



Physical Education Teacher in Middle Schools: Requirements and Academic Profile

Zsolt Németh

University of Pécs, Institute of Sport Science and Physical Education, Hungary,
zsolt.nemeth@gamma.ttk.pte.hu

Abdumalik Shopulatov

Uzbek State University of Physical Education and Sports, Uzbekistan,
matonat1981@gmail.com

Komiljon Norboyev

Urgut branch of Samarkand State University, Uzbekistan, n-komil@samdu.uz

Farruh Ahmedov

Dr., Samarkand State University, Uzbekistan, ahmedovfsh@gmail.com

Sabina N. Valente

CARE - Research Center on Health and Social Sciences, Polytechnic Institute of
Portalegre, Portugal, svalente@ippportalegre.pt

This study aimed to discuss the academic profiles and requirements of physical education teachers at middle schools. Therefore 102 physical education teachers (Mage= 44) from Uzbekistan participated in this study. The literature review method was used to find potential research papers. A special self-report interview was used to determine the professional needs of physical education teachers working at middle schools. The results of the interviews were used to determine the indicators of the professional profiles of the physical education teachers. The results showed that physical education teachers should meet several professional requirements. Also, revealed five main requirements, namely, psychological and pedagogical requirements, personal and professional requirements, teaching (or methodological) requirements, communicative and organizational requirements, and scientific-educational requirements. The research results can be applied to the future training of physical education teachers, the development of teacher education programs, and the organization of an effective educational process in schools. Future physical education teachers can use the results of this study to envision professional requirements, skills, and experiences.

Keywords: education, physical education, practices, profile, requirements, teacher

INTRODUCTION

With the progression of globalization, the importance and significance of education are increasing dramatically. Currently, many tasks and competencies are assigned to

Citation: Németh, Z., Shopulatov, A., Norboyev, K., Ahmedov, F., & Valente, S. N. (2024). Physical education teacher in middle schools: Requirements and academic profile. *International Journal of Instruction*, 17(3), 371-382.

teachers' activities in schools. In modern life, developing school education and increasing the social status of teachers are considered the main factors in the development of education. An important social determinant of children's health and well-being is social construction and the creation of an educational system of physical education (Lawson, 2020). Global legal bodies have been promoting schooling as a non-discriminatory and egalitarian policy for decades (UN, 2016; UNESCO, 1994). Moreover, the development of school education and the requirements for teachers are defined by local laws (Law of Education in Uzbekistan, 2020). The education system needs qualified teachers to complete the learning process. This explains why teaching requires inclusive competencies, including material knowledge, pedagogy, social skills, and behavioral skills (Sebalo & Teslenko, 2020; Valente et al., 2023).

Physical education is becoming increasingly important in society and people's lives. It has been established that physical activity is beneficial for health, and the use of physical education at all levels of education plays an important role in preventing inactivity (Awadhesh & Aaron, 2022; McKenzie & Lounsbury, 2013). Researchers have recognized that the importance of physical education has risen to a high level, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic (Goodyear et al., 2021; Valeria et al., 2022). Nevertheless, a number of previous studies and related research points to the future of maintaining physical education on an international scale as a subject of study (Hardman et al., 2013; Marshall & Hardman, 2000). Even the latest World Health Organization (WHO) global observations confirm (WHO, 2022) that failure to take action to improve physical activity levels in the future will increase costs for health systems, promote physical activity as a priority and strengthen global cooperation in this regard. The literature indicates that the role and need of physical education teachers in society are extremely significant. The quality of physical education in schools is important for the development of society, health and well-being.

It is known from practice that physical education in schools around the world is organized by schoolteachers. Together with teaching, physical education teachers must perform several parallel tasks such as management and organization. Morgan and Hansen stated that the role of physical education teachers is important in increasing the physical activity of students and maintaining their health (Morgan & Hansen, 2008). In addition, other researchers confirm that physical education teachers also have the task of directing students to social activity. Physical education teachers need to create active social relationships and a healthy environment through physical education (Richards et al., 2014; Richards et al., 2019). According to the other authors, future physical education teachers' professional profiles are defined as active and motivational (Prontenko et al., 2019). Additionally, the processes of changing traditional social values observed in modern society have led to the urgent need for the educational system to contribute to spiritual and moral self-identification and personal growth in the younger generation. This circumstance has led to an increase in the level of professional and personal requirements for pedagogical activities (Shevchenko et al., 2019; Syunina et al., 2018). Therefore, the role of teachers in the organization of physical education in schools is multi-profile, and this process is related not only to physical activity but also to socio-pedagogical features. However, the personal aspects of physical education teachers' activities have not been studied.

