



RESEARCH ON EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENT PEDAGOGUES FOR FORMATION OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND READINESS FOR PROFESSIONAL WORK

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ABSTRACT

The **aim** of the conducted study is to determine the attitudes for the formation of professional competence and readiness for professional work in the field of physical education of students in the specialty "Pre-school and primary school pedagogy" at Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria.

Subject of the survey are 68 students at their Bachelor's degree, who graduated in the academic year 2019/2020. All respondents are women with an average age of 22,6 years. For the purpose of the study, a questionnaire with author Ilieva & Doncheva (2015) was attached. Alternative analysis and chi-square Pearson's test (χ^2) were used to analyze the results.

Results: Over 80% of the students have a positive mindset in regards to learning the subjects "Theoretical foundations of physical education" and "Methodology of physical education in preschool and primary school age." 60% of them have higher expectations about their sports-technical preparation. The surveyed students are aware of the importance of personal motivation and responsibility for the success of their professional work in the area of physical education.

Key words: Student pedagogues, professional training, pedagogical and personal expectations.

INTRODUCTION

The modern educational paradigm is focused on the active application of the competence approach for achieving quality qualification of higher education graduates. For authors exploring the problem, such as Khutorskoy (2003); Rychen and Ferrer (2004); Zeer, Pavlova, and Symanyuk (2005); Reid (2006); Rodzericiüte (2009); Apelgren and Giertz (2010); Ryegard, Apelgren, and Olsson (2010); Hakim (2015); Hustler, Mirzagitova and Akhmetov (2015) and others, in Bulgaria - Boneva (2009); Tsankov and Genkova (2009); Gospodinov (2011); Gaidova (2013); Bizova (2016), Naidenova, Semerdzhieva, Doncheva (2016). etc., the

competence approach in education is an objective need to master a system of competencies that determine the readiness of the specialist to use their potential (knowledge, skills, experience, and personal qualities) to carry out effective activities in a particular professional or social field, for professional and personal development (1-17).

In the various normative documents, the competences/competencies (without further going into a discussion about the semantics of these two concepts) are related to the concept of lifelong learning and life realization as a result of learning. In this context, students' academic preparation in pedagogical degrees is a natural starting point for achieving one of the main goals of modern education - a flexible system, one that's rapidly adapting to the dynamics of current realities.

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The special training of the students develops in two interrelated areas: theoretical - based on advances in science and technology, and practical, corresponding to the needs of the society, the requirements of the labour market and the individual needs of the trainee.

Creating an optimal correlation between students' personal perceptions and desires for professional development and societal and market needs highlights the need to increase the share of pedagogical technologies in academic training to stimulate learner's proactivity. According to (Ivanova and Ivanova, 2018), this would contribute to the consolidation of their subject position for the concretization and enhancement of cognitive and professional interests; for the formation of professional knowledge, skills, models of behavior and attitudes in order to independently solve problems arising in the professional environment, etc. (18). For Temnikova (2016), Siderova (2016), Terzieva (2019), Dimitrov (2020) the emphasis in the application of the competency-based approach in the training of future teachers is placed on the processes of segmentation and construction of structural-functional models for building specific competencies, enriching the preparation for actual pedagogical practice (19–22). D. Georgieva (2019) expands on the idea, stating that it is an approach "designed to build their personal, professional philosophy" (23).

The main component in the training of students with a degree programme in "Pre-school and primary school pedagogy" is the professional preparation for planning, organizing, conducting physical education, and managing the teaching activity in both units of the physical education system – kindergarten and primary school. The specific nature for forming professional competencies implies and requires cognitive and physical activity from the students to successfully transfer the acquired knowledge and skills (including physical skills) in an actual working environment. The high complexity and systemic complexity of training for the formation of professional competencies in future children's and primary school teachers are expressed in its purposeful, meaningful (appropriately selected learning content and learning means), procedural (forms, methods, techniques and means of

training) and control-regulating (opportunities for control, self-control and feedback) aspects.

If we proceed from the accepted definition of a competency model - a set of competencies organized in a common matrix in a way that corresponds to the needs of a specific organization and that describes all (needed) competencies and their distribution according to particular criteria, then, according to Tsv. Delcheva (2020), one of its main objectives when applied in an academic environment, is to support developing behavioral indicators of professional competencies that delineate the boundaries of operational readiness for students' future professional realization (24).

