

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION STUDENTS' CAREER PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS TOWARDS LABOUR MARKET

Andrzej PARA<sup>ABEFG</sup>, Anna PARA<sup>CDEF</sup>

*Faculty of Physical Education, University of Rzeszow*

---

### Keywords:

- career planning
- labour market
- motivation
- physical education

### Abstract:

**Introduction:** Currently sports activities and physical education are getting more and more popular in Poland. Therefore, in the sports industry there is a growing demand for skilled and well-educated employees, equipped with expertise in the field of physical education. **The aim of the work:** The main objective of the study was to identify why students decide to take on physical education studies as well as to determine their expectations towards future job and career. **The material and the methodology:** The research was conducted in January 2015 at Physical Education Department. As many as 72 students enrolled in physical education studies at Rzeszow University participated in the research. The applied research tool was a questionnaire survey. **Results:** The most important factor that affected the candidates' decision to enroll the studies in the field of physical education were their interests and hobbies (94% of responses). The majority of the students are convinced that they have chosen the right field of study. The vast majority of respondents (69%) want to work in the sector related to physical education. **Conclusions:** Physical education studies are quiet popular among students. However, the number of students is decreasing. The students' decision to enroll in physical education studies are driven mostly by their interests. Unfortunately, they may face some difficulties on the labour market because of intense competition among graduates.

---

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays physical activity is considered to be one of the most crucial elements of a healthy lifestyle. It has an impact not only on physical health, but also on mental health and well-being. According to the World Health Organization insufficient physical activity is the fourth most important factor, responsible for premature deaths and high mortality rates in the world [Konkluzje Rady... 2012]

Unfortunately, Poland is among the nations with a moderate level of physical activity. According to the data collected in 2012 as much as 61% of respondents said they never or almost never take up physical activities such as exercise or gymnastics, 47% avoids activities such as running, swimming, cycling [CBOS 2013]. Luckily, this trend is changing for the better and sports and recreation industry is developing rapidly.

It can be observed that there are more and more participants in sports mass events (including running contests, cycling marathons, etc.) What is more, the sports and recreation infrastructure is getting more developed and well-equipped, eg. there are more and more outdoor gyms in municipal parks as well as more fitness clubs and sports centers, clubs and associations. Undoubtedly, sports are getting popular thanks to success and popularity of Polish athletes, who achieved international success (eg. R. Lewandowski, M. Kwiatkowski,

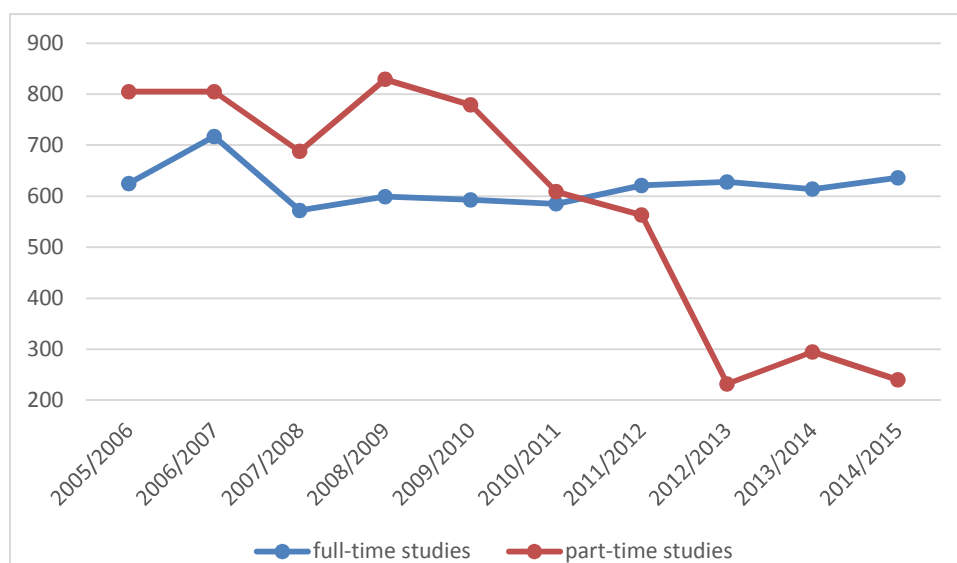
A. Radwanska, K. Stoch, M. Włoszczowska) as well as thanks to celebrities promoting healthy lifestyles (eg. E. Chodakowska, A. Lewandowska).

