

THE ACADEMIC MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS OF THE SPECIALITY „TEACHER OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION“ OF THE FACULTY OF PEDAGOGY AT THE NATIONAL SPORTS ACADEMY „VASIL LEVSKI”

Original scientific paper

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Abstract

Motivation is at the base of every human activity. It is especially important for capacity, creativity, and the pursuit of success. Academic motivation is basic in preparing students as specialists and future professionals. The study aims to determine the degree of academic motivation of students in the specialty „Teacher in Physical Education and Sports“ at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the National Sports Academy „Vasil Levski“. The article presents the results of a study of academic motivation, conducted during the summer semester of 2018-2019, among 49 students from first, second and third course in the specialty “Teacher of Physical Education” at the National Sports Academy „Vasil Levski“. An academic motivation questionnaire, developed by Angel Velichkov, was used as a research tool, containing 11 questions, 7 of which have positive and 4 negative directions. In the article, the analysis of the results is presented in the three main aspects of academic motivation „Active attitude to the learning process”, „Internal self-discipline” and „Striving to supplement and expand the acquired knowledge”. The results show that the degree of academic motivation is directly proportional to the course i.e. As the course increases, the students’ academic motivation increases. This is a very good certificate for the quality of training in the academy.

Keywords: *higher education, physical education and sports, training, academic motivation*

INTRODUCTION

The successful teacher combines two things – one is the charisma (the call to be a teacher) and the other is the excellent professional preparation. And if the first is inexplicable, and every teacher carries it in his heart and soul, then the second is the result of the qualitative preparation of this young person who has accepted the challenge of working as a teacher. He is expected when entering a school to be „armed“ with the knowledge and skills that will enable him to pursue the profession with the inner conviction and confidence that he can. He will „model“ the rising generation and prepare them for life through the competences he possesses. As pointed by Doncheva & Ivanova (2018) „The modern society needs quick adaptation of people with skills to cope with problematic situations, to exhibit tolerance to differences, empathy, humanistic and civic self-awareness“ (pp: 152).

The biggest challenge for the education process and the teacher as a „face“ of this system and as a profession is related to the issue: How a teacher prepares his students for the same future, which will be completely different after the 10 or 12 years course of school education?

And the greater challenge for the higher education is – How the professors at the universities to prepare in the 4 years course of the bachelor studies, the future teachers, so that on the one hand, they meet the needs of today, but also have the motivation to keep upgrading and be prepared for „tomorrow“? Therefore, the preparation of a future teacher is an extremely great responsibility not only for the society as a whole but for the young person who crossed the threshold of any pedagogical faculty.

Since 2016, the British Council, through a series of studies, has drawn the image of global higher education (Georgieva (Георгиева), 2019). At the conference „Going Global“, held on 13-15 May 2019 in Berlin, a new international study, analyzing the state of the higher education in 52 countries, showed that: „Bulgaria as one of the key countries in Europe has a serious potential for European and World Transnational Education, and also has one of the best networks in Europe for bilateral cooperation between Bulgarian and foreign uni-

versities. This even though at present present Bulgaria does not have a comprehensive strategy for international education and state-level funds for international cooperation” (Georgieva (Георгиева), 2019).

In the European Commission’s 2018 report on the structural indicators for monitoring Europe’s education and training systems are noted that: „In 2008, the Council has adopted an EU-wide higher education benchmark, stating that by 2020 at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds must have a bachelor or master degree or equivalent level of qualification. This indicator has since become part of the dual-title objective of the education, as stated in the framework of the 2020 European Strategy for Growth (Eurydice Background Report, 2018).

Analyzing the European vision for the quality of higher education, K. Peeva concludes that: „The quality is the core of the education. It influences what students learn, how well they learn it, and what benefits curtain education has. Finding a guarantee that students achieve good learning outcomes and acquire knowledge and skills, which would help them to play a positive role in the society, is a matter of political strategy in almost every country” (Peeva (Пеева), 2010).