In modern times, physical culture, physical education, sport and physical activity are values with specific importance to people. The general theories of physical culture, physical education and sports provide the content (methodology) of the relevant core/common competencies. Under the influence of various circumstances and other factors, the contents undergo changes depending on new discoveries in the sciences in these areas of physical activity. Considered in a philosophical sense, B. Peneva (2019) defines them as methodological foundations of the respective core competencies, which extend their methodology to individual competencies providing in their field and expert knowledge (25). According to the same author, competencies in physical education can be:

- ✓ cognitive competencies, assuming the use of knowledge, theories and concepts of physical activity;
- ✓ functional competencies – skills and know-how that can be applied in a specific educational or social activity;
- ✓ personal competencies relating to the behavior of the physical education teacher in a particular situation;
- ✓ ethical competencies related to the teacher's possession of personal and professional values.

The acquisition of core competencies (every day and professional motor skills, good physical capability, knowledge mainly of physiology, psychology, methodology, etc.), their transformation into individual competencies, is

an open process continuing throughout the whole of human life, in which the institutions of kindergarten and school with their stages and levels of training play an essential role. Thus, the subject of competencies leads to the problem of

subject-subject learning. If, until recently, the current model of physical education was a learner who knows and understands, the modern model, in addition, requires the trainee to think, act, evaluate and create (25).

Table 1. Structure of physical education models (cited in Peneva, 2019)

Traditional approach	Modern approach
1 – educational units + 2 – an introduction and modern materials + 3 – pedagogical pressure	1 – attitude + 2 – forming/ modelling + 3 – educational freedom
An objective category is the trainee and their body	A subjective category is the trainee and their body
The body is subject to the educational process	The body has to be treated as an element of the general system of values

The professional success and working style of the prospective children's and primary teacher in the field of physical education is influenced by their personal motivation, attitudes towards professional suitability, and trends in the development of the area. For example, a review of current physical education curricula in Bulgaria shows a trend towards athleticism that limits training in natural human movements such as walking, running, jumping, throwing, climbing, propelling, etc. The physiological effects on the conditioning and coordination physical abilities of trainees are also underestimated.

On the other hand, due to the immobilization typical of modern times, as a result of an unhealthy lifestyle, these locomotor movements are not developed at the necessary level in preschool and primary school-age children. The gaps in personal experience and the disconnection between individual capabilities and reality cause part of the educational content that curricula offer in the form of state standards to be, at a later stage of education, overwhelming for the trainee in mastering individual competencies.

METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted to determine the attitudes for the formation of professional competence and readiness for professional work in the field of physical education of students in the specialty "Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy" at Trakia University, Stara Zagora, Bulgaria.

The **subject** of the survey were 68 students, Bachelor's degree, graduated in the academic year 2019/2020. All respondents were female with an average age of 22.6 years. For the purpose of the study, a questionnaire authored by Ilieva & Doncheva (26) was applied. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part covers the students' expected outcomes. They are pedagogical expectations and personal expectations. Pedagogical expectations are related to their theoretical and practical preparation for motor education of children from 3 to 11 years of age. Personal expected outcomes determine motivational factors - the basis of any effective teaching activity. Alternative analysis and chi-square Pearson's test (χ^2) were used to analyze the results.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

After analyzing the data, it has been determined that the students who have been surveyed realize the importance of the school subjects "Theoretical foundations of physical education" and "Methodology of physical education in preschool and primary school age." As is seen in **Table 2** (items 1-5, section "Expected pedagogical results"), over 80% of them have the readiness for active participation in the educational process of physical education in the academic field.

The motivational factors generalized as personal expectations (items 6-11, section "Expected results in personal plan") are also rated with a

favourable rating from over 50% of the surveyed students. The proportion with the indicated answers "No" or "I cannot decide" is insignificant. The lowest result is given to the item "Specialized skills and abilities about the different sports" (70% - "Yes", 12% - "No" and 18% "I cannot decide").

After the applied Pearson Chi Square Tests (χ^2), at $p \leq 0.05$, no differences were found in the answers of the respondents to any of the posed questions, on the criteria of age.

The results from both sections of the survey reveal favorable opportunities for the quality and efficiency of the collective work.

