion timing and opportunity) than others.

Lengthened careers may also challenge the personnel pyramid and a properly functioning up-or-out career flow process because lengthened careers will almost certainly lengthen time in grade, which, in turn, may lower promotion opportunity.⁷ Likewise, alternative career paths may impede adequate flow through the personnel system, potentially challenging the up-or-out career flow and the personnel pyramid. Finally, a successfully implemented KSA-promotion timing system would directly challenge the seniority-based promotion timing feature of DOPMA.

A major concern about moving to a KSA-based promotion eligibility system is its feasibility. We know of no good examples of personnel systems that use KSAs to determine promotion eligibility; in fact, the authors of [6] express considerable skepticism about its feasibility. They write:

The greatest amount of work in implementing a competency-based system will fall to the services and the service communities. Greater flexibility does not mean greater ease of management; the opposite is probably true. The biggest challenge will be in identifying the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) that are conferred and required by each job,

7. This assumes that all of the additional career length is not added at the end of the current career, thus avoiding changes in promotion timing.

school, and training event. This is not a one-time effort, particularly on the demand (requirements) side. Changes in the geopolitical environment, in technology, and in society have a continual influence on individual competencies that generate the capabilities of military organizations.

Despite the shortcomings of the current seniority-based promotion eligibility system, it is visible, easily understood, and relatively easy to measure. A move to an imprecise and difficult-to-measure standard, such as KSAs, to determine promotion eligibility may challenge the integrity of the entire advancement system.

How KSAs relate

The current time-based promotion system already incorporates some aspects of a KSA-based system. Early in their careers, officers must qualify in their specialties, typically by means of written and practical exams. As officers progress in their careers, however, the qualities that are needed to fill billets effectively—superior leadership, strategic thinking, and management—become increasingly difficult to describe precisely and are certainly more difficult to measure. Moreover, officers who promote to the next grade will be called on to fill a variety of billets; the precise type of these billets is unknown at the time of promotion. As a result, in the current promotion system, officers are selected based on their performance in past positions (accumulated experience) as well as on expected future performance in a variety of higher-level positions, none of which is necessarily described in extensive detail by KSAs.

Although we outlined our concerns about the feasibility of supplanting the seniority-based promotion timing system with KSAs, we believe that KSA analysis could play an important role in helping to determine which careers should be lengthened and where in the career path additional time should be added. Similarly, KSA analysis could help determine how alternative careers could be shaped to improve the effectiveness of the officer corps. Table 1 summarizes this discussion.

Table 1. Inflexible, static system in a dynamic world (i.e., changes in supply (officer behavior) and demand (requirements))

Negative effect of current personnel system	Proposed solution ^a	What may be gained	What may be lost	How KSAs relate	How KSAs may be a challenge to implement
Battle space, platforms change demand, officer behavior changes supply; personnel system cannot respond effectively.	Allow for more flexibility in the system, especially for adjustments to changes in the personnel pyramid and grade tables.	Adequate adjustment time to external changes in the system. Better match of career and tour lengths to type of work done for each competitive category.	Uniformity of careers. Ease in assessing experience vs. rank across competitive categories and across Services.	Unclear why KSAs would have to be used explicitly in the promotion timing system. KSA analysis, in conjunction with analysis of experience/productivity profile and ROI analysis of training, may help determine which careers should be longer	Feasibility of a KSA system questionable. Few problems if KSA analysis is limited to use in determining optimal tour and career lengths.
DOPMA has an inflexible personnel pyramid. DOPMA promotes inflexible career lengths; provides for few alternative career paths.	Adjust 20-year voluntary retirement and widen promotion windows to facilitate longer careers and alternative career paths. Use KSAs instead of seniority to determine promotion eligibility to facilitate variable career lengths and alternative career paths.	Maximization of experience/productivity profile for each competitive category. Better continuation, broader range of experiences for officers.	Adequate opportunity for promotion. (Lengthening careers and widening promotion windows must be accompanied by sufficiently strong up-or-out policies.) Seniority-based promotion timing, which may impede sufficient flow through the system.		

a. The solutions also include allowing for different career lengths by reforming the compensation system.

Limitations of the compensation system

Another body of literature contends that the current compensation system is perhaps the key limitation to managing both the enlisted and officer personnel systems. Laws that describe the compensation system are not considered to be part of DOPMA, but the compensation system's current form reinforces many of DOPMA's most inflexible features.