Currently, at many universities worldwide, physical education teachers with higher education are trained based on their education curriculums. Different teacher education programs and teaching methods can be found at different universities. However, it is worth discussing whether these teacher education programs have the potential to develop competencies for physical education teachers. Maksymchuk et.al. (2018) noted that the current model of training physical education teachers does not meet modern requirements. The training programme for physical education teachers should be innovative and modern based on the requirements of the current labour market. These points, which were emphasized by Metzler (2011), absolutely confirm that the academic profile of physical education teachers and the scope of their requirements are wide. In the same way, teaching styles, knowledge and skills are important for improving the teaching-learning process (Fernández & Espada, 2021). Similarly, Lee et al. (2017) argued that physical education programs provide teacher candidates with the knowledge, skills and dispositions required to impact student learning. The same authors also indicate that throughout a long and successful career, quality physical education teachers must continue to adapt to the new demands of their profession. In contrast, other researchers emphasize that schools should have the best sports equipment possible for more satisfied, less burned-out physical education teachers. In fact, school sports facilities affect the job satisfaction and burnout of physical education teachers working in low-income schools. As a result, teachers who work in schools with less favorable sports facilities are less satisfied and more tired than their colleagues who work in well-equipped schools (Kroupis et al., 2019).

Research findings and analysed studies show that physical education teachers should have several skills and abilities (e.g., Fernández & Espada, 2021; Lee et al., 2017). Although many studies have examined physical education teachers' motivation, education, and organization, there is a lack of research on how academic profile indicators are related to these aspects. This research gap limits our understanding of the structure of the academic profile of physical education teachers and their professional demands. Therefore, this study aimed to analyse the academic profiles and requirements of physical education teachers as an example of teachers' opinions.

METHOD

Participants

A total of 102 physical education teachers from Uzbekistan, who are gaining experience at the Retraining and Advanced Training Institute in Physical Education and Sports, Samarkand Branch, participated in this study. The average age was 44 ± 12.5 years, and the average work experience at middle schools was 11 ± 2.5 years. To ensure the gender balance of the participants, 50 men (49%) and 52 women (51%) were involved in the study.

Instruments

To determine the requirements for the work of physical education teachers, the present study presents a qualitative analysis performed via interviews (written reports). The participants were asked to express their opinions on 5 specially offered blocks:

Psychological and Pedagogical Requirements; Personal and Professional Requirements; Teaching (or Methodological) Requirements; Communicative and Organizational Requirements; and Scientific-Educational Requirements.

Procedure

This study was performed at the Retraining and Advanced Training Institute in Physical Education and Sports, Samarkand Branch. This is a governmental institute under the Ministry of Youth Policy and Sports. Every month, more than 40 physical education teachers from different regions of the country attend short-term (30 days) courses to improve their skills. All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee, approved by the teachers' participants, and respected the ethical standards set out in the Declaration of Helsinki (2013). Before collecting the data, the teachers were informed about the study purpose, and ethical procedures were guaranteed, namely, anonymity, response confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Written reports were assigned to the participants in the order of free expression in the published case. These questions mean that participants are invited to express and write their opinions on the papers. Each participant was asked about their opinions and suggestions by writing the special papers given by the researchers. Participants were also informed that it was important to respond honestly to the questionnaire (written report). The interview process lasted throughout the year (2022 academic year). Every month, we attempted to collect the interviews and gave them a special questionnaire prepared by the authors. The interview questions were made by the researchers and approved by the Ethical Committee of the Retraining and Advanced Training Institute in Physical Education and Sports, Samarkand Branch. Certain criteria were imposed so that the samples were general and typical. The study's inclusion criteria were: participants are currently working as physical education teachers in secondary schools; have a minimum of 5 years' professional experience; and attend the interview on a reciprocal and optional basis.

Data analysis

The completed results were summarized and classified. The participants were divided and processed into appropriate blocks according to the relevance and content of the given answers.

