

IMPROVING THE TEACHING CAREER IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS THROUGH EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUNDS

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Abstract

Aim. This paper emphasizes the specificity of the teacher continuing education programs developed through European Social Funds at the Bucharest National University of Physical Education and Sports.

Methods. To fulfill the aim of this paper, we applied a questionnaire for the program quantitative and qualitative analysis, by including items able to reveal teachers' opinion about the discipline contribution to their education.

Results. Results were structured on: total number of teachers vs. graduated teachers and their attitude towards the continuing education. Each category was analyzed by taking into account teachers' experience and the types of institution they belong to.

Conclusions. Conclusions present the advantages and limits of the continuing education in our specialty field.

Key-words: education, teacher, physical education, sports

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Received 22.05.2011 / Accepted 21.07.2011

Introduction

This paper is part of the POSDRU project 19/1.3/G/13096 *Professionalization of the teaching career in physical education and sports from the lifelong learning perspective*, co-financed by FSE through POSDRU 2007-2013, its beneficiary being UNEFS and its implementation being achieved in partnership with the Teaching Staff Houses of Giurgiu, Teleorman, Olt and Dambovită, as well as with the Bucharest Municipal School Inspectorate, during 2 years (2010 – 2011).

Professionalization of the teaching career represents a priority of the Romanian higher education system, in order to get it aligned to the European quality standards, in all the domains (N. Vințanu, M. Stănescu, R. Bejan, 2003).

Starting from the physical education and sports teacher's current status, the UNEFS DPPD (Department for Teacher Training) had the initiative to develop a continuing education offer and to increase the participants' interest in their lifelong professional improvement, by obtaining a co-financing resource from the European Social Funds, through POSDRU 2007-2013, which supports the program progress. Within the mentioned project, the following education programs were accredited by the Minister Order no. 4620/5.08.2010: "Physical education in primary schools - practical-methodical fundamentals", "Extracurricular sports activities", "Methods and means for the effort capacity recovery", "ICT applications to physical education and sports teaching", "Mentorship in physical education and sports", "Sports training in children and juniors". Each program is structured on 60 hours and grants 15 professional credit transfers.

As this project provides continuous education programs, it creates the premises for teachers' appointment in primary schools, by

contributing thus to the increase of the employment general ratio, because it builds up competences specific to this education cycle. We also mention that, at this level, specialty teachers have been responsible with physical education classes since the school year 2007-2008, that's why the teaching staff is recommended, by the school inspectorates, to attend some purposely conceived education programs. Due to this specific contribution, the project backs the national policies, by optimizing the quality of human resources training and by stimulating their involvement into the teaching career (D. Byrd, 1981, A. Delhaxe, 2005, P. Santiago, 2005).

On another side, the project has a real contribution to the consolidation of teacher status and role, by reflecting the spirit of resolution adopted within European Committee for Education Conference (Bruxelles, 2005) "Europe needs teachers". "Human resources represent the main value of European Union. Europe will become what Europeans want. Teachers will have the main role on that process. We have to be sure that our teachers will be capable and will want to answer to the challenges of the new based knowledge society." (J.Figel, 2005; U. Fredriksson, 2005). In that way, the continuing education programs, promote new teaching methodologies in Physical Education and Sports, as ICT and advanced training methods for children and young people, from different sports branches.

Aim

This paper aims at highlighting a series of particularities specific to the educational programs developed in the project first year, in order to optimize the continuing education content and organization.

Method

By studying the official documents - grade transcription books, catalogues, we got the information necessary for us to assess students' level of involvement into the education program

Results

As we can notice in table no. 1, 308 (82%) out of the 376 students completed the programs by submitting their final oral examination. The relatively high absenteeism can be justified by the fact that these final oral examinations usually took place on Saturdays, when the teachers participated in different sports competitions. This superposition of professional activities also made difficult their participation in the current activities, not only in the evaluation ones. Therefore, we can emphasize a first difficulty, namely the scheduling of education programs by the end of the week, which is a problem for physical education teachers, because sports competitions take place in the same period. With reference to the education program

completing. As a research method, we used the questionnaire-based inquiry to find out students' opinion about the education program contents, respectively the contribution of different disciplines to the development of professional competences.

contents, the obtained data revealed a series of aspects related to the disciplines attended within each program.