Reforms in higher education aimed at improving its quality are carried out at Global, European and national levels. In 2016, a team from the Faculty of Pedagogy of Sofia University „St. Kliment Ohridski” was commissioned to conduct a national survey of the system for educating future pedagogs at the universities, as well as a comparative analysis of the system for supporting qualification and career development in the Republic of Bulgaria, in the European Union and other countries. The analysis of European documents has shown that „the guidelines in European policies regarded to the teachers, should be oriented towards 1) creating integrated and comprehensive models for the professional development of teachers; 2) providing flexible opportunities for obtaining pedagogical training, respectively qualification; 3) achieving and maintaining high quality in the profession; 4) creating deployed and detailed professional profiles to achieve consistency between the teacher’s qualifications and achievements on the one hand, and the schools’ needs, on the other; 5) stimulating the establishment of local, national and international

professional networks between teachers for improving the quality of their work" (Gospodinov, Peicheva-Forsyth, Petkova, Mizova, & Parvanova (Господинов, Пейчева-Форсайт, Петкова, Мизова, & Първанова), 2016).

The author Petkova (Петкова), (2012), in her monograph „Preparation and Qualification of the Bulgarian Teacher”, analyzes some European and normative documents, as well as the content of the Teacher Training Regulations and curricula of leading pedagogical faculties, and concludes that „the preparation of future teachers needs reforms in each of its components – it’s normative and it’s content. However, they should not be chaotic. There should be a clear philosophy for education as a whole, and hence their subordination in the various stages and grades is the basis on which the training of future professionals is built”(pp: 115). However, in addition to the political programs, the normative changes, the improvement of the facilities, the quality of education can only be achieved by quality human capital, which should be the teachers. They must not only be well prepared but also to „burn“ in the profession, to give away to 100% of themselves, to love children, to be creative, to provoke them as well as themselves, i.e. to be motivated to practice the profession and to keep improving in it.

Motivation has long been the subject of research by psychologists. Due to the ability „to set goals, develop strategies, analyze himself and evaluate his results, a person can self-regulate his or her behavior and emotional state” (Kaprra & Servon (Капрара & Сервон), 2003).

Academic motivation among students studying the subject Physical Education and sports is also a subject of international and national researches.

Even though not all of the young people involved with sports activities will become professional athletes, they still will be prepared to face the challenges of everyday life in better health and a spirit of tolerance, cooperation, and Fair play. Some of them would become coaches, other sports journalists, managers or sports executives, etc. In this way, a generation of well educated and related to sports, persons is built, pursuing continuity with the next generation (Aleksieva (Алексиева), 2012).

To achieve good results, the role of the sports educator (coach), which is the leading party in the implementation of the educational process, is crucial. Achieving maximum effect in this process requires mastering and knowledge of a wide range of principles, methods, and tools to be used in the pedagogical practice (Kolev (Колев), 2016a).

Furthermore, in another study, Kolev (2016b) reveals the interpersonal relations in the sports team – „The sports’ training level reached, as well as the successes in the competitions, achieved by the members of this team, largely depends on these relations. These successes are not only a personal matter of the coach or the athlete, they are a characteristic of the social environment and the team they defend“ (Kolev, 2016b, pp: 197).

According to (Peltekova (Peltekova), 2014), “It is important that physical education and sports teachers acquire scientific knowledge and learn the theory and methodology, but also to be able to confidently demonstrate practical knowledge and skills to the most demanding examiners – the students” (Peltekova (Peltekova), 2014, pp: 468).

A. Sivrikaya examines the relationship between the level of academic motivation and the academic achievements of students in Physical Education and Sports at the University of Belikeshir, Turkey. He defends the thesis that „The student believes that he/she can achieve the goals set by the teacher and fulfill the tasks assigned, by

making certain efforts and overcoming some difficulties. Student’s motivation can be influenced by assigning not only very easy but also very difficult tasks” (Sivrikaya, 2019, pp: 310)

Petkova, I and Ignatov, G also have long-standing interests in exploring the students’ academic motivation. In their study examining motivation for academic work (Petkova & Ignatov (Петкова & Игнатов), 2018), the authors defend the idea that „the motivation of the individual’s motivation in the performance of any activity is crucial to both – the performance’s quality and the individual’s internal satisfaction. In academic education, where the compulsory element is missing, the student needs to find a balance between the self-interest, the professional knowledge, and the skills needed to apply them. That is why examining the balance in the binary educational process – between teacher and student, between learning and teaching, is crucial” (Petkova & Ignatov (Петкова & Игнатов), 2018, pp: 55).