FINDINGS

According to the results of the interview, proposals were made in 4 directions regarding psychological and pedagogical indicators for physical education teachers. In particular, the participants reported directions for improving pedagogical and psychological knowledge, critically evaluating one's own and students' activities, monitoring one's activities, and understanding the psychological and emotional states of students.

Regarding the Personal and Professional Requirements, all the participants expressed suggestions for self-demanding, working on oneself, working hard work, improving physical fitness and observing pedagogical ethics or culture.

Relatively more proposals were made in the field of teaching (or methodological) requirements. In particular, the analysis and planning of educational programs, quality organization of classes, organization of extracurricular physical education, promotion of a healthy lifestyle among students, assessment of physical fitness of students, protection of students from negative diseases and suggestions for conservation were performed.

According to the communicative and organizational indicators, the participants made the following suggestions: leading students and working with a group, creating a pedagogical environment among students, controlling students' interactions, and making independent decisions.

A number of proposals were also made in the direction of the latest "Scientific-Educational Requirements" survey. For example, suggestions such as being aware of best practices and applying them in practice, forecasting development trends in this field, and using scientific literature and information were noted.

Table 1

Determination of the requirements for the activity of physical education teachers based on interview (n=102)

Blocks	Requirements*	Teachers' opinions**
I	Psychological and Pedagogical Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving pedagogical and psychological knowledge. • Critically evaluating one's own and students' activities. • Monitoring one's activities. • Understanding the psychological and emotional state of students.
II	Personal and Professional Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-demanding. • Working on oneself, hard work. • Improving physical fitness. • Pedagogical ethics.
III	Teaching (or Methodological) Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis and planning of teaching/educational programs. • Quality organization of classes. • Organization of extracurricular physical education. • Promotion of a healthy lifestyle among students. • Assessment of physical fitness of students. • Protection of students from negative habits.
IV	Communicative and Organizational Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading students and working with a group. • Creating a pedagogical environment among students. • Controlling students' interactions. • Making independent decisions.
V	Scientific-Educational Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being aware of best practices and applying them in practice. • Forecasting development trends in this field. • Using scientific literature and information.

Note: *Blocks and Requirements suggested by the authors. **Written responses given by the participants according to the relevance to the blocks.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to analyse the academic profiles and requirements of physical education teachers as an example of teachers' opinions. Our analyses and

investigations revealed that the academic profile of physical education teachers is multifactorial. This study, in addition to confirming the results of previous scientific research (e.g., Metzler, 2017; Gaudreault et al. 2018), also led to certain scientific conclusions.

Regarding the research results, it should be noted that the results of our research and the conclusions of the experimental process were consistent with the findings of other researchers (e.g., Casey & MacPhail, 2018). For instance, Botagariev et al. (2021) found that future physical education teachers must have intellectual, creative and motivational components. The authors also confirm that these components are specific parts of the professional training of physical education teachers. Such thoughts are also reflected in the scientific research of other authors (Arufe-Giráldez et al. 2023; Casey & Kirk, 2020). In particular, previous studies have confirmed that the activities of physical education teachers must first be organized on the basis of general laws and principles of education and must strictly obey these requirements (e.g., Enright et al., 2017; Fernandez-Balborá, 1997). Additionally, other research has shown that teachers must have specific potential to resolve classroom conflict management (Valente & Lourenço, 2020). This factor also affects the effective improvement of the quality of educational practices, the conflict management in the context of the educational process and helps to understand students' emotions (Lourenço et al., 2023; Valente & Lourenço, 2020). In terms of professional requirements, physical education teachers' profiles must meet a number of criteria and requirements, as reflected in this study. In addition, other studies related to the obtained results also confirm that physical education must have a positive effect on the development of individuals, especially young people (e.g., Castelli & Beighle, 2007; McEvoy et al., 2015; O'Sullivan, 2021; Valente & Lourenço, 2020). Physical education teachers should have the ability to develop important functions, such as not only the physical health of students, but also mental and social activity.

