

STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR ORGANISING FAMILY SPORT

Professional training and family sport

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Abstract

Introduction. The aim of this work was to form the set of opinions about the improvement of the system of students' professional training in the field of conducting and organising family sports activities. **Material and methods.** A questionnaire was used in the research which included students from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year of the Latvian Academy of Sports Education (n=157). **Results.** Significant relationships were found between questions concerning students' opinions about physical activities in their families and relationships between professional readiness to manage family sports activities. **Conclusion.** The research results confirm that if students have developed interest in pre-school children they will also show willingness to get to know activities connected with pre-school children, e.g. they will take advantage of possibilities to attend public activities for pre-school children or explain the necessity of physical activities in strengthening family bonds.

Key words: family sport, professional training, pre-school children, students

Introduction

The present societies need physically healthy and mentally developed people. Physical activity helps people to develop and therefore a lot of attention ought to be paid to it since early childhood in order to form healthy, balanced and versatile personality [1].

Nevertheless, the public opinion research "Sporting habits of the inhabitants of the Republic of Latvia" carried out in "SKDS" centre (December, 2007) showed that 49% of the respondents did not take up any sports activities and as the main reason they mentioned "lack of time" and "lack of necessity to do physical activities". The latter reason proved the fact that the inhabitants were not sufficiently educated about the necessity to practise sports. An even more critical situation was observed in family sports habits: only 17% of the respondents involve family in sporting activities and do sports together. It means that consistency and traditions are needed which form the motivation to do physical activities. Most traditions are formed in families [2].

Such situation concerning family sporting habits was also observed by Piech who tried to solve key issues concerning motivating pre-school children and their parents to take up physical activities [3].

Nowadays families are so overloaded performing their job duties and striving for material wealth that they often forget their greatest value, i.e. children. Children are looked after by babysitters, grandmothers, older brothers and sisters who cannot provide a child with those emotional, physical and mental feelings which can be provided only by the child's parents.

Additionally, an important role in developing family sporting habits is played by a pre-school teacher who helps the child to develop the full potential of their personality forming the system of values and attitudes towards other children, adults, the environment and things [4].

There is a lack of qualified pre-school sports specialists who could encourage and motivate families to do physical activities. In Riga only 91 out of 154 pre-school educational institutions employ physical education teachers full time.

Society demands high quality from education and from every person involved in it, i.e. the responsibility for the process and the result achieved in it, qualified staff, quality environment, well-planned child-centred day, high-quality programmes, professionalism in contacts with parents.

The improvement of pedagogical qualifications is one of the directions to which much attention should be drawn. Universities prepare qualified specialists to work with pre-school children but due to different outer and inner factors students lack motivation to take up such jobs [5, 6] and they do not want to work in pre-school sector. Thus, there is an insufficient number of specialists who would like to conduct physical activities with pre-school children and their parents.

The objective of this study was to form the set of conclusions about the improvement in the system of students' professional qualifications in conducting and organising family sport.

The tasks:

1. To find out students' opinions about physical activities in their families and other Latvian families.
2. To find out students' opinions about their knowledge obtained during a pre-school sports didactics course necessary for running family sports activities.

Material and methods

The research included students of the 2nd, 3rd and 4th year at the Latvian Academy of Sports Education (n=157). After the completion of the pre-school sports didactics course the questionnaire was used to obtain data about students' sporting habits in family and their awareness of the necessity to do

physical activities with pre-school children. The questionnaire was anonymous and it included 26 questions with answers in a 5-point Likert scale. The questions concerned physical activities in which students and their families participated and knowledge obtained by students during the pre-school sports didactics course, the aim of which was to motivate the students to do physical activities themselves and conduct physical and sport activities with pre-school children and their parents.

The collected data were processed with the help of SPSS 16 software – mutual correlations were determined according to Spearman's rank.