Consequently, more amateurs want to train sports on a higher level. People involved in various sports disciplines decide to buy professional equipment as well as train under the guidance of coaches and professional trainers. The increase in popularity of sport and recreation, as well as the emergence of a growing number of sports facilities contribute to increased demand for skilled professionals.

The sport industry can work effectively only if there are the competent and experienced workers (eg. personal trainers, sports instructors) equipped with expertise in the field of physical education. Physical education as a field of study is quiet popular among students in Poland. In the academic year 2013/2014 there were 25,3 thousand people studying at the physical education academies [GUSa 2014].

In the last years, academies of physical education strengthened it position, providing education for teachers, coaches and recreation specialists. For decades, academies of physical education had a monopoly on the training of personnel for the sports industry's needs. This situation changed drastically, when other universities introduced physical education courses in their educational offer. In the academic year 2000/2001, there were 30 universities that offered studies in the field of physical education, while in 2009/2010 there were already 43 institutions, including 20 non-public [Buchta 2014]. Academic studies in the field of physical education in Poland are offered mainly in the academies of physical education. Currently, there are six schools of this type located in Warsaw, Krakow, Poznan, Gdansk, Wroclaw and Katowice. Besides, the physical education can be studied in 27 other institutions (including universities and state higher vocational schools).

There are 2 public institutions offering studies in the field of physical education in Podkarpackie Voivodeship. University of Rzeszow is now leading in terms of number of students. Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Rzeszow was established in 2005, although the beginnings date back to 1988 [Rzeszutko-Polak, Zaborniak 2015]. Currently, Faculty of Physical Education offers a choice of 4 specialties: health coach, coaching module, personal trainer, instructor of sport. Since 2005 the studies have been very popular among students. The chart below presents the number of students enrolled in physical education studies over the period 2005-2015.



**Fig. 1.** Number of students enrolled in physical education studies in the period of 2005-2015  
Source: [Rzeszutko-Polak, Zaborniak 2015]

In the academic year 2005/2006 there were in total 1430 students enrolled in physical education course. Since the academic year 2008/2009 the number of students has begun to decline. In the academic year 2014/2015 there were 876 students enrolled in physical education studies at University of Rzeszow. Interestingly, the number of students enrolled in part-time studies changed drastically over the years. In the academic year 2014/2015 73% students were enrolled in the full-time studies, only 27% studied during the weekends (part-time studies).

Knowing that physical education studies were popular among students, the authors wanted to discover why did candidates decide to study at this faculty and to check if they are satisfied with the studies. Moreover, the authors strived to gather information about student's expectations towards labour market as well as to get to know their career plans.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

The survey was conducted in January 2015 at the University of Rzeszow. The study was conducted with use of diagnostic survey. The main reason for choosing this technique was its low cost, high response rate and uncomplicated research process [Kędzior 2005].

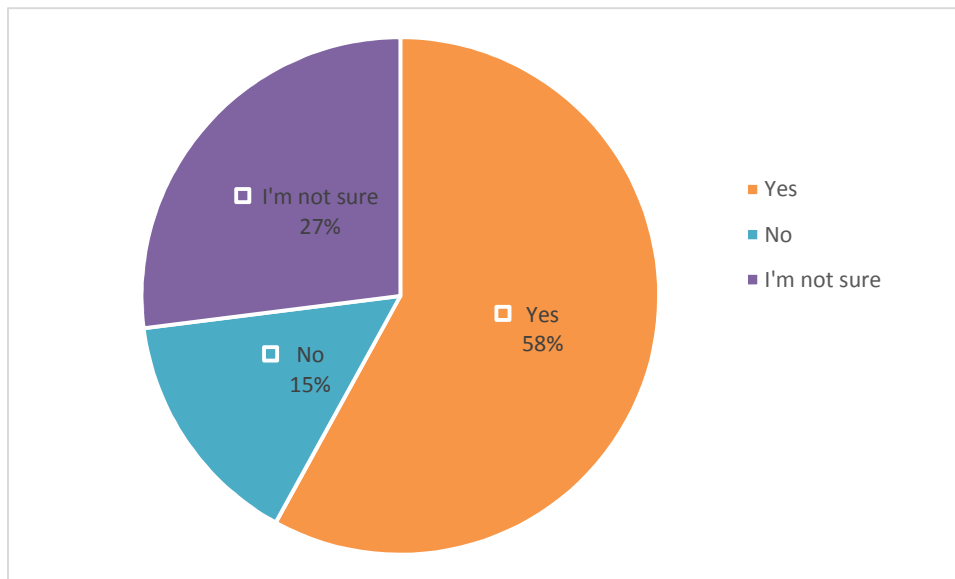
The authors managed to interview 72 physical education students, who were enrolled in the second year of Master studies. The study group accounted for 64% of all students enrolled in the second year of Master studies. 69% of respondents were men, whereas the average age of respondents was 23.8 years.

