THE ANALYSIS OF CHOSEN CHARACTERISTICS OF ALUMNI WHO STUDIED THE PROGRAM PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT AT UNIVERSITY OF WEST BOHEMIA IN PILSEN

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ABSTRACT
The aim of the survey was to monitor the development of professional career of alumni who had accomplished the Physical Education and Sport program and finished their studies at the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen in the years 1998–2005. Of the 254 questionnaires distributed 97 were returned – reaching a 38.1% response rate. 69.1% of all alumni were those of the master program and 30.9% were non-pedagogical bachelors. 69.1% of alumni work in the field they studied (education or physical education and sport services). The following characteristics were monitored: further education, job choice criteria and retrospective evaluation of the content of education they had undertaken. When interpreting the results the author analyzed the workplace and region specifics.

Key words: graduates of the West Bohemia University, physical education and sport graduates, evaluation of study plan, professional assertion in employment

Department of Physical Education and Sport (DPES) of the Faculty of Education at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen

The Faculty of Education in Pilsen was established in 1948 and it existed as an independent school preparing teachers of elementary and high schools until 1990. In 1991, it became one of the founders of the newly established University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, which now consists of seven faculties [1].

Following changes in conception of preparation of elementary and high school teachers necessary changes were also introduced in curricula of physical education (PE). The reform of the whole educational system caused changes in PE study programs in terms of content and duration of the study.

For current situation in physical education at DPES of the Faculty of Education at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, the crucial factor was finishing the restructurization process of the study programs.

Accreditation of the new study programs was completed in the academic year 2006/2007. Since then the Department has been preparing future teachers of physical education in the following way. First, in a three years’ bachelor’s degree, where students study mostly professional subjects, and then in a follow-up two years’ master degree where subjects for mastering the pedagogical competence are included. Apart from those programs, the Department of Physical Education and Sport provides a three years’ bachelor study program of non-pedagogical physical education and sport that also allows the students who have met the requirements of entrance exam to continue in the follow-up master study.

These study programs at DPES are taught by seventeen internal and nine external teachers. Professionalism of the staff is also projected in cooperation with the various sport federations at the regional as well as national level, which is positively reflected in the work of the department when granting instructor and coach licenses to students that have passed optional study programs. On the basis of officially concluded agreements about international cooperation DPES has contacts with universities in Great Britain, Denmark, Turkey, Poland and Slovakia. Research activities of DPES take place predominantly in the Center of Sport Diagnostics. The department also closely cooperates with the Sporting Youth Foundation in Pilsen.

Introduction

On a European scale, the learning and good-quality education is currently considered to be a standard. Also,
social transformation has initialized many changes in the Czech educational system.

Changes were also due to the weaknesses of the educational system in the Czech Republic at the end of the last century, when problems had cumulated and began to exert negative influence on the work of teachers. Changes in the social status of teachers – lack of recognition and social prestige, as well as poor financial reward caused serious outflow of a generation of young alumni to a better paid work, though sometimes requiring less qualification [2–4].

This situation is one of the stimuli to researchers who monitor professional careers of university alumni, for example, Janak [5], Jansa, Kocourek [6], Tilinger, Smidova [7], and others. The latest research was also the project of Grant Agency of the Czech Republic 406/052670 “Career of Alumni that Studied the Program Physical Education and Sport on Labor Market in the Czech Republic”. The research was sponsored by UK FTVS in Prague and UP FTK in Olomouc, and eight other Faculties of Education from the Czech Republic, including our Faculty in Pilsen, took part in it.

In this nationwide research 4330 respondents were addressed. They were alumni of the study program “Physical Education and Sport” from 1998–2005. Of the 1855 responses returned, 891 were given by women and 964 by men.

In the paper, we present partial results obtained through the survey concerning the alumni of the study program “Physical Education and Sport” at the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, who finished their studies in the years 1998–2005. Of the 1855 responses returned, 891 were given by women and 964 by men.

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Material and methods

The aim of the survey was to monitor the development of professional career of the group of alumni mentioned above. Our focus was to get up-to-date feedback about their careers and position on the labor market. Quite often these pieces of information appeared to be inspiring as regards our Department, particularly when creating new follow-up study programs that were submitted to accreditation.