Results and discussion

It was concluded that students improve their knowledge of the importance of physical activities in a child's development during their university course "Pre-school sports didactics". The course emphasises questions concerning a child's harmonious development, i.e. a child's physical development, individuality and cognitive abilities, social relationships, the feeling of comfort and health viewed through physical activities. The questions about family as social and cultural environment are touched upon in the programme of the course as well as in the legislation concerning services for small children and their families. Strategic guidelines on the necessity of physical activities and the promotion of basic skills and bio-motor abilities in every age group (from birth to the age of seven) have been elaborated. The programme includes getting acquainted with laws and regulations concerning a child's preparation for school.

In the research a child as an individual in a family and society, students' empirical experience and problems expressed by society were studied and finally the ways of finding a professional solution were developed with the use of special methods and means.

Innovativeness of the programme:

1. Theoretical foundations of the importance of family in a child's development and the summary of students' personal experience were elaborated.

2. The practice of observation and management was introduced. It was made possible for students to observe and analyse sports classes at pre-school institutions under the guidance of a qualified sports teacher after completing the theoretical course, to organise and run sports (game) classes at a pre-school education institution and organise public sports events for children together with their parents and to create safe and aesthetic environment. Altogether the students organised 10 family sports festivals.

After the completion of the pre-school sports didactics course data about students' sporting habits in their families and their awareness of the necessity to organise physical activities for pre-school children were collected with the help of the questionnaire.

Mutual correlations with 0.705 coefficient ($p \leq 0.01$) was observed between the questions "Do you engage your family in physical activities?" and "Does your family plan physical activities?" The assumption was that if students can draw their families' attention to sports and make them interested in performing sports activities, the family will do sports and will be likely to plan physical activities to spend their free time in an active and creative way.

Medium correlation, i.e. -0.535 ($p \leq 0.01$) is observed between the question "Do you engage your family in physical activities?" and the statement "I encourage them to do physical activities". Therefore, the assumption was that if a student does not engage his family in doing physical activities, it may mean that he or she has weak motivation. The student has

insufficient experience and possibly also insufficient opportunities to encourage their family to do physical activities.

Similarly, a medium correlation coefficient of -0.514 ($p \leq 0.01$) was observed between the question "Does your family plan physical activities?" and the statement "I encourage them to do physical activities". Taking this relation into account, the assumption was that if the family does not plan or very rarely plans physical activities, the main reason may be the lack of activity and interest of family members themselves (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Correlations between questions concerning students' opinions about physical activities in their families (n=157)

Questions	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
1. Do you engage your family in physical activities?		0.705**	0.535**
2. Does your family plan physical activities?	0.705**		0.514**
3. I encourage them to do physical activities.	0.535**	0.514**	

Families will plan physical activities and take part in them together if there is someone who can take initiative. This initiative can be taken by the student who is aware of the significance of physical activities in the formation of human personality and the maintenance of working capacities. Therefore, it is very important for students to encourage their and other families to do physical activities.

What was also important was students' opinion about the reasons for undertaking physical activities. (Fig. 1).

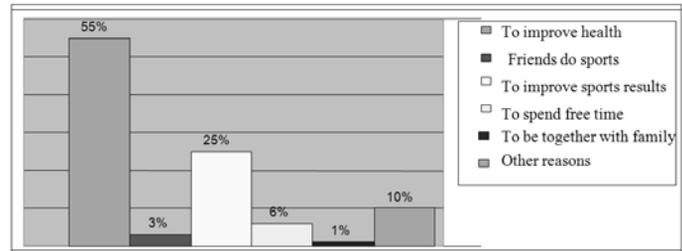


Figure 1. Students' opinion about the reasons for doing physical activities

The data obtained prove that the main reason for doing sports in students' opinion was to improve health (55%) and to improve sports results (25%). It was connected with the fact that a great number of students did exercise and took part in different competitions. Being with the family was the reason chosen by 1% of students only. It stems from the fact that the majority of them did not have their own families and they spent little time with their parents. 1% of the respondents mentioned the fact that they do physical activities as a way of spending free time, while 10% stated that they like sports and they have their own reasons.

In order to find out the level of students' knowledge and practical experience they were asked to provide the main advantages of pre-school sports activities.