Specific limitations

The military's compensation system reduces personnel management flexibility in many ways, perhaps none more so than by the retirement

system. The military's 20-year cliff vesting retirement system provides no benefits for military personnel who leave before 20 years of active service but, once vested at 20 YOS, pays benefits immediately on retirement from active duty. As a result, the majority leaves the Service with no retirement benefits at all. Once an officer reaches 10 to 12 YOS, the 20-year cliff vesting creates a strong incentive to remain on active duty until 20 YOS. There is little incentive to remain on active duty after reaching the fully vested 20-year milestone. Even when force shaping may require it, the Services find it difficult to "break the faith" and separate personnel with more than 10 but less than 20 YOS, knowing how much will be lost in retirement benefits.

Moreover, over the last several decades, this type of retirement plan has become increasingly different from the flexible, portable retirement plans available in the civilian sector. Many civilian-sector retirement plans are defined contribution plans, in which the employee has some discretion over the amount of compensation taken as current cash compensation versus the amount put into a retirement savings plan. These plans do not require that employees stay for 20 years to become vested. In many cases, employees are able to take retirement savings with them when they leave employers.

Proposed solutions

Most proposed retirement reforms create earlier vesting in the plan and decrease or eliminate the immediate payout of benefits at 20 YOS. Reforms of the basic pay table and special and incentive pays are also cited as solutions because the Services must maintain adequate retention as the incentives in the current retirement system change.

Gains and losses to the current personnel system

As compensation reform allows more flexibility in the personnel system, and in particular as it makes longer careers and alternative career paths possible, the potential gains to the personnel system are as we described earlier: gains in productivity, better retention, and greater breadth of experience. In addition, compensation reform could enable lateral entry to certain officer communities; to the extent that this helps manage personnel to meet requirements, this could be viewed as an improvement to the current system.

At the same time, a number of the features of DOPMA may be challenged by reforming the compensation system. To the extent that compensation reform facilitates lengthened careers and alternative career paths, uniformity may be challenged. Similarly, compensation reform that supports longer careers and alternative career paths must be accompanied by careful analysis about adequate flow through the system; otherwise, the up-or-out career flow and personnel pyramid features will be challenged. Finally, lateral entry by definition directly challenges the closedness of DOPMA.

How KSAs relate

KSAs play no direct role in compensation reform. If compensation reform, coupled with changes to DOPMA, facilitates longer careers and alternative career paths, KSAs could play a supporting role in determining those new paths. Table 2 summarizes this discussion.

Limitations due to culture

We define limitations due to culture as the ways that Navy culture and tradition keep it from making full use of the flexibility of the current personnel system.

Specific limitations

Several studies argue that the Services have adopted a conservative approach to officer management, whereby risk taking and creativity are not rewarded and may even be discouraged. They note that, especially since the drawdown, there has been a culture of “zero tolerance” for mistakes. In addition, deviations from due-course career paths are usually met with disapproval. This attitude creates additional rigidity in an already inflexible personnel management system.

Proposed solutions

The promotion system allows limited numbers of early promotions (“below-zone promotions”) and late promotions (“above-zone” promotions). The Navy is also allowed a 2-percent window around its congressionally mandated officer endstrength, and it has some authority to extend certain officer careers to meet special technical or other needs of the Navy. The Navy can also request waivers from

Congress when it is unable to meet its DOPMA-imposed seniority restrictions. The proposed solution is to go against tradition and culture and use promotion timing authority and other personnel system waivers wherever possible.

Table 2. Current compensation system promotes the wrong incentives and is out of step with the civilian sector

Negative effect of current personnel system	Proposed solution	What may be gained	What may be lost	How KSAs relate	How KSAs may be a challenge to implement
With 20-year cliff vesting and immediate payout of retirement benefits, some officers leave too early and some stay too long.	Reform retirement system to alleviate inefficient stay/leave decisions. Allow for earlier vesting and eliminate 20-year cliff vesting/immediate payout of benefits.	Officers whom the Navy no longer needs can leave the Service vested in the retirement system. Officers whom the Navy needs to retain can stay.	Comparability of a given rank across competitive categories within the Navy and across Services. Current career patterns may be altered and would need to be monitored to ensure adequate flow.	For pure compensation reform, KSAs are not applicable. As compensation reform allows for longer careers and alternative career paths, KSAs may be used as described in table 1.	Few problems anticipated if KSA analysis is limited to helping to determine career lengths and alternative career paths that are supported by compensation reform.
Compares unfavorably with flexibility of civilian-sector employment arrangements. Makes it harder to retain certain officers whom the Navy wants to keep.	Reform pay tables, special/incentive pays to maintain adequate retention.	Changes may be attractive to certain officers whom the Navy wants to keep. May allow for easier lateral entry.	Lateral entry challenges notion of "officership" or military officer as a profession (i.e., closedness).		