The authors decided to conduct research at the University of Rzeszow because of two reasons. Firstly, it is the largest public university offering a degree in physical education in Podkarpackie Voivodeship. Secondly, University of Rzeszow is the only institution offering both Bachelor and Master studies.

## **RESULTS**

One of the most important questions referred to the decision the students made when choosing a studies course. The study showed that the most important factor that affected the candidates' decision were their interests and hobbies (94% of responses). The relatively less important factors were parents' and friends' opinions and suggestions (18%). Surprisingly, only 15% respondents claimed that they hoped to find an attractive job after the studies. Only 8% of respondents stated that physical education was not the field of study they wanted to study, but they enrolled because of the fact that they did not get into another field of study. A few respondents (8%) indicated that their decision was driven by the popularity of physical education studies. It seems that the main and most important reason for choosing physical education as a field of study were interests, hobbies and passions, whereas other factors had weaker impact.

The authors wanted to check students' satisfaction with studies and asked them to indicate if they would choose again physical education as a field of study if they had another chance to decide. The figure 1 presents the student's answers.



**Fig. 2.** Students' opinion on the decision about choosing physical education as a main field of study (n=72)  
Source: authors' elaboration.

As Figure 2 shows, the majority of the students are convinced that they have chosen the right field of study and they would choose it again. Only 15% of respondents (11 people) do regret this decision. More than a quarter (27%) of students indicated the answer "I'm not sure", what suggests that they are not fully content with physical education studies or the studies did not meet their expectations. Further research could investigate the reasons for their dissatisfactions as well as potential improvements. It is worth mentioning that the decision, which field of study to choose, was made 4.5 years earlier. It is probable that students changed their opinion with time. Interestingly when compared to tourism and recreations students, as much as 71% of students would not choose the same study again [Para, Para 2015]. It seems that physical education students are much more satisfied and content with their studies than their colleagues studying tourism and recreation at Rzeszow University.

Next question concerned the students' readiness to enter the labour market. As many as 71% of respondents believe that they are well or very well prepared to enter the labour market, whereas only 5% of respondents claim that they are not prepared to start a career. One in five respondents could not assess their chances and pointed to answer "I do not know".

At the time when the study was conducted (January 2015) 42% of respondents did not have a permanent job, 11% of respondents (8 students) were employed full-time and 21% (15 students) worked part-time (21%). Every fourth respondent declared that they work casually, from time to time. Taking into account the fact that the respondents were students enrolled in the last year of full-time studies, they still can postpone entering the labour market till the moment of obtaining a Master's degree. Only then, it will be possible to fully examine their employability.

The vast majority of respondents (69%) want to work in the sector related to physical education, 10% of respondents (7 people) have already been working for the sports industry. Almost one fifth of respondents (18%) do not bind their future career with physical education.. Students seem to be pessimistic about finding a job related to their education. Only 8% of respondents said that they will find the right job. Almost half of respondents (45%) are confident that they will find a job, but not necessarily related to physical education. On the other hand, 35% of respondents expect difficulties with finding any employment. 9% of students students were not able to assess their chances on the labor market.

