



MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS RELATED TO THE CHOICE OF THE BACHELOR COURSE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The aim of the present study was to identify the motivations the led first- and second-year undergraduate students to enter the career of Physical Education and Sports and their expectations regarding the course and professional career.

Method: A qualitative and quantitative approach was used, which consisted of two phases: the formation of focus groups followed by analysis of the topics raised and, on the basis of these, the elaboration, application and analysis of individualized structured questionnaires.

Results: The greatest motivations observed were: previous involvement in sports practice, affinity for sports, and helping people/health promotion. The mean score for expectations about the course was 3.1, with first-year students showing significantly higher scores than second-year students regarding the following topics: need to opt for a specific area of the course ($p=0.0294$); expectations about the options in the area of activity ($p=0.0012$); and future financial reward ($p=0.0243$).

Conclusion: Affinity for the area and previous experience with physical activities are the main motivators to choice physical education as a career.

Keywords: physical education (students), motivations, focus group.

INTRODUCTION:

Various factors are related to the choice of a working activity or profession. The time of the choice of a profession by an individual is necessarily related to a motivation, - an intention generated by one or more elements, which some authors consider to possibly occur in a conscious or unconscious manner (Krug; Krug, 2008; Hurtado, 1983). In a phenomenological reading of motivation (Stein, 1999), the motive is something whereby an action is performed and includes all that, in some way, mobilizes the will. This mobilization may occur in an openly rational, or more conscious, manner or in a less conscious manner, without being thematically conceived by an individual, who does not clearly identify what leads him to act. Among these less thematically conceived elements are social and historical conditions, as well as affective, moral and cognitive involvement in such conditions. According to this possibility, the factors related to the choice of a professional career can be retranslated as subjective elements acting in a determinant manner on this decision. Thus, in contrast to the more external aspect related to them, these factors can be considered from an internalized perspective.

The difficulty observed in the definition of the professional profile seems to contribute to professional insecurity, with repercussions on the insertion in the job market. Undergraduate students who are aware of effective job pathways have the

ability to compare more rationally what is being required on the job market, considering the personal skills they possess (Werbel, 2000). Specifically regarding the professions in the health area, the social demands and the modern scientific development in this field have been essential, from an historical viewpoint, for the creation of careers such as nutrition, physiotherapy and nursing (Ojeda et al., 2009).

The choice of formation in Physical Education is usually based on practical experience with physical and sports activities, the main motive being the liking of sports (Krug, 2010; Becker, Ferreira e Krug, 1999). Other studies have shown that the main motivations for the choice of Physical Education as a profession are: liking the practice of physical and sports activities, the relation of the course with other health areas, an individual identification with the course, and also the experience with the physical education classes during basic education (Krug; Krug, 2008; Krug, 2010).

In view of the scarcity of studies involving specific surveys of the motivations and expectations related to the choice of the Physical Education career, in the present study, using qualitative and quantitative tools, we evaluated singular and shared aspects involved in the choice of this course among first- and second-year undergraduate students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was based on the ethical precepts of scientific

research on humans (HCRP #6289/2010), with preservation of confidentiality about the identity of the subjects studied, who gave written informed consent to participate.

The reference population of the present study consisted of 116 students enrolled in the Bachelor course of the School of Physical Education and Sports of Ribeirao Preto, University of Sao Paulo, in 2010.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative procedures were used in the present study, which consisted of two stages: first, determination and analysis of topics surveyed by means of focus group dynamics and, based on the data obtained in the first stage, elaboration, application and quantitative analysis of the individual questionnaires as a whole.

Focus Groups

In the first stage, a spontaneous sample of 16 students (eight first-year and 8 second-year students of the course) was formed after the subjects were invited and gave written informed consent to participate in the study. The subjects were organized into two focus groups, one of first-year students (group 1) and the other of second-year students (group 2), on separate days. The sample corresponded to 17% of the number of students (a total of 47 students in each classroom on the day when the invitations were presented).