In addition, the Navy could explore options for counting accumulated experience toward the due-course milestones differently. For example, the Navy could expand on such concepts as the career intermission pilot program, which allows seniority to be adjusted for time away from active duty. Other pilot programs could be developed to test the feasibility of alternative measures of accumulated experience.

Gains and losses to the current personnel system

Setting aside rigid traditions and taking advantage of all possible waivers and exceptions to the law could increase personnel management flexibility without systematically challenging DOPMA's underlying features. If setting aside tradition and cultural practices results in

longer careers and alternative career paths, other potential gains to the system that we have already described may accrue—higher productivity, better retention, and increased breadth of experience.

As described earlier, a number of DOPMA features will be challenged if aggressive use of waivers and creatively designed pilot programs help facilitate longer careers and alternative career paths. Seniority and uniformity are among the DOPMA features that will face challenges. Also, any changes to the system that support longer careers and alternative career paths must still ensure adequate flow through the system or the up-or-out career flow and personnel pyramid features will be challenged.

How KSAs relate

KSAs were not mentioned in the literature on tradition and cultural limitations or in discussions with Navy subject matter experts (SMEs). Though KSAs appear to play no role in addressing Navy tradition and culture, we can envision a supporting role for KSAs to understand which careers could be lengthened, to understand how alternative careers can be planned, and to help determine alternative measures of accumulated experience. Table 3 summarizes this discussion.

AC-RC integration problems

Studies on improving both AC-RC integration and the effectiveness of the RC in meeting requirements form a growing literature. Frequently mentioned limitations include the administrative and business process shortcomings of tracking personnel as they move from one component to the other. Other concerns involve the measurement of experience. Finally, differences in the AC and RC retirement systems may impede overall AC-RC personnel management.

Specific limitations

The literature and SMEs suggest that a significant part of AC-RC integration difficulties can be attributed to administrative challenges and not to DOPMA and ROPMA law or policy. Various data systems that contain AC and RC personnel information have limited ability to inform each other and to accurately track movement between the AC and the RC. These administrative challenges extend to AC and RC pay information as well.

Table 3. Navy tradition and cultural practices

Negative effect of current personnel system	Proposed solution	What may be gained	What may be lost	How KSAs relate	How KSAs may be a challenge to implement
Flexibility limited by adherence to culture and tradition that recognizes only due-course career paths.	Set aside Navy culture and tradition on issues of career advancement. Use all alternative promotion timing, waivers, and exceptions allowed in DOPMA law and policy to allow for alternative career paths and longer careers.	The possibility of alternative career paths and longer careers that may achieve higher productivity, better retention, and greater breadth of experience.	Strict compliance at all times with the letter of DOPMA (and ROPMA) law and policy. A strict adherence to time-based seniority.	For setting aside Navy culture and tradition on issues of career advancement, KSAs are not applicable.	Few problems anticipated if KSA analysis is limited to helping to determine career lengths and alternative career paths that are fostered by evolving Navy culture and tradition.
May limit full use of AZ and BZ promotion, waivers, and exceptions in DOPMA and ROPMA law and policy to achieve more flexibility.	Consider alternative measures of accumulated experience, and design pilot programs to test them.		Uniformity of careers; ease in assessing experience vs. rank across competitive categories and across Services. Adequate promotion opportunity and maintenance of the personnel pyramid if the up-or-out career flow is not maintained.	As Navy culture and tradition evolve and allow for longer careers and alternative career paths, KSAs may be used as described in table 1.	

The measurement of experience is a limitation to AC-RC integration as well. The CNGR report points out that reservists may have relevant civilian-sector experience that could help fill requirements. Such experience, however, is usually not reported in Service personnel databases. Thus, the Navy cannot systematically evaluate reservists' civilian-sector experience.

Another factor affecting AC and RC integration is the potential mismatch of military experience. In contrast to an AC officer, an RC officer can earn a year's worth of creditable service with 2 days drilling per month plus an additional 2 weeks per year. Since promotion timing is essentially the same in the AC and the RC, there can be significant differences in military experience for AC and RC officers of the same grade and YOS.