Students' career plans were verified by asking, what profession do they want to work in. They could indicate up to three proposals. The answers were various, mostly related to sports

industry. Some respondents indicated professions related to other sectors and industries eg. banker, baby-sitter, sales representative etc. As mentioned before, 20% of students do not plan to work in sports industry. Many respondents (27 students) were interested to work for uniformed services and plan to work as a policeman, fireman, professional soldier or border guard. Undoubtedly these kind of professions require a good physical condition and stamina to perform the job effectively. When it comes to occupations related to the physical education and sports industry, students indicated the following:

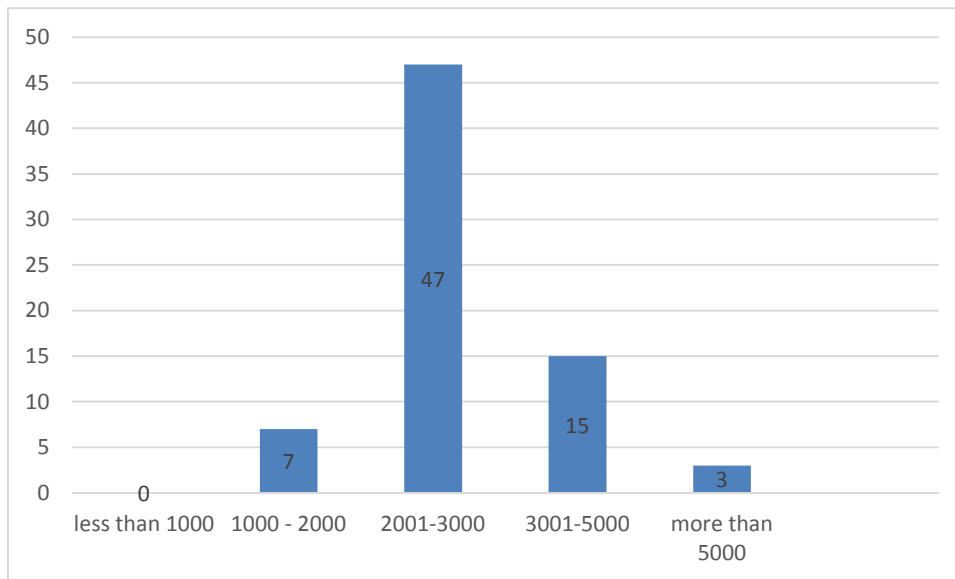
- sports instructor (handball, bodybuilding, swimming, fitness) - 20 indications,
- sports trainer (personal trainer, football, basketball, swimming) - 23 indications,
- physical education teacher - 46 indications.

More than half of respondents (57%) would like to work in the public sector. This result is consistent with previous declaration, because many respondents aspire to work in schools as a physical education teacher or in the uniformed service. For 20% of the students surveyed, the type of future employer is not important. Only 7% of respondents indicated that they want to work in their own company, whereas 11% of the respondents would like to work in the private sector, in small or medium-sized companies, while 2% of respondents intend to work in a big corporation.

Undoubtedly, the graduates' success on the labour market is determined by the methods they use to search for a job. It is advisable to search for employment using various methods. The students surveyed pointed 3 ways or methods they use when looking for a job. The most common source of information indicated by the students was Internet (29 responses). Undoubtedly, this is one of the cheapest and fastest methods. It is not a surprise that young generation Y (called also digital natives) perceives Internet as an easy and comfortable tool. There are numerous portals and websites, where many job offerings are published everyday. The greatest advantage of this solution is the fact that the websites can be checked and used at home [Kalinowska 2009]. The respondents often use the help of family, relatives and friends in the process of looking for a job (23 responses). Some respondents indicated that they will use the labour office services (14 responses). Students consider also using the advertisement published in newspapers and magazines (13 responses). Only three people admitted that they want to use career center located at the university. Alarmingly, 22 students admitted that they have never thought about it and have no idea.

Students are aware of the fact that they might need to relocate in order to find a job. Some of them have plans to leave Rzeszow after graduation. Almost one third of students (32%) plan to return to their hometowns, whereas 14% consider moving to another city in Poland. Migration to another country is also an option to consider, 15% of respondents want to move out from Poland. The majority respondents (39%) want to stay Rzeszow after finishing their studies.

One of the most important issues regarding future employment is the salary expectation. Respondents were asked to indicate how much do they want to earn in the first job after finishing the studies (net amount/month). The results are presented in the chart below.



