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## A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN THE OPINIONS OF STUDENTS AND TEACHING STAFF REGARDING THE FORMAL PHYSICAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES PREFERRED BY STUDENTS

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### Abstract

*Objectives.* The youth's preparation, training and education in modern society is negatively influenced by the impact of factors harmful to the body (stress, alcohol, smoking, intellectual overexertion, drugs, overeating, etc.), their presence being more and more manifest in daily life. In this context, the role of motor activities and their prophylactic and formative values become increasingly important to ensure a physical and mental development in accordance with the requirements of society. In the academic environment, the increase of students' interest in participating in formal and non-formal physical education activities greatly depends on their preferences for certain activities. In this sense, the teaching staff members are those who must provide preparation programs adapted to students' necessities. The aim of the study was to achieve a comparative analysis of students' preferences versus those of the teaching staff for formal physical education activities.

*Method.* The research is based on the survey method. It was created an opinion questionnaire with responses prioritized on a 5-level scale, the result analysis using the statistical method - SPSS software, version 15. The questionnaire was applied to a number of 200 students and 80 teachers from many non-profile universities of Bucharest.

*Results.* The analysis of responses for both categories of respondents reveals that the first places come clearly to sports games and fitness. After the statistical analysis by gender (male and female), we notice that, among the male subjects' preferences, sports games are on the first place, followed by table tennis, fitness and swimming, and, among the female subjects' preferences, fitness is on the first place, followed by aerobic gymnastics, sports games and badminton.

*Conclusions.* Knowing the students' options, the teacher can contribute to the development of formal physical education activities in accordance with their preferences. The teacher is the crucial factor in optimizing the instructive-educational process so that it stimulates participation in physical education classes, by adapting it to students' preferences.

*Keywords:* physical education, sports, health.

### Introduction

Education at the university level must focus, according to the UNESCO report of 1996 (Learning:

- *Learning to know* the environment where you live your daily life, through understanding, discovery and knowledge;

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The Treasure Within. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century), on the following four "pillars" (Ionescu, 2012):

- *Learning to act* responsibly and positively in social and professional situations;
- *Learning to live together*, to be tolerant, to be in solidarity with your fellow;



▪ *Learning to be* responsible, to have projects aimed at your personal and professional life, to want to be in continuous progress.

It is known that, in higher education, physical education contributes essentially to educate/ develop/ promote among young people some sets of positive values and attitudes necessary to form the future citizen.

We consider that physical education should represent a major concern of society for the multilateral development of youth. In non-profile higher education and not only, physical education aims, besides a harmonious physical development, at developing some social and ethical values necessary and useful to a good integration into the social and professional activity.

According to specialists, physical education, through its content and tasks, through its positive effects on the body from the psychomotor point of view, represents a primordial, essential component of general education (Dragnea et al., 2006).

Preparation, training and education of young people in modern society is negatively influenced by the impact of factors harmful to the body (stress, alcohol, smoking, intellectual overexertion, drugs, overeating, etc.), their presence being more and more manifest in daily life. In this context, the role of motor activities and their prophylactic and formative values become increasingly important to ensure a physical and mental development in accordance with the requirements of society. We should not forget the role played by the leader of the instructive-educational process, whose main objective is to select, organize, plan and fulfill the tasks according to subjects' age and gender (Neacșu, 1999).

As any educational process has formative objectives consistent with the requirements of society, so physical education must have well-established objectives and goals. According to Șiclovan (quoted by Dragnea et al., 2006), physical education is a "*deliberately constructed and directed process*" meant to improve physical and mental development, taking into account: the age- and gender-related particularities, an optimum integration of the young people into society, the professional demands and the preservation of physical and mental health.

The objectives of physical education are divided into general and specific ones, and mainly aim to "*build up - develop the human personality undergoing a rearrangement process*", depending on the permanent changes in the society where we perform our daily activity and on health maintaining (Colibaba, 2007).

Specialists in the physical education field consider that through physical education and sports, a component part of the university curriculum, it is aimed to provide a useful and enjoyable way of spending the time destined to the curricular physical education activities, to motivate students for participating in these activities and to maintain physical and mental health of the human body.

Consequently, physical education in the academic environment must be focused on the multilateral development of the student, with a positive impact on personality, facilitating his/her social and professional integration. Building up a positive personality in young people is essential, the "*body and soul unit*" being very often brought to discussion in our field, because nothing can be done without participation of the psychic functions, according to specialists, and we agree with them (Epuran, 2011). Through the practice of motor activities, it is primarily aimed at developing the youth from the social and professional points of view (Bota, 2007). Among the positive effects of motor activities on the practitioners' personality, we mention: self-confidence, optimism, will, objectivity of evaluation, positive self-image, exercise capacity, body awareness, fair-play, respect for oneself and the others, ambition, desire to win, perseverance, development of motor capacities etc.