The dynamics of focus groups is similar to that of a group interview, usually consisting of 8 to 10 collaborators in each group with homogeneous characteristics which, in the present study, were class and year of entering the course. In each group there was a moderator who led the discussions and an assistant who observed and recorded the most significant points during the session. The duration of the focus groups was 94 and 96 minutes for groups 1 and 2, respectively. In addition to the notes taken by the moderator and the assistant, the entire discussion was audio-taped, with later transcription and analysis. The discussion was stimulated and led by the moderator based on a guide script of open questions and/or statements which invited the participants to position themselves regarding their motivations in the choice of the course and their expectations about it. The guiding questions were: 1) What led you to opt for the career of physical education and sports?; 2) What do you expect from the course?; 3) What do you expect from the job market and the professional career? Interventions and conceptions that had not been predefined but that were faithful to the central interest of the research were used to guide the dynamics of the focus group. In this respect, the objective of these interventions was to clarify statements which were only partially understood or were obscure, following the phenomenological orientation of bringing to light the meaning of the thematic subject in order to make it understood inter-subjectively. These indications about the development of focus groups agree with the discussions presented by Carlini-Cotrim (1996), Krueger (2006), Wibeck, Dahlgren and Öberg (2007), Ressel et al. (2008), Mooney, Glacken and O'Brien (2008), Leung and Savithiri (2009), and Ojeda et al. (2009).

Structured Questionnaire

The results regarding the motivations and expectations about the course obtained in the focus groups permitted the

elaboration of the instrument for data collection during the second phase of the investigation (individualized questionnaire). Specifically, the transcribed material was submitted to qualitative analysis based on an initial reading and synthesis of the data reported, and to the elaboration of more expressive thematic categories. This initial analytical process, as well as the development of the focus group itself, followed the precepts of phenomenological orientation, i.e., an attitude devoted to the experiences of the students, permitting a closer contact with the subjective content related to the research subject (Ales, Bello, 2006). These contents related to the motivations and expectations about the course were used as reference for the elaboration of the questionnaire with 10 questions with closed alternatives of the second phase of the study.

In addition, the questionnaire contained informative questions regarding the characterization of the students: sex, age, year of entry, socioeconomic level, and the educational level and profession of their parents (Figure 1). The questionnaires were applied to all students of each year of the course, including those participating in the focus groups.

The questionnaire was elaborated with a question related to motivations (number 1) and nine questions related to the expectations about the course (numbers 2 to 10). The replies to questions, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, with point 1 corresponding to "without importance" and point 5 to "very important" (Oppenheim, 1966).

The data were tabulated and submitted to descriptive statistical analysis and to comparison of the scores by the nonparametric Mann-Whitney test and to comparison of the frequency of responses by the Chi-square test (Graph Pad 5.0 software, Prism, San Diego, CA), with the level of significance set at $P < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Ninety-four students responded to the questionnaire proposed, 47 of them first year students and 47 second-year students, on separate days. None of the students had difficulty in understanding and filling out the questionnaire.

Based on the focus groups, it was possible to define the topics that emerged at higher frequency during the meetings. Within the context of the first question, referring to the motivations for the choice of the course, the main topics were: previous involvement in sports practice, health promotion and helping people by means of the profession, complementation of a previous career, low competition for positions in the course, idealism, affinity for sports, and influence of friends and family.

Based on the options of question 1, the greatest motivations were: previous involvement in sports practice (80.9% and 78.7%), affinity for sports (78.7% and 74.5%), and helping people /health promotion (48.9% and 51.0%, respectively, for the first and second year of the course). Among second-year students, more regularity was observed in the concomitant choice of the first or second motivation with the third one than among first year students ($p < 0.0001$; Chi-square test). The frequency of responses related to all the other motivational topics was less than 10%.