The main method relied on a 17-item “Questionnaire for alumni” with choice of alternative answers. It contained four thematic units:

• current job in state, communal or federal (concerning physical education) services including private sector,

• motivation to study the “Physical Education and Sport” program, acquiring additional qualifications,

• satisfaction with current job, as seen from different points of view,

• assessment of the study program “Physical Education and Sport”.

The questionnaire was tested through the pilot study and it was consequently modified for the needs of nationwide research.

The questionnaires were sent to alumni of the study program “Physical Education and Sport”, and were to be answered from September to December 2005. The respondents had been guaranteed the anonymity but they could sign the questionnaire, if they wanted to.

The data obtained were statistically analyzed and collected in frequency tables, being presented per cent and also graphically in doughnut charts.

Results and discussion

The alumni accomplished studies following two types of programs. These were a non-pedagogical bachelor study program of physical education and sport (30.9% questionnaires returned) or master study program of physical education for elementary schools (4 year study) or high schools (5 year study) in combination with other majors (69.1% questionnaires returned) (Fig. 1).

In Fig. 2, we show frequency charts of answers given by women (43.3%) and men (56.7%).

Fig. 3 reflects reasons for the choice of the study program Physical Education and Sport. Two thirds of the alumni (66%) marked the answer “I like to do sport”, 17.5% chose “I was interested in sport”. Only 7.2% of the respondents marked “I like to work with children, among people”. Still less respondents (4.1%) indicated the answer “I liked the job of a teacher”. The remaining five choices with frequency of 1% can be considered as interpretatively insignificant. 83.5% of the alumni marked as clear priority and motive, generally speaking, the need for movement or interest in sport.
Considering the experience gained during lessons we can state that personal direction of students plays an important role during studies. On the other hand, it is often expressed in their sometimes distorted ideas about the content and forms of physical education and sport. At least the first year of the study is devoted by some students to developing and shaping of appropriate approach to study requirements. Obviously, more often it is during bachelor non-pedagogical study that the idea prevails that study will be like a “training camp”. This results in certain underestimation of so called theoretical subjects (anatomy, history of physical culture, and so on). These ideas are projected to a certain extent onto the course of education, due to which some students have difficulties with filling actual, mostly practical, credit requirements.

We must state that the reason for this is not only personal but it is also due to many other factors generally influenced by social conditions and to a certain degree by regional specifics, too.

We can assume that the “need of movement” (66%) and “interest in sport” (17.5%) is positively expressed even during studies when selecting optional programs leading to getting various types of coach or instructor licenses. Certain motivational role, e.g. in soccer, can be possibly played by the perspective possibility to use coach licenses, which students can get during studies, in nearby Germany. Already when studying, some students, soccer players, participate in German regional competitions. Some, after finishing active player’s career, also find professional job in Germany as an assistant of coach or a coach, where they commute approximately 2 or 3 times a week. We also notice this cross-borders phenomenon, but to a much lesser degree, among students playing handball. They use coach license, which they got during their studies, and this
“part-time job” considerably enhances their living standards.

Our experience gained during implementation of the system of optional subjects to study programs, the output of which are coach or instructor licenses recognized by relevant sport federations are as follows. In terms of the content of the studies we are assured that university education is not necessary for acquiring licenses, e.g. in soccer UEFA does not expect university education. But on the basis of agreement with individual sport federations the offer and possibility of acquiring coach and instructor licenses during studies contributes to their attraction in current market-oriented offer of studies at the Czech universities preparing bachelors and masters in physical education and sport. Naturally, the problem is not theoretical basis of license study but it can be the missing or short coach practice.

In the analysis of data concerning the problem of employment 59.8% of alumni point to the work in educational system as their main profession. 9.3% work in federal services in the area of physical education and sport (coach, instructor or other profession). Almost one third of alumni (27.8%) work in other fields, which is quite a big number, though expected, and 3.1% belong to unemployed (Fig. 4).

A detailed analysis of frequency of the full time job is presented in Fig. 5. The highest percentage of alumni are employed in elementary education (34%), and then higher education (16.5%) follows. 41% of them teach PE at private schools, 31% at universities and 21% at vocational schools. Altogether, 59.8% respondents work as PE teachers.