Thus, for the program *ICT applications to physical education and sports teaching*, developed at Targoviste, we found out that the discipline thought to have the greatest contribution to the development of students' competences was *Measurement and evaluation in physical education and sports through ICT means* (figure no. 1). Further information about this education program showed that students were much interested in the analysis software presentation, because they had been confronted to this necessity in their professional activity (87%).

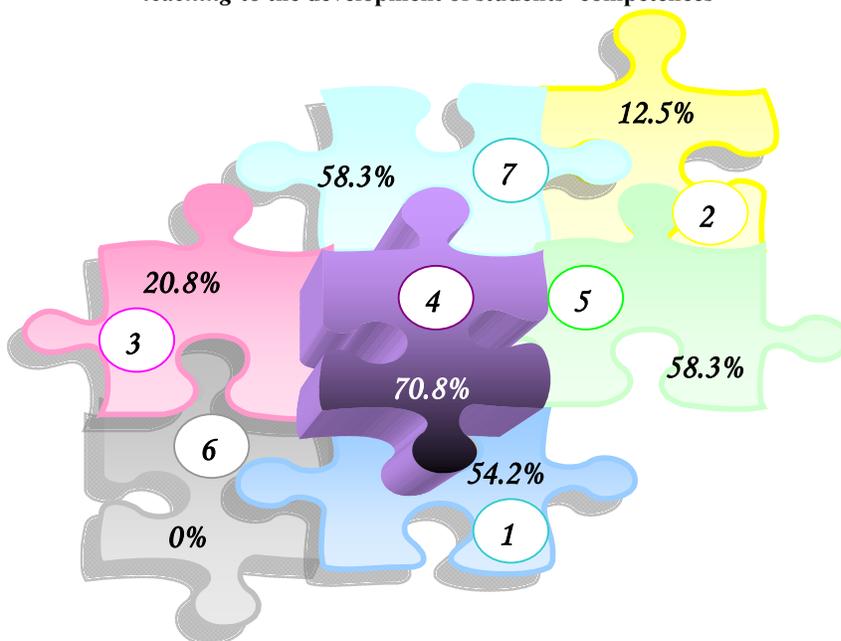
Table no. 1. Situation of the students participating in education programs (the project 1st year)

Education program	Location	Registered students	Students who have completed the program
Physical education in primary schools - practical-methodical fundamentals	Targoviste	42	38
	Slatina	82	73
Extracurricular sports activities	Alexandria	25	18
	Bucharest	28	26
Methods and means for the effort capacity recovery	Bucharest	40	29
	Targoviste	25	21
ICT applications to physical education and sports teaching	Targoviste	25	24
Mentorship in physical education and sports	Giurgiu	23	20
	Slatina	34	26
Sports training in children and juniors	Alexandria	25	15
	Bucharest	27	18
Total		376	308

Table no. 2. Contribution of disciplines in the program *ICT applications to physical education and sports teaching* to the development of students' competences

No.	Discipline	Options (percents)
1.	ICT - general notions	54.2%
2.	Computer-assisted instruction in physical education and sports	12.5%
3.	ICT use in programming activities specific to physical education and sports	20.8%
4.	Measurement and evaluation in physical education and sports through ICT means	70.8%
5.	Audio-video aids in physical education and sports	58.3%
6.	Document drawing up and management in physical education and sports by means of ICT	0%
7.	Informing documentation	58.3%

Figure no. 1. Contribution of disciplines in the program *ICT applications to physical education and sports teaching* to the development of students' competences



Teachers who attended the education program *Mentorship in physical education and sports* (Giurgiu) laid emphasis on the discipline *Didactics of teaching gymnastic disciplines*, by considering its content necessary and efficient to the instructive-educative process. *Didactics of athletics teaching* was their next option determined by its importance to the development of physical education lessons.