Considering the 5 point scale, with point 1 corresponding to “without importance” and point 5 corresponding to “very important”, the mean score related to the expectations with the course was positive (3.1), being 3.2 and 3.0 for the first and second year of the course, respectively. Regarding these expectations, the quantitative comparison of the responses showed significantly higher scores for first year students than second year students only for the following questions: question 5 – greater expectation with the need to opt for a specific area of the course ($p=0.0294$); question 8 – greater expectations with the options of the area of activity ($p=0.0012$); and question 10 – greater expectations regarding future financial reward ($p=0.0243$). There was no significant difference in the analysis of all other factors studied with the questionnaire (Figure 2). Details of the general results on both motivation and expectations are presented in Table 1.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, the study consisted of two stages: a more properly qualitative stage regarding data collection (focus groups) and analysis that permitted to identify the emerging topics and assign them to expressive categories, and a quantitative stage in which the categories were arranged on forms, application of the latter, and quantitative analysis. The interdependence of the two research stages permits to perform a return from the latter to the former, permitting the interpretation of the data as meaningful data.

The focus group procedure has been widely used in investigations of a qualitative nature in different areas, especially the health area (Resell et al., 2008; Carlini-Cotrim, 1996). This method has also been used in previous studies similar to the present one (Ojeda et al., 2009; Mooney, Glackens and O'Brien, 2008). In addition, as stated by Bradbury-Jones, Sam brook and Irvine (2009), holding focus group procedures does not contradict a phenomenological orientation of the investigation, so that it is possible to identify singularities at the time of narrative sharing in a group. Considering the second phase of the study, formulation of the questionnaire, the analytical direction chosen was to identify thematic generalities sufficiently specific so that they would encompass the particularities of all the motivations manifested during the focus groups. Thus, in the focus group process, the stimulus of singular manifestation of the motivations to enter the career of Physical Education and Sports favoured the individuation of elements with these characteristics (generality/specificity) inserted in the questionnaire applied.

Previous involvement in the practice of sports or of some physical activity, the main motivation reported (by 79.8% of the students), is illustrated by the following sentence: “I chose Physical Education because I always played sports” (a student of Focus Group 1). Another example was: “when I was a child I played lots of sports, even too much. I played volleyball, I was a swimmer and also danced jazz” (a female student of Focus Group 2). There were variations regarding previous involvement, not exclusively involving sports, but also physical exercises such as body building or street games. Regarding affinity for the practice, the same variations between sport modalities, recreational games and physical exercises should also be pointed out.

The alternatives related to affinity for sports, previous practice of some sport or physical activity and health promotion/helping people were marked by different experiences reported by the subjects in the focus groups. It is interesting to note that, even though the Focus Group favored and stimulated the expression of one's experiences, the dynamic of the reports of the subjects did not delve deeply into the description of these experiences and of how they were, being simply based on the fact that their personal histories were marked by their previous experience and their affinity for given practices. This seemed to correspond to the difficulty inherent to the description of eminently bodily experiences such as sports and physical activities, as pointed out by Stelter (2000). Despite the similarity of the first and second alternatives, there was a reason for them to be inserted separately in the questionnaire. The affinity for sports may be marked by an experience of fascination with sports, as described by Gumbrecht (2007), a fact that sometimes is not associated with a significant previous practice.

An excerpt of the report of a student from Focus Group 1 also demonstrates this relation between previous involvement and motivation to enter the area. “I played volleyball a lot for a long period of time and during the training, especially for championships, winning or losing gave me a sensation that I am looking for in Physical Education. (...) The primordial factor was to try to look for this sensation. Also, it is not simply a matter of sport, but the possibility that you, as a professional, will provide a formation as a human being to members of future generations”. This excerpt demonstrates the methodological path covered by this study, since the topics inserted in the questionnaire and analyzed quantitatively in the second stage were based on the experiences reported by the students in the focus groups.

In thesis, during childhood everybody plays and is involved in activities, games and sports. Thus, simply stating that previous experience with physical activity leads persons to enter the course does not satisfy the understanding of this object since, even if this experience is widely disseminated in childhood and youth, physical education and sports are not the area of greater formation of professionals. The intensity of previous experience may favour this understanding in a satisfactory manner as long as it is articulated with meaning attributed to such experience. In this respect, it seems that the most significant articulation resides in the recognition of the relation between personal affinity in previous experiences and the general purposes of physical education. Thus, we cannot overlook the intimacy between motivation and expectations, interlinked phenomena that permit us to understand the option for the career in an more comprehensive manner. The meaning of what motivates comes necessarily from something that precedes the action (option) and from something that succeeds it, i.e., the anticipation of its result or the projection of the action. Thus, even though previous experience alone is not sufficient to predict a determinant motive in the personal negotiations about opting for a career, the integration of this experience with its future projection determines this motive in a more secure manner. The results obtained trace a predominant profile of this integration among the students of Physical Education and Sports.