The above-mentioned factors led us to do this multi-component study on characterizing students’ academic motivation, as well as revealing their overall motivational status for their future achievement.

The presented study aims to determine the degree of academic motivation of students in the specialty „Teacher in Physical Education and Sports“ at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the National Sports Academy (NSA) „Vasil Levski“. It is a specialized higher education institution with over 70 years of history, which prepares teachers in Physical Education and Sports, athletes, and coaches.

METHODS

The study has longitudinal character and was conducted during the summer semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. A questionnaire, originally designed by Angel Velichkov (Radoslavova & Velickov (Радославова & Величков), 2005). as a research instrument applied for assessment of the level of academic motivation. It consists of 11 statements, of which 7 have a positive and 4 have negative connotations. The evaluation is done by using a 4-point Likert scale, where 0 is „completely disagree” and 4 is „completely agree”. The study was conducted at random principle.

According to Velichkov (Radoslavova & Velickov (Радославова & Величков), 2005), academic motivation is „a construct that describes the overall motivational state generated and related to the education in a certain specialty in higher education. The overall positive motivational readiness is an indicator of the quality of teaching in a particular profession and is also one of the predictors of academic achievement” (Radoslavova & Velickov (Радославова & Величков), 2005, pp: 46). According the author, there are three main manifestations of academic motivation, namely: 1) active attitude to learning, 2) internal self-discipline, and 3) striving to supplement and expand the knowledge gained. They are also specific indicators that are included in the questionnaire and will be analyzed comparatively. As the questionnaire’s author himself points out, „The validity of the method is verified by a correlation analysis of academic motivation’s assessments and the subjective importance of three long-term goals – building as a competent professional, contributing to society as a specialist, and building a personal professional reputation. The degree of academic motivation within the following limits: 0-11 points – absence of academic motivation; 12-18 points – weak; 19-24 points – moderate and 25-33 points – strong academic motivation.

The research hypothesis we formulate is related to the assumption that students exhibit a high degree of academic motivation.

The subject of the study is the academic motivation of the students studied.

The subject of research is the influence of the main manifesta-

Table 1. Distribution by course and gender of the students studied

Course/ gender	I course	II course	III course	Total
Men	5	20	4	29
Women	5	9	6	20
Total	10	29	10	49

tions of academic motivation, through which we can reveal the state of students' general motivational for future academic achievement.

The participants sample was conducted of 49 students in their 1st, 2nd or 3rd year of bachelor studies in the specialty „Teacher of Physical Education“, at the Faculty of Pedagogy of the National Sports Academy „Vasil Levski“. Their distribution by year of studies and gender is presented in Table 1.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analysis will be presented on a comparative plan between the year of studies and the main manifestations of academic motivation, namely:

- active attitude to learning,
- internal self-discipline and
- striving to supplement and expand the knowledge gained.

Analysis of the indicator „Active attitude to the educational process“ data

There are four statements (of which two by two contradictory), related to this indicator (Table 2): „I try to gain lasting knowledge in all major disciplines“ and „I regularly take notes during lectures“ vs „I am not interested in the theoretical details in the subjects“ and „Everything we learn here is not uninteresting to me and sometimes I wonder what the meaning of learning is“.

The comparative analysis based on the year of studies shows that:

- there is a lasting tend among the students in all years of bachelor studies, regarding the effort to gain lasting knowledge in all subjects;
- the analysis of the „completely agree“ answers on the second

statement, „I regularly take notes during lectures“, shows that the most active in note-taking are freshmen, in the second year this rate slightly decreases, but again increases in the third year. This is probably due to the different number of textbooks in each year of the studies, also in each specialty or subject, which requires students to make more or fewer notes.

However, if we combine the data of this answer with the data of the second „rather agree“ the picture becomes different. Then the students in the third year of studies are unanimous (100%) that they regularly take notes during lectures, followed by freshmen (90%), in third place are the students in the second year (89, 65%).