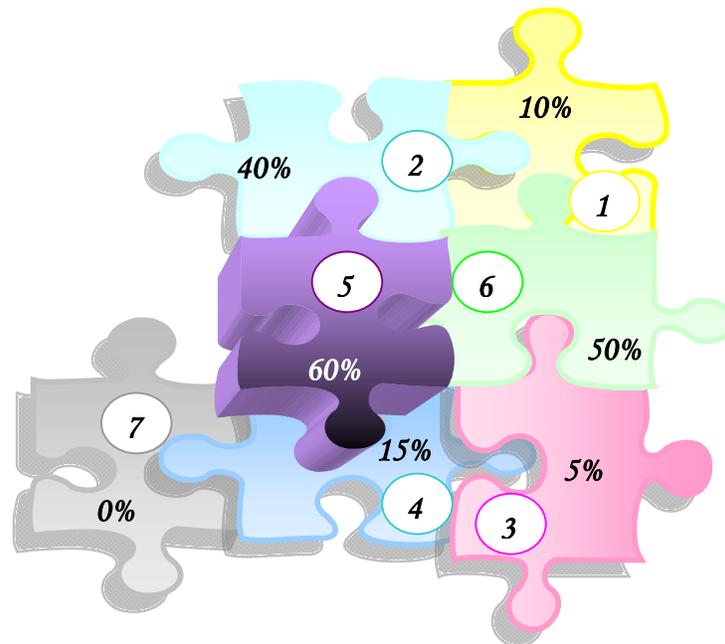
The recorded percentages confirm once more the gymnastics and athletics place and role in teaching the physical education and sports content within the school system (table no. 3, figure no. 2).

Students' suggestions about this education program content mainly referred to the psychopedagogic and counseling disciplines, to the approach of some less known sports and to the modalities of organizing extracurricular activities.

Table no. 3. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Mentorship in physical education and sports* to the development of students' competences

No.	Discipline	Options (percents)
1.	Physical education - a curriculum discipline	10%
2.	Management of the physical education lesson	40%
3.	Evaluation of the physical education teacher's activity	5%
4.	Didactics of teaching sports games	15%
	Basketball	25%
	Handball	25%
	Soccer	15%
5.	Didactics of teaching gymnastic disciplines	60%
6.	Didactics of athletics teaching	50%
7.	Didactics of teaching combat disciplines	0%

Figure no. 2. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Mentorship in physical education and sports* to the development of students' competences



Within the program *Extracurricular sports activities*, most of the registered options were for the discipline *Racket sports* (81.3%) (table no. 4, figure no. 3), the teachers expressing, at least at the declarative level, their intention to introduce badminton and table tennis into the instructive-educative process. *Excursions and trips* represented another point of interest for the students (56.3%), because many of them organize camps and trips with

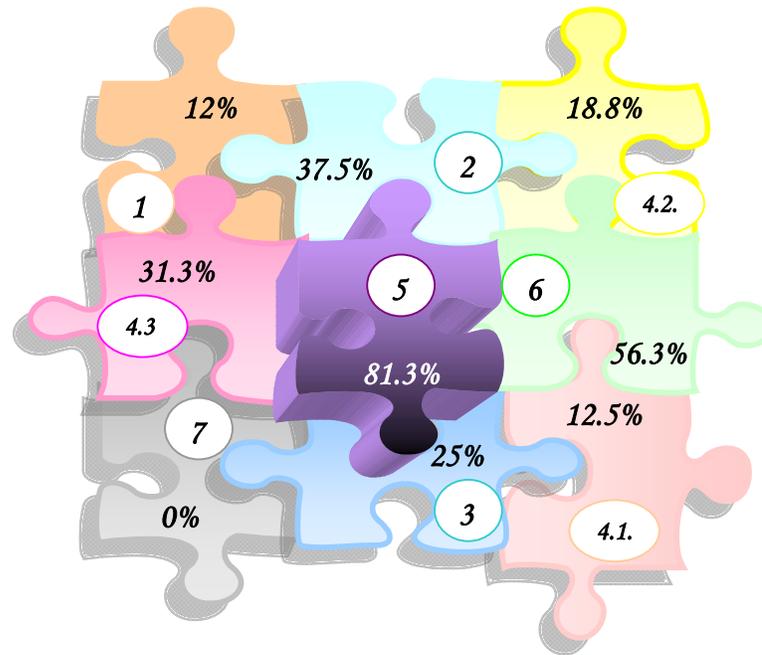
their pupils in different tourist sites, activities for which some special competences are required.

Among the study topics considered by the students to be useful to their professional training, we can mention the didactic communication and the importance of extracurricular activities, as well as the minute description of some contents specific to sports artistic activities.