Movement is one of the fundamental functions of human life, is a means of adaptation to the permanent changes in the surrounding environment, a means of somatic, functional and motor development, and a factor of cultural, economic and social progress (Neagu, 2010).

Educating young students for a continuous and systematic practice of motor activities, due to their benefits to the human body at the physical and mental levels, is imperative for giving the society a healthy generation - a prerequisite for the development of the society in which we are living.

Purpose. We consider that the physical education field educates students for an active and healthy lifestyle necessary to increase the quality of life, which has become a major concern in our society, too.

To make young people understand the connection between health and the practice of motor activities of any kind, the leader of the instructive-educational process must highlight their benefits to the body. It is necessary to educate the pro-motion attitude, through which students can be motivated to take part in formal physical education activities and become active persons in their daily life.

In the academic environment, the increase of students' interest in participating in formal and non-

formal physical education activities largely depends on their preferences for certain activities. In this sense, the teachers are those who must provide preparation programmes adapted to students' needs.

In this regard, our study aimed to achieve a comparative analysis of students' opinions versus teachers' opinions about the formal physical education activities preferred by students. We also wanted to know the opinions of students and teachers about the motivational factors determining the students to participate in these activities.

Hypothesis. Knowing the students' options, we can conduct the instructive-educational process in accordance with their preferences, increasing thus the degree of involvement in the practice of motor activities.

### Method

The research is based on the questionnaire survey method, which provides accurate information about the opinions, preferences, feelings, interests and behaviors of the investigated subjects (Chelcea, 2007).

It was created an opinion questionnaire with responses prioritized on a 5-level scale, respectively: 5 – to a very large extent, 4 – to a large extent, 3 – to the same extent, 2 – to a small extent, and 1 – to a very small extent.

The result analysis was achieved using the SPSS software program, version 15. There were calculated the statistical indicators of central tendency (median

and arithmetic mean), dispersion (standard deviation), form of distribution (Skewness Index - for obliqueness and Kurtosis Index - for arching) and independent t-Test.

The respondents were 200 students and 80 teachers from the following non-profile universities of Bucharest: Technical University of Constructions, Academy of Economic Studies, "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy and Polytechnic University.

This survey is part of a wider research, the questionnaire designed for students including a number of 13 items, and the questionnaire designed for teachers having a number of 10 items. Within this paper, we selected the items no. 1 and 2, among those for students (in this research, they are numbered 1 and 2), and the items no. 2 and 3, among those for teachers (numbered 1 and 2). The content of the items will be presented at the "results" section, in the succession: students - teaching staff.

### Results

Question no. 1 addressed to students: "Mark on the 1 to 5 scale, according to your opinions, the preferred physical education activities, depending on the existing material facilities".

Overall, the respondents' results place fitness and sports games on the first positions, as seen in figure 1.

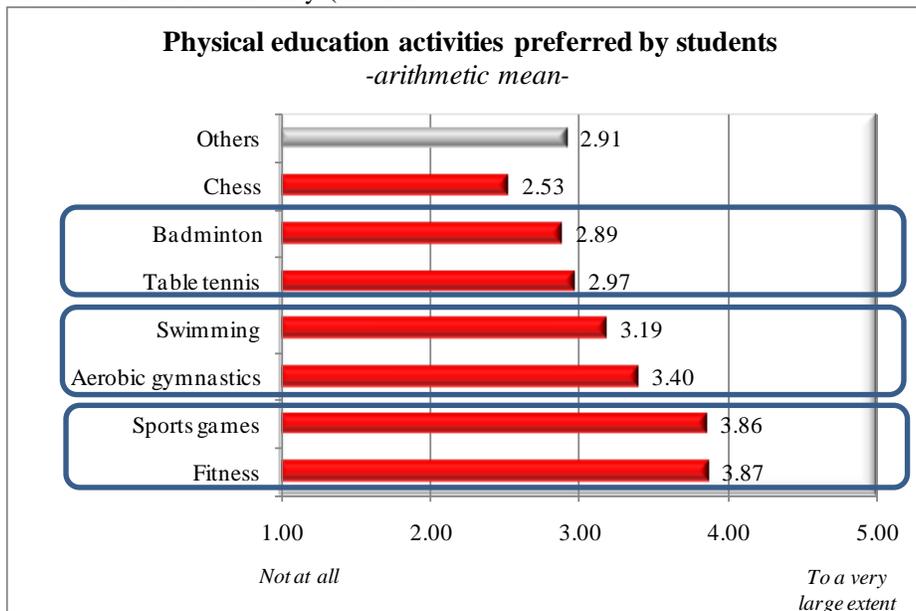


Figure 1 Physical education activities preferred by students – students' opinions