Other key differences that could impede AC-RC integration are the compensation systems—in particular, the retirement systems. Such

differences provide different stay/leave incentives for AC and RC officers and make a coordinated system difficult to achieve.

Proposed solutions

The Defense Integrated Military Human Resources System (DIMHRS) was supposed to help fix the administrative problems for both AC and RC personnel within each Service and across Services. The DIMHRS effort, however, has stalled. While it is under review, it has fallen to each Service to attempt to address these problems internally. The Navy is working toward improved administrative and business processes to facilitate better AC-RC integration.

To address potential civilian-sector and military experience mismatches between the AC and the RC, the CNGR proposes using KSAs to determine promotion eligibility. This means that civilian-sector and military experience of AC and RC officers must be described by a common set of KSAs. In addition, the CNGR recommends creating a single AC-RC seniority list based on those KSAs.

Finally, the literature provides numerous proposals for compensation reform that could help facilitate AC-RC integration. Many recommend lifting the 20-year vesting rule in the retirement systems for AC and RC officers and adopting the delayed benefit payout rules that are currently in the reserve retirement system.

Gains and losses to the current personnel system

The potential gains from addressing database and other administrative limitations are better tracking of AC and RC personnel, more accurate reporting of pay and retirement accrual information (particularly for the RC), and improving the planning capabilities of the Navy for future mobilizations.

There are also potential gains to more accurately measuring civilian-sector experience and the AC-RC differences in military experience. If feasible, this could lead to much more effective use of the RC since true accumulated experience could be matched against requirements. Likewise, AC and RC retirement reforms that support better AC-RC integration, longer careers, and alternative career paths could

potentially achieve higher productivity, improve retention, and provide greater breadth of experience.

However, improvements in AC-RC integration may challenge several features of DOPMA. First, it directly challenges closedness, or the idea of “officership” as a profession. The more that RC officers who gain military experience slowly while accruing potentially unrelated civilian-sector experience are treated similarly to AC officers who accrue military experience quickly and exclusively, the more that the profession may be challenged. Second, it will directly challenge the seniority-based promotion timing by replacing it with a KSA-based promotion timing system. Finally, to the extent that AC-RC integration facilitates alternative careers, uniformity within and across competitive categories, the up-or-out career flow, and the personnel pyramid features may be challenged.

If a KSA-based promotion timing system were feasible, it would go a long way to solving the AC-RC integration problems facing the Navy. Although such a system would not necessarily address the administrative challenges of AC-RC integration, it could address the military and civilian-sector experience mismatches. Unfortunately, a KSA-based promotion timing system is highly questionable for the AC because it would be so difficult to identify KSAs for positions and personnel and to measure the achievement of those KSAs accurately. The infeasibility of the system is increased when the RC is considered because civilian sector experience also has to be described by the same set of KSAs.

How KSAs relate

KSAs play no direct role in solving the administrative and business process limitations to AC-RC integration. Nor are KSAs likely to help overcome experience measurement issues for the AC and RC officers because of lack of feasibility. However, KSAs can play a supporting role in the case of AC and RC retirement reform that improves AC-RC integration and allows for longer careers and alternative career paths. Tables 4, 5, and 6 summarize this discussion.

Table 4. Active/reserve integration: Difficulty moving between active and reserve components

Negative effect of current personnel system	Proposed solution	What may be gained	What may be lost	How KSAs relate	How KSAs may be a challenge to implement
Difficulty moving between AC and RC.	Create/revise databases that follow Service members through their active/reserve careers.	More effective and efficient use of RC to meet requirements.	May challenge notion of "officership" or military officer as a profession (i.e., closed system).	N/A	N/A
May be hindering effective and efficient meeting of requirements.	Rethink laws/policies regarding reserve statuses.	More fluid military careers.			

Table 5. Active/reserve integration: Experience mismatch for a given designator/grade

Negative effect of current personnel system	Proposed solution	What may be gained	What may be lost	How KSAs relate	How KSAs may be a challenge to implement
May be hindering effective and efficient meeting of requirements by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not accounting for relevant civilian-sector experience and • Not aligning AC and RC YOS experience appropriately. 	Use KSAs to account for civilian-sector experience and to align AC and RC experience. This would require using KSAs to describe all requirements and attributes of personnel.	More effective use of the Reserves.	Closedness, or notion of officership (military officer as a profession). Seniority-based promotion timing. Uniformity and adequate promotion opportunity as alternative career paths develop.	KSAs would have to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately account for civilian-sector experience and • Improve the process of aligning AC and RC military experience. 	Describing civilian-sector experience and differences in AC-RC military experience by KSA is not feasible; would challenge the integrity of the current promotion system.