A detailed interpretation of the data is much more difficult and not so clear. In reality, many of the alumni of bachelor non-pedagogical study teach at various types of school. Their trend is “to go to teach”, which was also confirmed by entrance exams to follow-up master study for the academic year 2007/2008, because there were over 30 alumni of non-pedagogical bachelor study of physical education and sport. Some of them already teach in the various types of schools in the regions of Pilsen and Karlsbad. It is yet true that especially in the regions of Sokolov and Karlsbad there is lack of qualified teachers of physical education.

On the other hand, some alumni of master study work outside the area of education, often in various
managerial positions, using benefits of their creativity “of physical education teacher”, adaptability and communication abilities.

Results in Fig. 6 show certain satisfaction with education acquired or repulsion to additional education (79.4%). We can only hypothesize about the causes of such a situation. This can, for example, be a short time interval (1–7 years) since the end of the studies. Another reason can be not motivating, or more precisely not existing, system of career growth of teachers or amount of financial evaluation of their work.

Fig. 7 even more strongly documents the facts mentioned above. 86.6% of alumni consider gained education as sufficient (21.6% as completely sufficient, 39.2% mostly sufficient, and 25.8% as sufficient) and only 8.3% as insufficient (3.1% as completely insufficient and 5.2% as mostly insufficient). 5.2% of respondents did not express their opinion.

In Fig. 8, a certain discrepancy in the answers of respondents is clearly seen. 58.8% of alumni state that after finishing the studies they gained additional education or qualification, which does not markedly correspond with the results mentioned (e.g., 86.6% consider education as sufficient) (Fig. 6, 7). One probable explanation is that our alumni consider also short one-day or few-days educational courses and seminars as additional education.

Results indicating satisfaction of our former students with current job are presented in Fig. 9. Satisfaction with salary was stated, as expected, only by 48.4% of respondents (but complete satisfaction only by 7.2%), dissatisfaction was stated by 26.8% of respondents. The highest satisfaction was with the content of the work (80.4%), then with the working time (70.1%), working environment (67%) and co-workers (66%). Less satisfaction was with superiors (61.8%), and the biggest dissatisfaction (13.4%) with salary. Satisfaction with the amount of work was indicated by 60.8% and with use of qualification by 58.7% respondents.

Fig. 10 depicts the way of seeking a job. 20.6% of alumni got a job already during their studies. This corresponds with our experience from practice because quite a big number of students start to teach externally part-time when they are in the last grades of their study. If they study part-time, this even allows them to work full-time.

40.2% of respondents got a job “through friends”, so it occurs that personal contacts play an important role in education when seeking a job. On the other hand, only 8.2% of alumni got a job through an official institution, that is, employment bureau, and 11.3% through advertisement.

In Fig. 11, we can see criteria of current job selection. The largest number of alumni (38.1%) indicate as the main criterion of selection prospects of material advantages. Next, 16.5% of respondents point to financial attraction. One fifth (20.6%) of them prefer attraction of the job content. From the social point of view a negative sign characteristic of alumni from the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen is that merely 4.1% of respondents consider social assessment of their work as the most important criterion. Personal satisfaction with the work is the priority for only 3.1% of respondents.
As regards this criterion, our results quite strongly differ from the results of other universities. Besides general social criteria there can be regional demographic specifications of Pilsen and Karlsbad regions. We can assume that closeness and quite easy access to the border regions of Germany may influence, for example, value orientation of our alumni. The above statements are evidenced by 54.6% of respondents who mention prospects of material security (material advantages 38.1% + financial attraction 16.5%) as the criterion of personal satisfaction.

Similarly assessed were “too theoretical education” (63.9% did not agree) and “overlapping of knowledge” (74.2% did not agree). 38.1% of respondents expressed preference to the “amount of knowledge instead of deeper knowledge”.

90.7% of respondents do not evaluate the amount of lessons in the program as too big. This fact does not correspond with the current trends of decreasing the amount of face-to-face teaching. A certain role is played here by the specifics of the study program physical education and sport.

In Fig. 11, we present results from monitoring education at DPES from the point of view of its conception and structure. 90.7% of respondents are convinced that accomplishing the physical education and sport programs gave them broad knowledge. Satisfaction with the possibility of specialization is indicated by 56.7% of alumni, which we understand especially as positive assessment of the possibility to gain coach and instructor licenses during studies.

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In Fig. 12, we present results from monitoring education at DPES from the point of view of its conception and structure. 90.7% of respondents are convinced that accomplishing the physical education and sport programs gave them broad knowledge. Satisfaction with the possibility of specialization is indicated by 56.7% of alumni, which we understand especially as positive assessment of the possibility to gain coach and instructor licenses during studies.