The analysis by gender (table no. 1) shows that boys place sports games on the first position, followed by table tennis, fitness and swimming. Girls

opt for fitness, aerobic gymnastics sports games and badminton.

Table no. 1 Physical education activities preferred by students, distributed by genders

Activities preferred by students <i>Arithmetic mean</i>	Gender		Independent t-Test	
	Male	Female	t	p
<b>Sports games (basketball, volleyball, football, handball)</b>	<b>4.36</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>4.619</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Aerobic gymnastics</b>	<b>2.53</b>	<b>3.93</b>	<b>-6.965</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Fitness</b>	<b>3.25</b>	<b>4.24</b>	<b>-5.354</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Table tennis</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>2.76</b>	<b>2.706</b>	<b>0.008</b>
<b>Badminton</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>3.31</b>	<b>-5.659</b>	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Chess</b>	<b>2.96</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>3.316</b>	<b>0.001</b>
<b>Swimming</b>	3.20	3.18	0.088	0.930
<i>Others</i>	3.00	2.81		

Question no. 1 addressed to teachers: "Indicate your opinion about the physical education activities preferred by students". According to figure 2, in teachers' opinion, the physical education activities preferred by students are sports games (basketball, volleyball, football and handball), which obtain a mean score of 4.83.

The second place in their ranking, but at a statistically significant difference, comes to fitness

(arithmetic mean = 4.20). The significant difference between the two means is indicated by the values of  $t = 6.082$  and  $p = 0.000$  (below the threshold of 0.05).

The third place is taken by aerobic gymnastics (arithmetic mean = 3.78), but at a statistically non-significant distance from swimming (arithmetic mean = 3.74) and table tennis (arithmetic mean = 3.65).



### surpassing oneself

<b>Participation in physical activities to know one's own physical limits</b>	<b>3.60</b>	<b>3.92</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>2.800</b>	<b>0.006</b>
Attractiveness of the performed motor activities	3.50	3.51	3.48	0.189	0.850
Promoting some socialization-related values	3.31	3.46	3.21	1.471	0.143
Compulsory participation in the formal classes	3.19	3.34	3.09	1.231	0.220
<b>Desire for assertion/ self-assertion</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>2.393</b>	<b>0.018</b>
Participation in the formal programme only to earn the credit	2.87	2.75	2.94	-0.879	0.381

Question no. 2 addressed to teachers: "Express your opinion about the reasons which determine the students to participate in the formal programme of university physical education".

In teachers' opinion, the main reason which determines the students to attend the formal programme of university physical education is the compulsory participation in the curricular physical education classes (arithmetic mean = 4.46), 62.5% of the interviewed teachers largely agreeing to this motivation.

Other reasons, but with statistical means significantly lower than the main reason, are: students' need to actively interact with those around (arithmetic mean = 4.13), keeping/ maintaining an

optimal health status (arithmetic mean = 4.13), need for mental relaxation (4.10), attractiveness of the performed physical exercises (4.09), participation only to earn the credit (4.01), desire to constantly perform physical activities (3.95), ensuring a physical, mental, emotional and social balance (3.94) and acquiring the capacity to practice independently physical exercises (3.89).

The weakest reasons are: students' desire for assertion/ self-assertion (arithmetic mean = 3.69), participation in physical activities to know one's own physical limits (arithmetic mean = 3.58) and students' desire for surpassing the others/ surpassing themselves (arithmetic mean = 3.54). The statistical analysis is presented in table no. 3.