Table 6. Active/reserve integration: Only partial overlap of AC and RC compensation systems

Negative effect of current personnel system	Proposed solution	What may be gained	What may be lost	How KSAs relate	How KSAs may be a challenge to implement
Difficulty moving between AC and RC.	Harmonize AC and RC compensation systems.	More fluid military careers	Closedness, or notion of officership	For pure compensation reform, KSAs are not applicable.	Foresee few problems if KSA analysis is limited to helping
May be hindering effective and efficient meeting of requirements.	Start with AC retirement reform to allow for different career lengths, earlier vesting, and benefit payouts commensurate with length of service. Pay table/special pay reform to maintain adequate retention.	and more effective use of the Reserves.	(military officer as a profession.)	As compensation reform allows for longer careers and alternative career paths, KSAs may be used as shown in table 3.	to determine career lengths and alternative career paths are supported by compensation reform.

Conclusions

Because we were unable to analyze directly how DOPMA and ROPMA may have caused possible KSA shortages, we reviewed the literature on officer personnel management for related analysis. We found four limitations described in the literature on officer personnel management that could lead to mismatches between requirements and inventory:

- DOPMA's inflexibility in the midst of changing supply of and demand for officers
- An inflexible compensation system
- Navy culture and practice regarding promotions
- AC-RC integration challenges.

We also summarized the solutions to these limitations that were most frequently discussed in the literature. In general, we found that KSAs were not mentioned as solutions to the limitations listed above. In one study, however, analysts proposed improving the flexibility of the personnel system by substituting the seniority-based promotion timing system with a promotion timing system based on KSAs. The CNGR extended this proposal to the RC, and it recommended adopting a single AC-RC promotion list.

We found that many of the solutions proposed in the literature, including the move to a KSA-based promotion timing system, had the potential to improve the personnel system but also challenged the underlying features of DOPMA and ROPMA. We also found that moving to a KSA-based promotion timing system has the additional hurdle of feasibility. Without feasibility, it is difficult to imagine how a KSA-based promotion timing system could be a credible alternative to the current system.

We believe that the Navy may have some other alternatives to achieving more flexibility in the system. Navy culture and tradition may be prohibiting full utilization of the flexibility that the system currently offers. For example, if the cultural mind set regarding promotion timing could be changed, it could help achieve more flexible

outcomes, such as alternative career paths. The same is true for expanding on such ideas as the career intermission pilot program, where seniority adjustments can be made to better reflect actual accumulated experience.

If the Navy needs additional flexibility, it should consider pressing for compensation reform. The compensation system reinforces some of DOPMA's and ROPMA's most inflexible provisions. With adjustments to the compensation system, the Navy would have significantly more flexibility in the personnel system, with or without major changes to DOPMA and ROPMA. Moreover, without retirement reform, changes to DOPMA and ROPMA are unlikely to achieve the desired ends because there will still be such a strong incentive for people to retire at 20 years.

If both solutions could be undertaken, it would go a long way toward providing more flexibility in the personnel system while minimizing the challenge to DOPMA's underlying features.

Comments on the CNGR recommendations

Here we summarize our views on recommendations 10 and 11 in the CNGR:

- To allow for variation in career lengths within and across competitive categories, set aside Navy tradition and cultural practices by using as much of the flexibility in the current system as allowed. This includes:
 - Using waivers and other exceptions to law and policy as much as needed
 - Testing the feasibility of alternative measures of accumulated experience through pilot programs.
- To the extent that the Navy needs more flexibility:
 - Push for reform of the compensation system; this must occur to fully address DOPMA/ROPMA limitations and AC-RC integration.

- Don't move to a KSA-based promotion timing system. It is likely infeasible, and it is neither necessary nor sufficient for building more flexibility in the personnel system.
- Instead of adopting a KSA-based promotion timing system, use KSA analysis in conjunction with experience/productivity profile analysis and return on investment in training analysis to:
 - Determine which competitive categories would benefit from longer careers or alternative career paths
 - Identify education, training, and experience gaps as the battle space and platforms evolve.

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