In the allegations with negative statements, could be also noted some peculiarities:

- on the statement „I am not interested in the theoretical details in the subjects“, in the answer „completely disagree“ the sophomores are in the first place, followed by the freshmen and the third-year students. However, if we combine the results of this answer with the „rather disagree“ answer, then „freshmen“ lead by 80%, followed by 2nd-year students (79.31%) and third-year students (60%).

- in the statement „Everything we study here is not uninteresting to me and sometimes I wonder what the meaning of learning is“, again the positions are exchanged between 1st and 2nd year. In the case of „completely disagree“, the leaders ate the students in the 1st year, followed by the 2nd and 3rd year. However, when this answer is combined with „rather disagree“, then lead the sophomores by 96.55%, followed by the first-year students with 90% and the third year with 70%.

Summarizing the first indicator, it can be said that students from all three years are actively involved in the learning process. For

Table 2. Students' answers to the asserted indicator „Active involvement in the learning process“

Course	I try to gain lasting knowledge in all major disciplines			I regularly take notes during lectures			I am not interested in the theoretical details of the courses			Everything we learn here is not uninteresting to me		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
I agree	60%	58,62%	60%	70%	55,17%	60%	0%	3,45%	20%	0%	0%	10%
Rather I agree	30%	37,93%	30%	20%	34,48%	40%	20%	48,28%	20%	10%	3,45%	20%
Rather disagree	0%	3,45%	10%	10%	10,34%	0%	50%	17,24%	50%	20%	31,03%	30%
Disagree	10%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	30%	31,03%	10%	70%	65,52%	40%

Table 3. Student Responses to the Indicator of Internal Self-Discipline

Course	I want to have high success in all the disciplines studied			I attend all the lectures regularly because it is interesting to me			When I am not interested, I miss lectures and seminars		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
I agree	20%	27,59%	60%	10%	6,90%	20%	10%	20,69%	40%
Rather I agree	80%	55,17%	20%	20%	51,72%	80%	10%	20,69%	30%
Rather disagree	0%	13,79%	10%	50%	34,48%	0%	60%	31,03%	10%
Disagree	0%	3,45%	10%	20%	6,90%	0%	20%	27,59%	20%

Table 4. Student Responses to the Statement on the Pursuit of Complementing and Expanding Knowledge

Course	I often look for additional literature on study issues that interested me			I often seek additional information from teachers			I regularly visit the library or search for additional material on the Internet			I try to study only the minimum required		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
I agree	10%	10,34%	30%	0%	17,24%	30%	10%	55,17%	60%	30%	20,69%	30%
Rather I agree	60%	55,17%	60%	30%	62,07%	50%	10%	34,48%	40%	40%	31,03%	50%
Rather disagree	30%	27,59%	10%	70%	13,79%	20%	50%	10,34%	0%	30%	31,03%	20%
Disagree	0%	6,90%	0%	0%	6,90%	0%	30%	0%	0%	0%	17,24%	0%

them, acquiring lasting knowledge in all major disciplines is of great importance. Therefore they regularly attend classes and make notes, are interested in theoretical details, and see meaning in their education as a whole.

Analysis of the Indicator „Self-discipline“ data analysis

Here again, the statements were with a positive and negative connotation: „I want to have high success in all subjects“ and „I regularly attend all lectures because I am interested“ vs „When I am not interested, I miss lectures and seminars“. The data is presented in Table. 3 and shows the following:

The comparative analysis based on the year of studies shows that:

Striving for high success is the goal of every student. This ambition is increasing in the next year of studies. It is noticeable that in the 3rd year it reaches 60%. However, this increase is only taken into account in the „agree“ answer. In the „rather agree“ answer, the trend is different – the percentage decreases with each subsequent year. However, the total between the two answers shows a constant trend in the range between 80 and 100%. The percentages are decreasing slightly with each subsequent year, as the rate increases. In the first year, it is 100% and in the third year, it is 80%.