Table no. 3 Teachers' opinions about the motivational factors which determine the students to participate in the curricular physical education activities

Motivations	% of Total, N = 80					Arithmetic mean	Median	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
	1	2	3	4	5					
A.	0.0%	0.0%	16.3%	21.3%	62.5%	4.46	5	0.762	-1.014	-0.510
B.	0.0%	7.5%	20.0%	25.0%	47.5%	4.13	4	0.986	-0.745	-0.654
C.	0.0%	2.5%	22.5%	35.0%	40.0%	4.13	4	0.848	-0.500	-0.778
D.	0.0%	3.8%	22.5%	33.8%	40.0%	4.10	4	0.880	-0.542	-0.712
E.	2.5%	5.0%	17.5%	31.3%	43.8%	4.09	4	1.021	-1.057	0.669
F.	5.0%	6.3%	12.5%	35.0%	41.3%	4.01	4	1.119	-1.191	0.826
G.	2.5%	8.8%	17.5%	33.8%	37.5%	3.95	4	1.066	-0.863	0.059
H.	0.0%	7.5%	26.3%	31.3%	35.0%	3.94	4	0.959	-0.402	-0.916
I.	0.0%	10.0%	30.0%	21.3%	38.8%	3.89	4	1.043	-0.319	-1.228
J.	0.0%	13.8%	28.8%	32.5%	25.0%	3.69	4	1.001	-0.185	-1.025
K.	2.5%	16.3%	25.0%	33.8%	22.5%	3.58	4	1.088	-0.348	-0.729
L.	3.8%	11.3%	33.8%	30.0%	21.3%	3.54	4	1.067	-0.325	-0.419




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M.	2.5%	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	2.5%	3.20	4	2.049	-0.441	-3.163
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Legend. 1. Not at all, 2. To a very small extent, 3. To the same extent, 4. To a large extent, 5. To a very large extent

- A. Compulsory participation in the curricular physical education classes,
- B. Need to actively interact with those around,
- C. Keeping/ maintaining an optimal health status,
- D. Need for mental relaxation,
- E. Attractiveness of the performed physical exercises,
- F. Participation in the formal programme only to earn the credit,
- G. Desire to constantly perform physical activities,
- H. Ensuring a physical, mental, emotional and social balance,
- I. Acquiring the capacity to practice independently physical exercises,
- J. Desire for assertion/ self-assertion,
- K. Participation in physical activities to know one's own physical limits,
- L. Desire for surpassing the others/ surpassing oneself,
- M. Others.

### Discussions

The importance of practicing physical education in higher education is undeniable, the entire society (parents, teaching staff, institutions responsible for the education of youth etc.) paying particular attention to the Physical education and sports field. A study targeted to parents and conducted in Sweden by Quennerstedt, M., Ohman, M. and Eriksson, C., from the Orebro University, shows that physical education and sports is thought to be one of the five subjects in the school curriculum which has a crucial role in the optimal development and education of their children (Quennerstedt, M., Ohman, M., Eriksson, C., <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/169508.pdf>).

In the United States, in the academic environment, it is mandatory for the students to take part in a sports activity, according to their preferences, which stimulates their participation in the physical education and sports classes

([http://www.morgan.edu/school\\_of\\_education\\_and\\_urban\\_studies/departments/health\\_physical\\_education\\_recreation\\_and\\_dance.html](http://www.morgan.edu/school_of_education_and_urban_studies/departments/health_physical_education_recreation_and_dance.html)).

Physical education represents, in some European countries ( France, Great Britain etc.), an act of culture and a means of development, whose primordial purpose is the development of individual's motor, psycho-socio-cultural capacities (Ionescu, 2010) .

The comparative analysis of results at question no. 1 for students and no. 1 for teachers shows that the opinions of both categories of respondents coincide, given the placement of sports games and fitness on the first positions. The result seems significant to us and supports a student-focused education programme.

We consider that the differences resulting from the analysis by gender provide an appropriate informational basis for particularizing the different activities, depending on options and material possibilities.

We believe that the motivational factors play an important role in determining the students to participate in the curricular physical education and sports activities. It is interesting that the comparative analysis of responses to question no. 2 reveals that students' opinions are different from those of the teachers. Keeping/ maintaining an optimal health status, the desire to constantly perform physical activities and the need for mental relaxation highlighted by students entitle us to assert that our subjects are aware of the role of motor activities.

The classification made by the teachers, who consider preponderantly that students' main motivation is the compulsory participation in the curricular physical education classes, indicates that there is no a good knowledge about students. For this



reason, we think that the results of our survey are significant for granting opinions and harmonizing the

### Conclusions

Investigating the opinions of students represents an optimal way for knowing their preferences regarding the curricular physical education activities, which leads, according to us, to an improved instructive-educational process.

It is important for the teachers to know the options of students, who are the key-factors in optimizing the instructive-educational process. Using, within the lessons, some exercises designed in a modern and inviting manner contributes essentially to build a promotion attitude and attract young people towards the practice of motor activities by conviction, not by obligation.

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teacher-student relationships.

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