Table no. 4. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Extracurricular sports activities* to the development of students' competences

No.	Discipline	Options (percents)
1.	Didactics of physical education (extracurricular activities)	12%
2.	Leisure motor activities	37.5%
3.	Sports artistic activities (rhythmic gymnastics, cheerleading, aerobics)	25%
4.	Sports games:	
4.1.	- Indoor soccer	12.5%
4.2.	- Rugby tag	18.8%
4.3.	- Street-ball	31.3%
5.	Racket sports (tennis, badminton, table tennis)	81.3%
6.	Excursions, trips	56.3%
7.	Jogging	0%

Figure no. 3. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Extracurricular sports activities* to the development of students' competences



Nutrition, medication and doping in children's and juniors' training raised problems that captivated the attention of most of the teachers and coaches who attended this education program oriented towards the performance athletes' training (figure no. 4). Some aspects related to the effort energetic substratum, the alimentary compounds and supplements, the effort sustainers and the substances forbidden in performance sports, represented modern topics for children's and juniors' training.

Having in view that the child's personality is in progress at the age when he is involved into the performance competitive activity, his reactions and manifestations, under the contest pressure, being susceptible to negatively influence the result, students considered that they should be informed

about the Competition psychology in children and juniors.

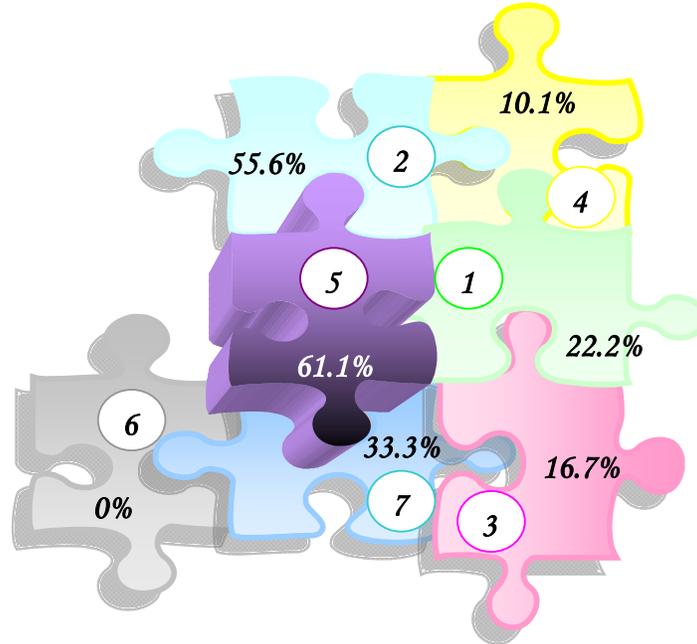
We think that one of the reasons for which teachers and coaches were interested in the discipline *Management of the organization and leadership in performance sections* was determined by the current financial situation of school sports clubs and by their need to support the participation in competitions by their own efforts.

The topics considered by the students to be useful are graphically represented above and they underline the necessity to introduce some further information about the sports training psychological component.

Table no. 5. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Sports training in children and juniors* to the development of students' competences

No.	Discipline	Options (percents)
1.	Training theory and methods in children and juniors (on disciplines or groups of disciplines, according to students' specialization)	22.2%
2.	Competition psychology in children and juniors	55.6%
3.	Effort physiology in children and juniors	16.7%
4.	Planning/monitoring in children's and juniors' training	10.1%
5.	Nutrition - medication - doping in children's and juniors' training	61.1%
6.	Selection for performance sports	0%
7.	Management of the organization and leadership in performance sections	33.3%

Figure no. 4. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Sports training in children and juniors* to the development of students' competences



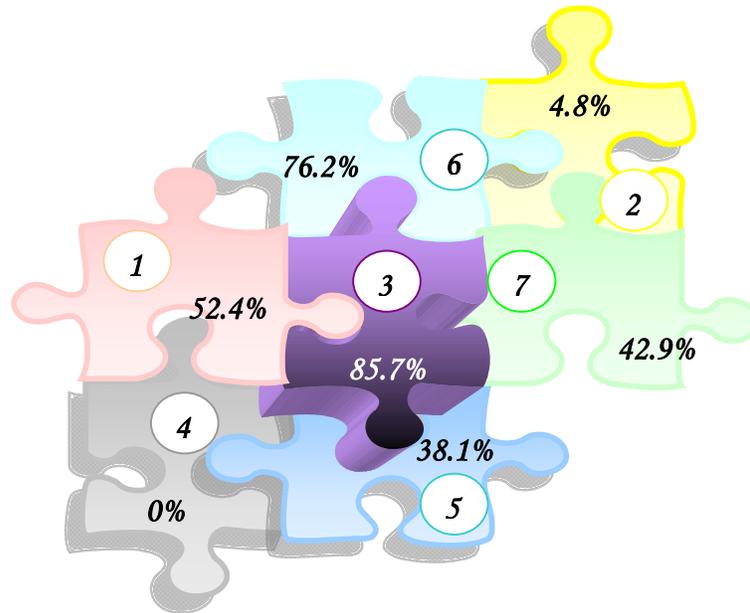
Within the program *Methods and means for the effort capacity recovery*, students thought that *Massage - a recovery means* (table no. 6, figure no. 5) greatly contributed to their professional improvement. The massage manipulations and techniques in this discipline content represented innovating elements for the students and brought to