There is uncertainty in the students' answers, regarding the second statement. The categorical percentage of those with a strong opinion is too low. There are discrepancies in the answers „rather agree“ and „rather disagree“. 50% of freshmen partially reject the claim that they regularly attend lectures. 80% of third-year students admit that their lectures are interesting and that is why they attend them. The analysis of the curriculum of 2017-2018 academic year for the specialty „Pedagogy“ (it can be found on the National Sports Academy's website), which gives the students the qualification „Teacher of Physical Education“, shows that as the course of studies increases, so does the number of special disciplines (related to the qualification). Perhaps this fact leads to an increase in students' motivation and provokes their interest, and is the reason for more regular lecture attendance. However, the high percentage of dissenting and, rather, dissenting to this statement, freshmen remains disturbing. However, the data on this issue regarding the freshmen contradicts one of the next.

To the statement „When I am not interested, I miss lectures and classes“ 60% of the freshmen express a clear „disagreement“ and 20% say they „rather agree“. From the third-year students, also a higher percentage – 40% are strongly in their agreement, where 30% are „rather agree“, which makes a total of 70%. However, when we compare the results of the previous and this statement, we would find a contradiction. On the one hand, students at the NSA disagree that they miss lectures and classes because they are not interested, and on the other hand, they express the same disagreement with the claim that they attend classes regularly because it is interesting to them.

This leads to the conclusion that on this indicator students' opinions are very contradictory. High success is a priority for them, but it is not the result of regular attendance at lectures and classes.

Analysis of the indicator Striving to supplement and broaden the knowledge gained data

There are four statements, two by two contradictory, related to this indicator (Table 4): „I often search for additional literature on study topics, I am interested in“, „I often seek additional information from teachers“ and „I regularly visit the library or seek additional information online“ vs „I try to study only the minimum required“.

The analysis of the positive statements shows that the NSA students are not entirely explicit in their views. They „rather agree“ that

they often seek additional literature on issues that have provoked their interest. Freshmen and sophomores show the same percentage – 60%. More hesitant, but again with a high enough rate – 55.17%, are sophomores. Their percentage increases when it comes to additional information from teachers. Higher is the percentage (62.07%) of first-year students who also prefer to ask the teacher. It decreases only in third-year students (50%). However, it should be noted that 70% of freshmen are more likely to disagree with the fact that they often seek additional information from their professors. Freshmen look for this information at the library or on the Internet. The sophomores and the third-year students are adamant in this same statement. Here again, there is a divergence of opinions. On the one hand, they declare their diligence in the learning process, by searching for information either from a teacher, from a library, or the Internet, but on the other hand, the NSA students surveyed, fully or partially agree that they study within the standard minimum. Third-year students are the most outspoken. 80% of them fully or partially admit it, 70% of the freshmen and 51.72% of sophomores.

CONCLUSIONS

The data summary of the three individual indicators shows that the „internal self-discipline“ indicator is with the highest percentage of full or partial consent. 100% of first-year students say they want to excel in all subjects studied. The same is the percentage of third-year students who say they attend all the lectures regularly because they are interested.

Again, they are unanimous (100%) in stating that they often search for information by regularly visiting the library or searching it on the Internet. Although not so direct, the opinion of the sophomores is also categorical. These statements are from the third indicator „Striving to supplement and expand the knowledge gained“.

High 96.55% of participants in the study declare that fully and partially agree with the statement „I try to gain lasting knowledge in all major disciplines“. This opinion of the sophomores is confirmed by the same percentage of those who disagree with the statement that „Everything we study here is of no interest to me and sometimes I wonder what the meaning of learning is“. These two opinions are from the indicator „Active attitude to the learning process“.

The fact that the highest percentages are in the „internal self-discipline“ indicator is explainable to us because the students surveyed are from the largest and most authoritative graduate school of sports. They are young people for whom as athletes, self-discipline is the leading quality. Active physical activity often leads to a different way of conducting the learning process. Very often, since the school years, the student-athletes have been individually or self-schooled. This is precisely why the striving for constant supplementation and expansion of the acquired knowledge (which is the second indicator), is a way to improve their educational preparation. The active attitude towards the learning process is also characteristic of these young people. Like their peers, they are aware of the need for quality education that will enable them to have a good professional and career development.

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