**Fig. 3.** Students' expectations towards future salary, net/month (n=72)  
Source: authors' elaboration

Every 10th respondent pointed out that the satisfactory salary amounts to 1001-2000 Polish zloty (PLN). As many as 55% of respondents would be satisfied with the salary that amounts to 2001 – 3000 PLN. 21% of surveyed has higher expectations towards future earnings, they would like to earn in the range of 3001-5000 PLN. Three students (4% of respondents) indicated that the satisfactory salary should be higher than 5000 PLN. According to the data published by Central Statistic Office, the average monthly salary In Poland in the third quarter of 2014 amounted to 3781,14 PLN and to 3434,15 PLN (gross values) in Podkarpackie Voivodeship [GUSb 2014]. It can be estimated that the worker employed on contract of employment, would earn about 2700 PLN and 2460 PLN net. In conclusion, the respondents' expectations regarding the future salary are realistic. However, it should be noted that salaries for freshly-graduated employees may be lower than the average salary.

## CONCLUSION

Physical education studies are quiet popular among candidates. However, the number of students is decreasing. One of the reasons for that might be the fact that higher education is not obligatory to work as trainer or sports instructor. Secondly, there are generally less students because of low birth rate.

The students' decision to enroll in physical education studies are driven mostly by their interests. Unfortunately, they may face some difficulties on the labour market because of intense competition among graduates. The majority of students seem to have well-prepared career plans. Interestingly, students want to work not only in sports business but also for uniformed service. This information should be taken into account to adjust the curriculum that is focused more on sports issues, rather than on skills and competences needed to perform work in other sectors. All in all, students career plans will be verified on the labour market. It is advisable to survey the same group of respondents after they graduate and enter the labour market.

The conducted study has several weaknesses and limitations that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the authors surveyed only students of one university located in Podkarpackie Voivodeship. The nature of the sample limits generalizability of the results. It would be advisable to include all the physical education students in the region or even in the country. Secondly, the research was conducted among students of the second year of full-time studies. Moreover, several opportunities for future

research can be identified. A better understanding of students' expectations and plans for career development in the sports industry is surely the major contribution. It would be worth to conduct similar survey on a bigger students group also at other universities. Interesting findings could be produced by repeating the survey after the students enter the labour market. Future research should seek for insights into these areas.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Buchta K., (2013), Badanie i ocena jakości kształcenia na kierunku wychowanie fizyczne w wybranych akademiach wychowania fizycznego, WWFiS w Białej Podlaskiej, Biała Podlaska.
2. CBOS. Polacy o swoim zdrowiu oraz prozdrowotnych zachowaniach i aktywnościach 2012, [http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2013/K\\_129\\_13.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2013/K_129_13.PDF) (access Dec 2015).
3. GUSa, Obwieszczenie w sprawie przeciętnego miesięcznego wynagrodzenia w województwach w trzecim kwartale 2014r. <http://stat.gov.pl/sygnalne/komunikaty-i-obwieszczenia/lista-komunikatow-i-obwieszczen/obwieszczenie-w-sprawie-przecietnego-miesiecznego-wynagrodzenia-w-wojewodztwach-w-trzecim-kwartale-2014-r-,277,2.html> (access Dec. 2015).
4. GUSb, Szkoły wyższe i ich finanse w 2013 r., Warszawa 2014.
5. Kalinowska, B., (2009), *Perspektywy i oczekiwania ludzi młodych wobec pierwszej pracy*, „Polityka Gospodarcza”, nr 17–18.
6. Kędzior, Z. (ed.), (2005), *Badania rynku. Metody, zastosowania*, PWE, Warszawa.
7. Konkluzje Rady i przedstawicieli rządów państw członkowskich zebranych w Radzie z dnia 27 listopada 2012 r. w sprawie propagowania aktywności fizycznej sprzyjającej zdrowiu (2012), DzUUEC393/07 z 19.12.2012, p.22, <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2012:393:0022:0025:PL:PDF>, (access Dec. 2015).
8. Para A., Para A., (2015), *Motywy podejmowania studiów oraz oczekiwania i plany zawodowe studentów kierunku turystyka i rekreacja*, „Kształcenie kadr dla gospodarki turystycznej i rekreacji: stan obecny i prognozy”, (ed.) S. Bosiacki, AWF Poznań, Poznań.
9. Rzeszutko-Polak A., Zaborniak S., (2015), 10-lecie Wydziału Wychowania Fizycznego Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów.