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Motivation for academic work of student – future physical education teachers

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Abstract

Personal approach toward learning process and interest for learning during university education are underlined as one of the key factors for success during university studies. The aim of this paper is to determine the motivation of students – future physical education teachers for academic work. The study was conducted on a sample of 69 participants, students in the first year at Faculty of physical education, sport and health at University in Skopje, North Macedonia. Questioner comprised from 11 items, designed as 4 – point Likert scale was applied. Three groups of indicators for academic work were determined: active involvement in teaching process; inner self – discipline for learning; strive to supplement and extend personal knowledge. Study results suggest on positive attitude toward academic work and respectively high level of motivation, different approaches in achieving results in academic work. Achieving long – lasting knowledge is underlined as priority in academic work of students included in this study. Obtained results are valuable for university professors indicating the key points that should be consider in order to achieve highly motivated students and maximal learning result.

Keywords: motivation, university students, learning, teaching process;

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1. Introduction

Success during university education depends on many different factors. Some of them are related with educational strategy, quality of delivery of study programs, possibilities for connecting theory with practice etc. Another group of factors is related to students, particularly their motivation for academic work, interest for selected studies, projections for personal development, expectations from their studies etc. Personal approach toward learning process, interest for learning as well as motivation that students has during university education are underlined as one of the key factors for success during university studies. Many times, motivation, particularly the type of motives that are dominant in students and their persistence to follow their goal determines the approach and interest toward learning. In many cases, student's motivation for learning and academic work are closely related with university drops – out or delays in studies.

Motivation is a psychosocial process characterized by behaviors that an individual deems vital for his/her personal development (Ryan and Deci, 2000b). Motivation in educational context is analyzed in the frames of Self – determination theory. SDT is a theoretical framework for human motivation analyzing the psychological factors that influence human behavior. In educational context, these means the impact of environmental and pedagogical factors on students learning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). The authors Ryan & Deci (2000), identify three different types of motivation: intrinsic motivation (motivation that is led by personal reasons as a result of satisfaction that the practice implies); extrinsic motivation (when external factors impacts the behavior) and a motivation (when people are passive and no motivation exists). From the perspective of university students, extrinsic motivation means to obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself such as good grades, privileges or teacher approval. Students with extrinsic motivation try to drag themselves with academic assignments, feel compelled to learn, always put minimal efforts to achieve maximum appreciations. Intrinsic motivation is related with achievement of knowledge, self – growth and development of personal competences. The students with intrinsic motivation are more enthusiastic, self-driven, challenging and feel pleasure in their studies. Intrinsically motivated students tend to utilize strategies that require more effort and that allow them to process information more intensely (Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to these two authors, the level of motivation is determined by following three main factors: autonomy (sense of control over personal behavior), competence (ability perceived during the activity) and relatedness (feeling of acceptance, belonging) (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Motivation of students is a subject many studies realized on samples of students from different faculties and specialties. Many studies confirm that the level of motivation of university students for academic work is not related with selected study group/specialty, nor the degree level and age of the students (Pedditzi & Spagno, 2012; Ignatov & Peltekova, 2019). According to Pedditzi & Spagno, (2012), personal goals, performance or mastery are pursued in a equally hard way by students from different degree level. The authors reported a difference in motivation of students in relation with their academic success and opinion for professors. Namely, the students with better academic achievements evaluate their professors more positively and better integrated at the university, which is not a case with their colleagues that have lower academic success (Pedditzi & Spagno, 2012). Teachers have influence on student's motivation for work but they are not the only source. Peer influence is strongly emphasized as a source of motivation, especially when it comes to teaching in PE It is also closely related with students goal orientation that can be defined by different mechanisms: cognitive -perceived competences, affective – enjoyment and behavioral - exerted effort (Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003).

Different aspects of student's motivation have different contribution on students` achievements. In this regard, the study of Steinmayr et al, (2019) conducted on university students confirmed that student's self – concept turns out to be the most important motivational predictor of students' academic achievement regardless the differences in the intelligence and their prior grades. Higher self – efficiency, successful experience, setting a group goal and creating a positive relation with colleagues (classmates)

can increase motivation in students, especially when they are related to physical education (Wang, 2012). Behaviors such as working hard, attending class, participating regularly, acknowledging others' efforts and receiving help from colleagues are encouraged. When learning in a cooperative group setting, students develop a positive interdependence towards their classmates, which increases motivation (Kraus et al; 2009). Results from study conducted on university students and their academic motivation conformed that students that are intrinsic motivated have much better academic performance compared with their colleagues that are extrinsically motivated. The good performance or good test results for students that are extrinsically motivated is short – term, or exist as long as the reward exists or until they are evaluated. This is not a case with intrinsically motivated (Afsal, Ali, Khan & Hamid, 2010).

All previously mentioned aspects for motivation of university students refers to all students including student's future physical education teachers, that are subject of interest in our study. When speaking about specialty of students future PE teachers, there are some specific regarded their professional competences. They are not related only with their approach to learning but also with their motor abilities and skills in mastering different motor movements and gaining knowledge from different sports. Many times, the success is not just related with students interests but also with their abilities, motivation to work hard, to be persistent etc. In this regard, as previously mentioned, higher self – efficiency, successful experience and creating a positive relation with colleagues can increase motivation in students (Wang, 2012). For PE students is important to acquire scientific knowledge, to learn theory and methodology but also to be able to confidently demonstrate practical knowledge and skills to the most demanding examiner. In this regard their motivation and positive attitude are important for achieving these goals. (Peltekova, 2014). Furthermore, analyzing the attitudes of students from the specialty PE teachers, Ilieva & Doncheva (2013), emphases that individual or group practice of different motor movements with positive effects and results has positive effects for students motor development, personal health, self – confidence and also have effects on their attitudes toward their future profession (Ilieva, I. & Doncheva, Yu., 2013). Positive experiences and attitudes during learning process have positive impact on student's self – esteem, self – evaluation and personal experience (Doncheva, 2015). The authors Ignatov & Petkova (2018; 2019) studied the motivation for academic achievement of student's future physical education teachers, that are attending studies at different universities in Bulgaria. They evaluated three group of indicators: active attitude, inner self – discipline and Attempt to complete and expand knowledge. They determined high degree of active attitude toward learning and striving toward complete knowledge (learning for long – lasting knowledge, striving for high success in studying disciplines, finding learning contents interesting, using different sources for learning etc. (Petkova & Ignatov, 2018), finding no significant differences in motivation for academic work among students from different universities, different age groups and different gender (Ignatov & Petkova, 2019). Considering the similar study programs and structure of curricula for PE teacher education between Macedonia and Bulgaria, as well as the importance of motivation of students for academic achievements, the same research method was applied in our study on sample of Macedonian students.

2. Methods

The purpose of this study is to determine the motivation of students – future physical education teachers for academic work. The study was conducted on a sample of 69 participants, future physical education teachers, students in the first academic year at Faculty of physical education, sport and health at University in Skopje, North Macedonia. Students' motivation for academic work was investigated using the instrument: "Scale for assessment of level of academic motivation" designed by Velickov, A (2005). It is constructed from 11 items set as 4-degree Likert scale (completely disagree, partly disagree,

partly agree, completely agree). From 11 items, 7 are affirmative, with positive connotation, while 4 are with negative connotation. It contained 12 items, designed as 4 – point Likert scale. According the author Velichkov (2005, pp: 48) the academic motivation is defined as " construct describing the general motivational status generated and connected with the education in a specialty at a university. The overall positive motivational readiness is an indicator of the quality of teaching in a given specialty and is also one of the forerunners of academic achievement ".

The validity and reliability of the scale were tested and according them, the standardized instrument was suggested for further use. Using factor analyses following three factors of academic motivation are measured using the instrument: active attitude toward learning process, inner self – discipline and strive to supplement and extend personal knowledge. On sample of Macedonian students, the study was conducted in academic 2017/2018. The sample was intentional – full time students at study program Physical education teachers.

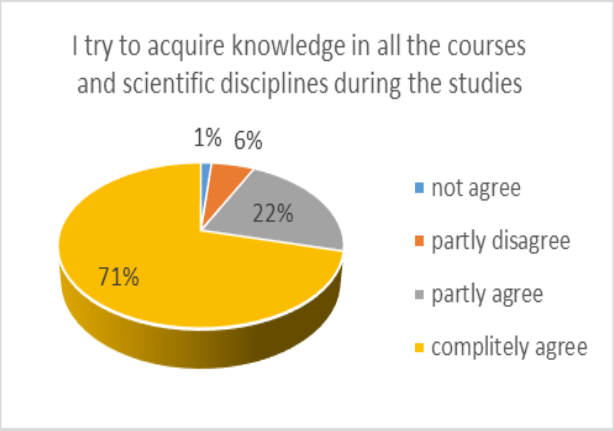
The results are analyzed using basic descriptive statistics and proper statistical analyses. The obtained results have been processed with frequencies (f) and percent's (%). Results are also presented graphically.

3. Results

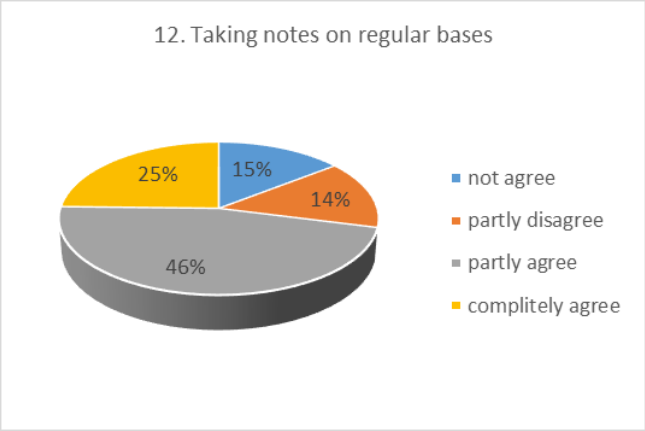
From the total sample of participants, particularly 69, 20% (14 students) were females and 80 % (55 students) were males. The distribution by gender is usual for this specialty considering that for many years more males are enrolled to be PE specialist compared with females interested for this profession.

Based on suggested structure of the instrument, obtained using factor analyses, the items were analyzed in three separate groups: active attitude toward learning process (4 items), inner self – discipline (3 items) and strive to supplement and extend personal knowledge (5 items).

The first group of indicators for academic work of students referred to their **attitudes toward the learning process**. In this regard, the examined aspects of interest were student's opinion about their interest in the field of study, striving for long – lasting knowledge, effort in acquiring knowledge. Obtained results have shown that majority of students 93% perceive themselves as interested and motivated in acquiring long – lasting knowledge in all the courses and scientific disciplines of their studies (71% completely agree and 22 % agree partially), while only 7% have shown lower motivation. (Graph 1).



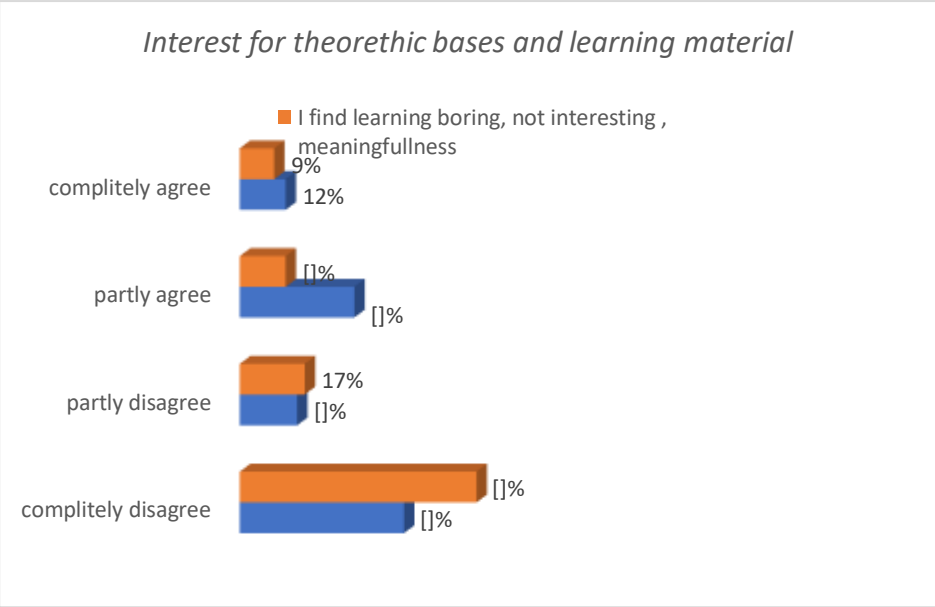
Graph 1. Devotion to gain long-lasting knowledge



Graph 3. Activity during lectures

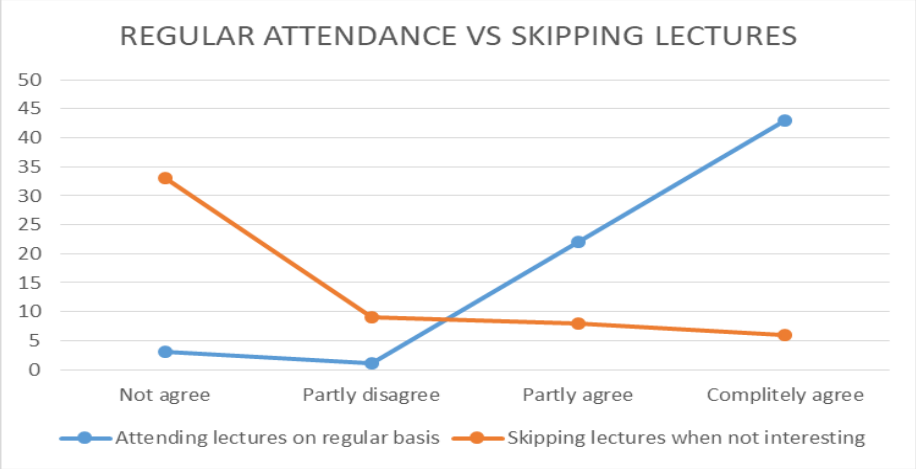
The following two item have negative connotation: "I am not interested in theoretic bases of the disciplines that I should study" and "Everything that I learn at faculty I find it boring, not interesting and sometimes I cannot find the meaning of what I learn". The results are presented at Graphic 3. Based on analyses, 58% of the students are interested in the theoretical foundations of the disciplines they study at University, and they find learning as interesting and meaningful (79%). Around 30-40% of students have stated that they are not interested in acquiring theoretical knowledge (theoretical foundations of the discipline) and often don't see what is the meaning of the contents they are learning about or consider them as boring and monotonous.

Active attitudes toward learning process is also recognized in students' attitudes during lectures. Taking notes during lectures is one of the strategies for active attitude toward learning process. Its anticipated by 71% of the students (25% completely agree and 46% partly agree). Taking notes is not a usual action for 29% of the students (Graphic 2). The number of students that are not taking notes can be explained by the fact that students in first year still don't have enough experience in academic learning and may still not have found the learning strategy that suits them the most.

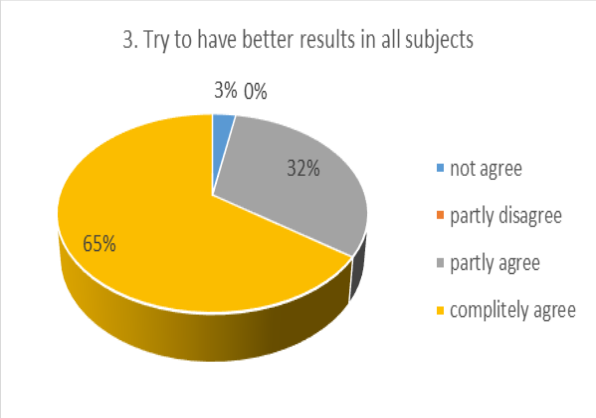


Graph 3. Interest for learning material and theoretic foundations

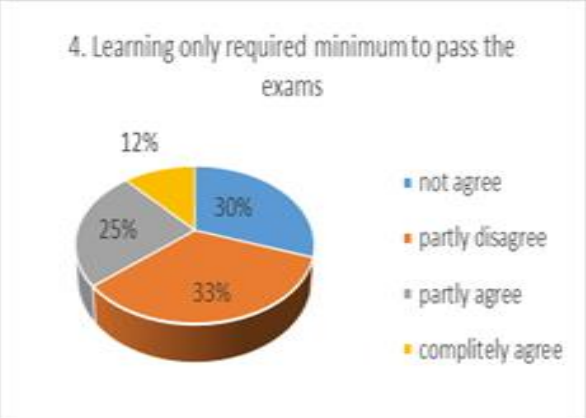
The second group of indicators for motivation for academic work and learning was related with student's **inner self-discipline for learning**. It was examined through student's persistence regarding regular attendance of lectures and striving toward high results. Their persistence can be observed through regular attendance of lectures and exercises. In this regard, majority of the students (95%) attend the lectures regularly (62% completely, 32% partially), but still 25% sometimes skip them, when they find them as boring and not interesting (Graph 4). Obtained data have shown that almost all students (97% in total; of them 65% totally agree and 32% partially) try to achieve high results in the courses they are taking (Graph 5).



Graph 4: Regular attendance VS skipping lectures

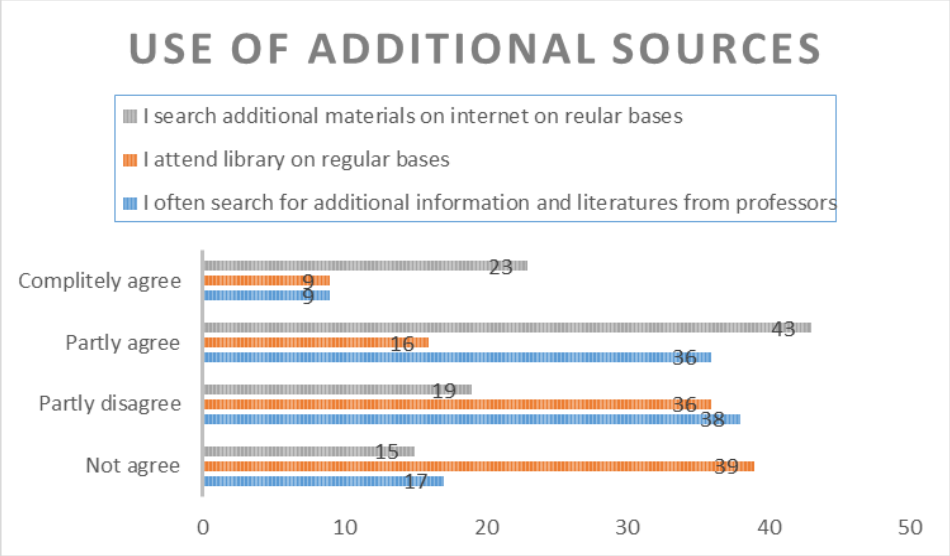


Graph 5. Striving toward better results



Graph 6. Learning the required minimum

The last group of indicators were related to strive of the students to supplement and extend personal knowledge/ with student's motivation to extend their personal knowledge. Obtained results have shown that students mainly strive toward achieving better results during their studies and learn more than required minimum to pass the exams (63%), while 37% stated that they stick to the required minimum, from which 12% completely agreed, and 25% partially (Graph 6).



Graph 7. Use of different additional sources

This is supported with the results on the next question that referred to using additional sources in order to supply and extend their knowledge. 67% of the students stated that they use additional sources, while 35% answered negatively, of which 24% partially (Graph 7). In order to extend the knowledge in the courses taken, students use different sources. The biggest part of the students 66% (23% completely and 43% partially) use internet as a source of additional information. Smaller percentage require additional materials from their professors 45% in total, of which only 9% completely and 36% partially, whereas at least used source is the library, or only 25% use it for searching additional sources (from which 9% completely and 16% partially). Results regarding the source student's use for searching additional information in order to extend their personal knowledge, show that students mostly rely on use of internet as a source. This is understandable, taking into consideration that this is the easiest and most approachable source which offers all kind of information needed. Compared with this, it can be concluded that very rarely students use the support of professors or library as additional source on a regular bases (only 9%) and mainly approach to these sources partially.

4. Discussion

Based on the results presented previously, it can be concluded that the majority of the students, (93%) participants in this research, are interested and motivated to acquire knowledge in the courses and scientific disciplines they are studying. This shows their devotion to gain long-lasting knowledge in scientific disciplines studied at University. Similar results are obtained for Bulgarian students included in the study of (Petkova & Ignatov, 2018; Ignatov & Petkova, 2019).

Although big part of the students expressed their interest in the courses that they are studying at University and find them as interesting and meaningful, still 30-40% answered that are not interested in

theoretical foundations of the disciplines they are studying about and find them as boring and monotonous. When analyzing these results it should be taken into consideration that participants are students at first year at the Faculty of Physical education and health, their attitudes regarding the importance of theoretical knowledge may be influenced by the fact that they find this field of study as more practically oriented and don't manage to understand what the meaning of studying theoretical aspects is. Often students are mainly focused on practical application of knowledge, and in the first year of studies is more difficult to see how theoretical knowledge can be applied. The courses in first year of the study programs are usually general, introductory (their aim is to introduce the students with the field, but also to acquire some general knowledge, aimed at developing general competences), and are not in a high degree professionally oriented, which makes difficult for students to see their connectedness with practical application. The possibility of practical application and acquiring useable knowledge has great influence on motivation in the learning process. This can lead us to the conclusion that students are more practically oriented. In educational process, in order to achieve good results and to motivate students for learning, academic staff should pay attention on relating theoretical foundations and practical application of knowledge (and 'showing' that connection to the students) in order for students to see what is 'the meaning' and why they are studying some courses from the study curricula. Teachers have influence on student's motivation for work (Duda & Ntoumanis, 2003).

The second group of indicators were related with student's self-discipline for learning and participating in learning activities. The majority of students have expressed their orientation toward achieving high results in all the courses, and this is manifested through regular attendance of lectures, even in situations when students find them boring and not interesting. This persistence can be an indicator for student's motivation and self-discipline, because high level of self-discipline is an indicator of inner motivation and shows that student is oriented toward achieving defined long-term goas. Other studies on university students also confirmed that intrinsic motivated students have much better academic performance compared with their colleagues that are extrinsically motivated (Afsal et al, 2010). These students are able to focus on short-term activities, even if they are not seen as interesting or their meaning is not very relevant now, but they contribute in achieving bigger and more important goal in future. High-level of self-discipline is also noted in the studies with PE students from Bulgaria (Ignatov & Petkova, 2019). These shows the orientation of the person toward achieving long-term and meaningful goals and shows high level of inner motivation. Behaviors such as working hard, attending class, participating regularly, acknowledging others' efforts and receiving help from colleagues are encouraged and increases motivation (Kraus et al; 2009).

The last group included student's strive and motivation for extending personal knowledge. Results/obtained data have shown that more than 60% of the students aim at learning more and achieving better results. In this regard, they search for additional/supplementary sources of information, mainly search on internet or require additional sources from their professors, while at least used source is library. This is understandable and represent the shift from the approach where the professor was considered as the only source of information to the new one, where the student and his/her active involvement and participation in the teaching and learning process is crucial. Also, for today's students the use of Internet technology is central in their lives, and allows them to easily reach to all needed information.

Still, there is one part of students, around 30-35% that are not very motivated for extending their personal knowledge and are satisfied only with studying the required minimum needed in order to pass the exam. These students mainly don't search for additional sources to supplement their knowledge (help from professors, go to the library or use internet as additional source). These results show that still, not all students have high level of motivation for academic work and learning, and in this regard some individual differences between students have to be taken into consideration.

5. Conclusion

The study results represented different aspects of student's motivation for academic work that has huge impact on their academic achievement and development of professional competences. Based on study results, it can be concluded that students which participated in this research study are motivated for academic work and learning. These is manifested in their orientation toward achieving high results during the studies, archiving long – lasting knowledge, interest for contents that are subject of learning, self-discipline, persistence in fulfilling the required criteria, and striving toward extending personal knowledge and excellence through use of different sources.

In this regard, it should be taken into consideration that motivation is not related with general aspects such as type of study program, level of degree, gender, structure of curriculum. It is depending mainly from learners' personal characteristics and goal orientation. It is very closely related and determined by individual factors and every student is guided and motivated by different needs. Also, it should be underlined the importance of the academic staff, their teaching approach, communication with students. It is also closely relayed with the way the teaching process is organized and managed, as an external factor that influence on the level of motivation for academic work and learning.

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