Full-time 2nd, 3rd and 4th-year students expressed the following opinions: 38% of them considered sports classes in pre-school education as a way of improving health; 29% thought that they influence the versatile development; 17% believed that they help develop a correct posture; 4% perceived sports classes as activities developing thinking, new skills and promoting mutual cooperation. However, only 2% maintained that sports classes give joy and discipline (Fig. 2).

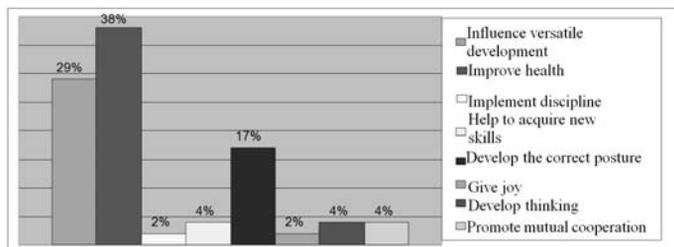


Figure 2. Students' opinions about the significance of sports classes in pre-school education

Mutual correlations concerning students' professional qualifications for conducting family sports were weak because there were different factors which influence the improvement in students' professional training (Tab. 2).

A weak but significant correlation -0.295 (p<0.01) which occurred between the question "Have you obtained sufficient knowledge and skills about sports in pre-school education?" and the statement "I do not want to conduct sports in a kindergarten" allowed to conclude that if students in the "Pre-school sports didactics" course have not obtained sufficient knowledge and skills as well as sufficient experience or do not like small children, they probably will not be willing to conduct sports in a kindergarten.

Mutual correlation with coefficient -0.347 and significance p<0.01, which was also observed between "I do not want to conduct sports in a kindergarten" and "I can motivate pre-school children and their parents to take up physical activities during pre-school education" led to the assumption that if students do not want to conduct sports classes in a kindergarten, then they also cannot motivate pre-school children and their parents to take up physical activities. It was possible that the students' insufficient knowledge and skills as well as other factors such as a low salary and a low status of the profession also influenced their willingness to conduct sports classes in pre-school education. Correlation 0.431 (p<0.01) is also observed between the questions "Will family sports activities strengthen family bonds?" and "Will the children doing sports together with their family have motivation to do sports when they grow older?".

Taking everything into consideration, the students' opinions indicated that LASE pre-school sports didactics course gives sufficient knowledge about the necessity of physical activities in the development of a child's personality, and assuming that the children doing sports together with their families will have motivation to do sports when growing older, it is possible that the quality of their lives and their health will improve. Sports activities which include different physical activities improve mental health as well as providing social communication and integration.

Table 2. Relations between the questions concerning students' opinion about professional readiness to manage family sports activities (n=157)

Questions	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th
1. Have you obtained sufficient knowledge and skills about sports in pre-school education?		-0.295**			
2. I do not want to conduct sports in a kindergarten.	-0.295**		-0.347**		
3. I can motivate pre-school children and their parents to take up physical activities in a kindergarten.		-0.347**			
4. Will family sports activities strengthen family bonds?					0.431**
5. Will the children doing sports together with their families have motivation to do sports when they grow older?				0.431***	

** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Conclusions

Taking all the obtained results into consideration, it can be concluded that if students are willing to take up physical activities, they will be able to organise such activities for other people. Additionally, they have sufficient knowledge and competence to motivate and engage their families in practising sport. Furthermore, if family members are equally interested in practising sport and perceive it as an indispensable and valuable part of life, they plan their sports activities more often and practise sports with interest and devotion. If family members plan and take up physical activities regularly, it makes it possible for them to improve health and quality of life to a large extent. What is more, if students have developed interest in the course "Pre-school sports didactics" and were evaluated well at the end of the course, they will be eager to conduct sports classes with pre-school children. Therefore, they will have no problems with motivating pre-school children and their parents to practise sports. It was concluded that if students have developed interest in training pre-school children, they will show willingness to participate in other forms of activities for pre-school children and to explain the significance of sports in strengthening family bonds.

The preparation of future sports specialists is only one aspect which influences family sport. Other aspects concerning pre-school children themselves as well as their parents and teachers are also analysed.

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