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important subject. As one of the possible explanations we see position of the subject in the study program, where it was included in the winter semester of the first year as limiting subject. From this indication it is clear that failing this subject meant the end of studies even in the frame of the credit system. This, quite hard uncompromising mechanism for students, was marked as "prolonged entrance examination". In the current follow-up study programs, the limiting subjects do not occur. We do not suppose that the reason for the aforementioned assessment of the subject was teacher’s requirements.

In the third and fourth place, there were mentioned biochemistry and biomechanics (both 8.2%). Subjects which according to respondents were most missing in education are presented in Fig. 15.

For interpretation of the subjects mentioned above, the variance of the assessment of this question was significant. A scale of 19 subjects was too wide. The pedagogical practice was marked as the most missing subject (9.3%). But it is necessary to mention a certain possibility of inaccurate understanding and presentation of the questions. The respondents completed pedagogical practice as a part of individual didactics of sports, as well as in the form of observing and continual pedagogical preparation at schools. That is why we understand the assessment with so low percentage (the subject was chosen by 9 respondents) rather as a minor impulse to extending the forms of pedagogical practice. Still lower percentage is noted in the case of such subjects as basics of sport training and biochemistry (6.2%), rehabilitation and non-traditional sports (5.2%). Another paradox (see philosophy) is that biochemistry is included in the most missing subjects and the least important subjects at the same time.

Out of remaining 14 subjects, 10 were chosen just once and for 4 of them the choice ranged from 3.1% and 4.1%, which meant three or four choices.

From the point of view of objective significance it is necessary to emphasize that of the 97 respondents only 54 selected 19 subjects and 43 (44.3%) did not indicate any subject. We can interpret this in terms of an absence of concrete idea or indecisiveness and uncertainty of alumni in answering the question about the subjects which were most missing in the studies. We consider the choice of subjects in this case as informative with quite low predicative value.

**Conclusions**

Of the 254 questionnaires addressed to the alumni of non-pedagogical bachelor or master program Physical
Education and Sport, who finished their studies at the Faculty of Education of the West Bohemia University in Pilsen in the years 1998–2005, 97 were answered. This gives a 38.1% response rate. We received most of the questionnaires from respondents who had finished their studies in 1998 (17.5%), and the least number from the 2005 graduates (1%). As regards the years 1999–2004 the number of answers ranged from 10 to 15%.

The percentage of master study alumni is 69.1% and 30.9% of bachelor study. From the results presented it is clear that 69.1% of alumni work in the field they had studied (education or services in the field of physical education and sport) and 27.8% are employed in other fields.

In terms of education the answers appear to be inconsistent, because 86.6% of respondents consider education as sufficient, but on the other hand, 58.8% of them say that they gained additional education or qualification after finishing their studies. It is probable that these were only part time courses and seminars. The majority of the alumni (40.2%) got their job “through their friends” and the least (8.2%) got their job through employment bureau.

In overall evaluation, 79.4% of respondents expressed satisfaction with their job but only 48.4% of them expressed satisfaction with salary. Only 3.1% of the respondents prefer personal satisfaction to the work itself, compared to 54.6% of alumni who consider the perspective of material advantages (38.1%) or financial attraction (16.5%) as the main criteria. It is possible that these approaches are influenced by the feasibility of confrontation with the living standards of the inhabitants of nearby Germany.

Concerning the content of the studies, 90.7% of the respondents stated the possibility of acquiring broad knowledge. 86.3% of them think that the studies did not mostly contain outdated information, which should be obvious and expected condition of the university education.

A 38.1% preference to the “amount of knowledge instead of deeper knowledge” can be a certain sign. Specifications of the physical education and sport program are probably reflected in 90.7% answers of respondents, who do not consider the amount of lessons during studies as “unnecessarily many lessons of education”. The possibility of specialization during studies is mentioned by 56.7% of alumni, which offer is readily available as they can get licenses of a coach and instructor.

Quite reasonably, but maybe unexpectedly, 33% of respondents consider pedagogy as the most important subject. Philosophy was marked as the least important one (37.1%).

The scores of subjects which alumni marked as most missing, have very low validity. 19 subjects were selected by 54 respondents. 43 respondents did not mark any subject.

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