Thus, the significance attributed to the intensity experienced permits to understand the meaning of this option beyond the mere execution of physical and sport exercises, a widely disseminated notion regarding this area, stimulating a more extensive search for training, in contrast to a more technical formation. An example related to the option of affinity for sports is: "I decided to compete for Physical Education mainly because I am fascinated with sports. (...) I saw in sports not only a question of doing exercise, but something more, i.e. teaching, learning values, and a form of experience" (a student of Focus Group 1).

This in-depth analysis is important for the future professional life of Physical Education professionals. Santini & Molina Neto (2005), when discussing the syndrome of professional burn-out within the context of physical education, emphasize that "if the choice of a profession was not conscious and coherent with one's personal interests, the profession may be exercised with little motivation and situations of discomfort and frustration may arise along the professional journey that may paralyze and depress the professional, with many personal and social implications". As a way to get rid of possible frustrations, people tend to discard from their horizon what appears to be inaccessible to them. Within this context, "the choice of a profession is determined by the chances of success perceived by a person" (Bordieu, 1998, apud Krug, 2010).

The expectations of the students were based on opinions about the course, the career and the job market and did not show a strict connection with the experiences of the subjects, whose importance was clear when we consider the quantitative result of the motivations analyzed in the structured questionnaire. The scores observed for the questions related to expectations about the course were high, except for the question about the expectations regarding the class hours destined to practical activities, which the students, and especially the first-year ones, considered to be fewer than expected.

First-year students showed higher rates of positive expectations related to the need to opt for a specific course area, to the possibilities of choosing various options of activity, and to future financial performance. First-year students are believed to have more optimistic and less delimited expectations, aiming at more specific or specialized professional activities. These opinions seem to reflect the fact that they still know few details of the career from an academic or professional viewpoint compared to second year students. This interpretation is supported by the observation of expressions that reflected a greater conceptual foundation on the part of second-year students during the focus group dynamics.

It is interesting to mention that most second-year students opted for the health area for their professional activity, in contrast to what was observed for first-year students, who predominantly chose the sports area. This finding suggests that first-year students have expectations resting more on the influence preceding the course (described in the motivations) while second-year students process their expectations on the basis of the new motivations incorporated into the academic milieu in which they have been inserted for a longer time. This hypothesis could be verified with new empirical data that would permit to find out if changes would occur in the expectations of the students who were in their first year at the

time of the study, when they reach the second year. The influence of the academic contest seems to also permeate the findings regarding the expectation of preparation received with the course, since most of the students of both years feel they are prepared to act in the research area.

In addition, as previously mentioned regarding the professions in the health area, the social demands and scientific development were reported to be important for the differentiation of careers such as nutrition, physiotherapy and nursing (Ojeda et al., 2009). Close relations are observed between these careers and health practice (Ojeda et al., 2009), with an intimate link to medical practice. It is commonly possible to perceive preferred interests regarding the medical career. A study conducted by Sousa e Silva (2001), whose results were presented by Ojeda et al. (2009), on university students regarding professional prestige showed that medicine was identified as the career of highest prestige, while physiotherapy ranked sixth and nursing eighth. According to the authors, these results indicate the need to expand the understanding of the meaning of the professional career related to the health area that has to be chosen on the part of the professionals, students and the population in general.

Concluding, the present study demonstrated the affinity for, and previous experience with physical activities as the greatest motivators related to the choice of the physical education course. In addition, the study pointed out a greater influence of a local course on the expectations of the choice of a field of activity among second-year students, who also had less optimistic and more delimited expectations.

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Table 1. Distribution of the replies regarding the motivations (question 1) and expectations (questions 2 to 10) of the first- and second-year students of the course of Physical Education and Sports.

	1 st year students	2 nd year students
Question1 (Motivations)	Number of replies (%)	
Affinity for sports	37 (78.7%)	35 (74.5%)
Previous sports practice	38 (80.9%)	37 (78.7%)
Low demand for the course	3 (6.4%)	5 (10.6%)
Promotion of health	23 (48.9%)	24 (51.1%)
Influence of friends	3 (6.4%)	4 (8.5%)
Influence of the Family	3 (6.4%)	7 (14.9%)
Idealism	6 (12.8%)	5 (10.6%)
Academic complementation	0	0
Others	1 (2.1%)	3 (6.4%)
Questions 2 to 10 (Expectations)	Scores*/Frequency of replies**	
2. Theoretical workload of the course	3.9	4.1
3. Practical workload of the course	1.7	1.8
4. Choice of the area of activity **		
Sports	21/47	22/47
Health	16/47	24/47
5. Need to opt for an area	3.3 [#]	2.7 [#]
6. Preparation of the area of activity **		
Practical	21/47	15/47
Teaching	5/47	5/47
Research	23/47	25/47
7. Job market	2.6	2.9
8. Dimension of the options of activity	4.1 [#]	3.4 [#]
9. Chances of a job related to the present teaching institution	3.5	3.4
10. Satisfactory income	3.4 [#]	2.9 [#]

[#]: $p < 0.05$; *: not applicable to questions 4 and 6; **: questions that did not follow the Likert scale.

Figure 1

MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE – COURSE OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS

1. Motivation(s) for choosing the Bachelor course of Physical Education and Sports.

() Affinity for sports
 () Family influence
 () Previous practice of some sport or physical activity
 () Idealism
 () Low cutoff note for the entry exam
 () Complimentation of previous academic training
 () Helping people/Health promotion
 () Friends' influence
 () Others: (please specify)

2. Considering your expectations in the Bachelor course of Physical Education and Sports, the workload is:

1: too small, 2: less than expected, 3: as expected, 4: a little more than expected, 5: much more than expected.

1	2	3	4	5
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3. Considering your expectations, the practical workload of the Bachelor course of Physical Education and Sports is:

1: too small, 2: less than expected, 3: as expected, 4: a little more than expected, 5: much more than expected.

1	2	3	4	5
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4. You intend to choose the area of:

() Sports
 () Health
 () Does not know

5. Do you consider the need to opt for an area during the course to be:

1. Inadequate to 5. Very adequate

1	2	3	4	5
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6. Based on what you have been taught thus far and on the curriculum of the next few years, do you think that at the end of the Course you will be better prepared to act in: (If you opt for more than one item, rank them with numbers)

() professional practice
 () teaching
 () research

7. Do you think that at the end of the course you will find that the job market is

1. Saturated to 5. Open

1	2	3	4	5
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8. Do you think that the options of activity in the area are:

1. Restricted to 5 Ample

1	2	3	4	5
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9. Will the fact that you are studying in USP facilitate your chances of entering the Job Market?

1. I fully disagree 5. I fully agree

1	2	3	4	5
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10. Your expectations regarding a satisfactory income in the exercise of the profession are:

1. Very low to 5. Very high (Financially)

1	2	3	4	5
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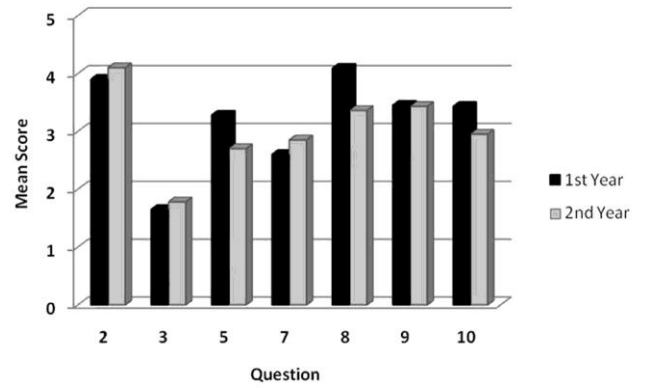


Figure 2. Distribution of the mean scores for the replies to the questionnaire recorded on the Likert scale.

Figure 1. Questionnaire applied to the students of the course of Physical Education and Sports based on the topics raised in the focus groups.