Table 2. *Expected results from the students' education*

№	Expected results from the students' education	Yes	No	I can not decide
	<i>Expected pedagogical results</i>			
1.	Good professional training for motor training in kindergarten and primary school	94%	0%	6%
2.	Gaining new knowledge and skills in the field of physical education	88%	12%	0%
3.	Specialized knowledge of and skills for particular sports	70%	12%	18%
4.	Pedagogical skills for leadership in various forms of motor training in kindergarten and primary school	82%	12%	6%
5.	Knowledge of and skills for correct terminology and demonstration of physical exercises	100%	0%	0%
	<i>Expected results in personal terms</i>			
6.	Positive mood (personal)	82%	0%	18 %
7.	Formation of a positive attitude towards the direction "Physical Culture" in the kindergarten and in the field "Sport" at school	82%	6%	12%
8.	Health, tone and energy	100%	0%	0%
9.	Improving of coordination skills	76%	6%	18%
10.	Improving of the physical qualities (strength, endurance, agility, flexibility, speed) (personal)	70%	6%	24%
11.	Other	0%	0%	0%

Expected outcomes from the education of students

The second part of the inquiry is focused on students' motor and health culture. It is linked to the future pedagogical development of the student in his role as an attractive example for the trainees about their health behavior. The following questions have been asked in the survey:

- Does your future profession require physical and health culture?
- Emphasize the most important physical qualities needed for your future career!

Can physical activity develop additional conditioning and coordination skills that are useful in your future profession?

Which is your preferred type of physical activity to be practice?

How many times a week do you exercise or do your preferred physical activity?

Is your diet focused on a balanced and healthy diet?

What foods do you mainly include in your daily menu?

Seventy-eight percent of the surveyed students positively answer the first question. 16% of them

aren't sure whether knowledge in this field is required for their future occupation, and only 6% give a negative answer. We suppose that what adds to the high results is the offered subject "Health education", which broadens the knowledge and professional preparation of future teachers in this direction.

The teacher who will be conducting the physical education must have physical endurance, swift reaction, agility and movement coordination. The adopted technique is essential for the correct demonstration of physical activities. With a high percentage with a positive answer (over 50%), the students point out four of the six groups of conditional and coordination qualities as useful for teaching profession.

Their rating according to the levels of importance, based on the given answers, shows that a priority is given to physical endurance – 83%, swift reaction – 81%, agility and movement coordination – 72%, strength and upper limb skill – 56%. According to the students, the other two qualities – total physical strength and lower limb strength - have lower significance relating to professional work: 32% for full physical strength and 28% - lower limb strength.

The answers to the third question (the average value of the answers is twice per week, ranging from 1 to 6 times) show that the students are aware of the benefits of physical activity and have personal impressions about this. Physical activity is an essential factor for primary health prophylactic. On the one hand, hypodynamics is being counteracted, which is a risk factor for the occurrence of a number of socially significant diseases. At the same time, as a result of systemic physical load, structurally-physical changes in the organism of the people doing physical exercises and sports are achieved. Physical activity increases the protective forces of the organism; it decreases stress, rationalizes free time and tunes the organism positively. Physical activity plays a significant role in the secondary prophylactic in individuals who have been ill and individuals who are sick now. Even though it's not in the field of the current study, physical activity has a considerable significance in the conditions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a preferred motor activity, the surveyed students have indicated folk dances, strolls, fitness, cycling, volleyball.

Balanced eating is a source of health and workability. That's why knowledge in this field is valuable and necessary for a future pedagogue. The answers and the carried-out discussion on the topic related to dieting show that the surveyed students have a necessity for more in-depth knowledge. The higher percentage – 76% answer "Sometimes" to the question "Is your diet focused on a balanced and healthy diet?" This statement is reaffirmed by the given responses relating to the food that students prefer to include in their daily menu. From the analysis of the results, we find that the daily menu of the surveyed students includes various eatables. The emphasis is on bread, cereals, potatoes – 86%. A preference for fruit and vegetables have indicated 82%; milk and milk products – 66%; meat and fish – 78%. Low is the percentage of students that have shown a preference for food containing fats and/or sugar – 35%, nuts – 67%, others (eggs) – 46%.

CONCLUSION

The study conducted on student teachers' expectations for the formation of professional competence and readiness for professional work in the field of physical education is part of a broader research activity. It is related to compiling a conceptual model of the Competence Profile of the graduating student majoring in Pre-school and Primary School Pedagogy, in order to make it possible in the longer term to change the curriculum documentation of the specialty in accordance with the contemporary requirements.

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