Obesity has increased dramatically during recent decades worldwide. Lifshitz (2008) argued that both genetic and environmental factors play a role in the development of obesity. In this sense, Delgado-Floody (2019) argued that high-intensity interval training in physical education programs can be used in schools as a strategy for combatting the childhood obesity pandemic. It seems that physical education plays an important role in preventing obesity. It should be noted that physical education teachers also play an important role in preventing obesity and other similar diseases in children. Their knowledge and experience lead children to follow a healthy lifestyle. Other studies have also confirmed that this issue is directly related to education, particularly the work experience of physical education teachers (e.g., Cardina & James, 2021; Kamil & Aboshkair, 2022). Interestingly, for example, in some countries such as Japan, physical education teachers should teach students health-related skills (Sato et al., 2023). Thus, this task requires physical education teachers to further expand their knowledge and skills. For this reason, some researchers have argued that physical education increases children's physical activity, physical health, mental health, well-being, educational activity and cognitive function (e.g., Breslin et al., 2023; Yunusovich et al., 2022). Importantly, the results of our research also confirmed the practical application of the above functions in the content of a number of requirements in the professional activities of physical education teachers.

The results of our research also showed that physical education teachers should work on themselves and develop their academic potential. Kingston et.al. (2023) state that physical education teacher training programmes are also one of the factors affecting the quality of the teaching process. According to Derwent (2015), physical education teachers' training programs must meet certain requirements, such as competency and reflective thinking. Our results indicate, concerning psychological and pedagogical requirements such as improving pedagogical and psychological skills, critical analysis of students and understanding students' psychological and emotional state of students is one of the most important parts of the didactic activity of the teachers. These results can be interpreted that physical education teachers must have skills not only pedagogical, but also psychological knowledge. Also, the Curran et al. (2017) study confirms that teachers play a key role in stabilizing students' psychological aspects, relationships and emotional states in the school context. With regard to personal and professional requirements, the results of the present study showed that personal and professional demands are also one of the important competencies. In our study it is confirmed that self-demanding, working on oneself, improving physical preparedness and pedagogical ethics are main requirements for teachers. Also, the present studies have indicated that future physical education teachers' competency directly related their motor activity (Balashov et al. 2019). During the classes, teachers must be very physically active. In addition, working on oneself and self-study ability are key factors in becoming high-quality physical education teachers (e.g., Andrew, et.al., 2016; Fletcher & Hordvik, 2023).

When asking teachers about didactic (or methodological) requirements, the results indicate that analysis and planning of educational programs, organization of classes and extracurricular activities, healthy life-style promotion, assessment and also protection of students from negative habits through physical education was found as an important aspect for the physical education teachers. It is important to note that these results are in line with the results of Casey and Kirk (2020) study. The authors indicated that to be an effective physical education teacher, it is necessary to have a thorough knowledge of teaching methods.

As for the communicative and organizational requirements, the results indicate that team management skills, creating educational atmosphere, good controlling the students during classes and decision-making abilities are also positive influences to the quality of the teaching process. Those indicators like team management, suitable school climate and choosing the best decision are considered a contributive factor on the quality of the education. These results are in line with the results of previous studies (e.g., Beare et al. 2018; Cicourel & Kitsuse, 2020; Wang & Degol, 2016).

Finally, concerning scientific-educational requirements, this study indicates that being aware of modern tendencies of the best practices, forecasting of development stages of the activity and scientific-based activity is one of the most crucial parts. This requirement is based on the interaction and interdependence of education and scientific research focuses to ensure awareness of modern knowledge. Other authors argued that science-based education is the most important thing in modern education (Chiriac et al. 2019;

Scager et al. 2016). So, science-based education is important in all stages and types of education including middle schools.

Although the results of this study are somewhat relevant, it has some limitations. First, this study included only physical education teachers from a particular country, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other countries; moreover, the obtained results were not classified by sex (male or female), which may limit the identification of results by sex differences.

In future studies, it is suggested that mixed qualitative and quantitative studies be carried out. Complement the interview with the application of questionnaires related to the assessment of specific psychological and pedagogical variables. For example, assessing teachers' emotional intelligence and professional efficacy.

CONCLUSION

This interview-based study presented the academic profiles and requirements of physical education teachers. The professional activity of physical education teachers is multifactorial and implies certain requirements. The research results can be applied to the future training of physical education teachers, the development of teacher education programs and the organization of an effective educational process in schools. Future physical education teachers can use the results of this study to envision professional requirements, skills, and experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express our gratitude to the Retraining and Advanced Training Institute in Physical Education and Sports, Samarkand Branch, who supported us organizing this study and all participants of this research.

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