their attention the importance of giving the athlete the necessary time to recover after an effort. Other points of interest for the students, who would like them to be minutely described, are the following: frequent injuries in performance sports, pharmacology notions, notions related to athlete's hydrating.

Table no. 6. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Methods and means for the effort capacity recovery* to the development of students' competences

No.	Discipline	Options (percents)
1.	Fundamentals of recovery	52.4%
2.	Physiology and biochemistry of sports effort	4.8%
3.	Massage - a recovery means	85.7%
4.	Psychotherapeutic means	0%
5.	Dietetic and pharmacologic means	38.1%
6.	Active rest (respiratory gymnastics, stretching)	76.2%
7.	Biomedical control of recovery	42.9%

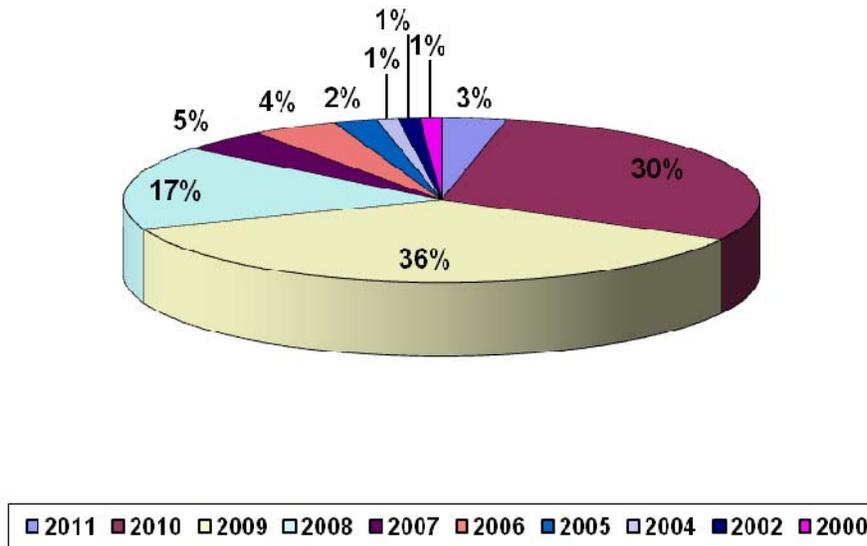
Figure no. 5. Contribution of disciplines in the program *Methods and means for the effort capacity recovery* to the development of students' competences



Statistical reckonings showed that among the total number of graduates from the education programs provided by UNEFS DPPD in the school year 2010-2011, 37% out of the teachers attended the latest professional refresher course in 2009. (figure no.6) The fact that they are being in the process of accumulating the 90 compulsory

professional credit transfers every 5 years explains students' increased interest in their continuing education. It is also interesting to emphasize that students, from all the programs, have a mean of 10 to 11 years experiences in teaching physical education.

Figure no. 6. Year of teachers' latest refresher course in the education programs developed within the project



Discussion and conclusion

Students' attendance of the six disciplines included into each education program gave them the opportunity to exchange experiences both with their teachers and the other colleagues. As for the practical activities, there was clearly a need to highlight the direct applications to physical education lessons. Teachers' interest was greater in those contents offering new alternatives to the means already known by the pupils. We refer here to table tennis, badminton and aerobics. Each discipline could represent the topic for a new program.

This project supports the recommendations formulated by the European bodies to keep the motivation for the teaching career by the acquisition of competences allowing the specialists to develop, beyond the didactic norm, further activities, such as the extracurricular and the sports training ones.

We conclude that the continuing education programs provided by the mentioned project enjoyed an increased interest from the teaching staff in Physical education and sports domain. However, competitive activities scheduled by the end of the week, simultaneously with the education programs, represented a limiting factor for students' participation in all the formative activities, even in the final evaluation.

These results will be completed next year, at the final of the project, and future conclusions will

represent the premises to develop new educational offer in adult continuing education.

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