

DYNAMICS OF VALUES HELD BY FUTURE SPORTS TEACHERS: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The dynamics of personal values and values pertaining to the meaning of life held by future sport teachers was investigated. The two surveys used were the Rokeach Value Survey for identification of the most important personal values and the Leontiev Life Meaning Orientations Test for the evaluation of values pertaining to the meaning of life (defined as ideas about life goals, processes, results and control of life circumstances). The cohort study model was used, and a representative number of students were surveyed during their first year of study (N=168) and then four years later during their fourth year of study (N=154). The research findings revealed that 'material well-being' (financially secure lifestyle) and 'public recognition' (respect and authority) were the most important values at the fourth-year level ($p<0.05$) compared their first-year. 'Clear life goals' was the value pertaining to the meaning of life that was most significant to future sport teachers in their fourth year of study compared to them during their first year.

Key words: Values; Personal values; Values orientations; Future sport teachers.

INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on discovering the dynamics of values held by future sport teachers by means of a longitudinal study. Several scientific studies have been published in Lithuania, and these suggest changes in values in the fields of religion, family, work and politics (Ziliukaite, 2000a, 2000b; Mitrikas, 2005; Ziliukaite, 2007, 2008). These studies focused on the influence of age on value tendencies.

At the turn of the 21st century, an analysis of changes in family values was completed (Mitrikas, 2000). It was reported that the younger residents (persons between the ages of 15 and 30 years) of Lithuania had a more liberal attitude towards family and marriage. The younger Lithuanians linked successful marital life with the financial prosperity of the family more often and focused less on qualities such as faithfulness, mutual respect and understanding and tolerance, when compared with older respondents. The analysis of their social and political values revealed that compared to the younger Lithuanians, they supported political decisions of the government more (Ziliukaite, 2007, 2008). The younger residents of Lithuania also had stronger attitudes of civic morale and tendencies towards ethical and moral values, such as sense of duty, care for the well-being of others, solidarity with groups who experience social isolation, etc. (Ziliukaite & Ramonaite, 2006).

Values are defined as abstract concepts that describe what individual's desire or seek to achieve. Values characterise human behaviour and facilitate the development of a person's personality. They also regulate human relationships. Personal values and values pertaining to the meaning of life were analysed in this study because they are value premises that are defined as the most general conceptions of desirable and undesirable modes, means and ends of action (Albert, 1956). Personal values define the worth of an individual's being and the importance of an individual's personal beliefs. The most important personal values are ideas about what is most important in life and provide internal reference for what is good, beneficial, useful, desirable, constructive, etc. Values pertaining to the meaning of life are defined as ideas about life goals, processes, results and control of life circumstances.

Some studies (Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Mitrikas, 2005) have shown that the underlying values of individuals continue to shape themselves until young adulthood and subsequently change little. Therefore, the values that are recognised by the younger generation as essential will be the ones they follow later in life. These values will in turn shape a society. The dynamics of the value priorities of the younger generation reflect the status of and changes within an entire society. Regular and systematic research of student values, as in the present research, those of future sport teachers, is necessary because there has been a recent emphasis on problematic issues related to the academic values of teachers in higher educational institutions, since the teachers were less satisfied with their labour conditions and communication with students (Paterson, 2003; Sukys *et al.*, 2006).

Scientists have analysed the attitudes of students towards values (Cileli, 2000; Knox *et al.*, 2001; Greybeck *et al.*, 2004; McCollum, 2005; Longerbeam & Sedlacek, 2006; Jaakson, 2008). Much attention is paid to the moral values of students (sensitivity, responsibility, dutifulness and fairness), spiritual values, as well as academic and family values. However, the number of studies dedicated to analysing the values of future sport teachers is limited. Research studies have been conducted (Sukys *et al.*, 2007; Sukys, 2008) on the professionalism of future physical education and sport specialists by assessing their attitude towards moral values in sport (respect for others, honesty, cooperation, self-sacrifice), but these values have yet to be analysed further. Therefore, the scientific issue remains: What are the dynamics of the values of future sport teachers at the beginning of the 21st century? The problem of changes in value priorities is not understood well enough at this point, especially in the Baltic States. Also, the results of the research carried out thus far are rather contradictory. For instance, Jaakson (2008) found that study time had no influence on the perception of values by students, but some studies (Malinauskas, 2006a; Vihalemm & Kalmus, 2008) have observed that the values of financial well-being of the fourth-year students is strengthening.

This problem becomes more relevant against the background of globalisation and Euro-integrating processes and their influence on the values of society. It takes a long time for values to be shaped and matured, as they are under the influence of various internal (personal experience) and external factors (globalisation), which are constantly in a state of change.

The present research about the dynamics of the values of future sport teachers does not lose its relevancy, because during the period of youth changes take place rapidly. Furthermore, the educational function of sport has recently been emphasised as a means of relaying human

values and is a factor in the way sport activities change the value system (Perenyi, 2010). According to Perenyi (2010), sport activities may influence both physical development and personal value orientation. It is said that sport have an independent subculture and values that are different from general values recognised by society (Joyner & Mummery, 2006). However, a recent assumption has been made that behaviour plays a significant role during combat sport (Malinauskas, 2006a). If during training sessions and competitions the first values to be promoted and supported are humanistic ones (health, physical development and human communication), it is possible that a player coached by that future sport teacher will also focus on them (Malinauskas, 2006a). Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the values held by future sport teachers (Sniras & Malinauskas, 2005; Murphy *et al.*, 2011).

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The present research could make a novel contribution to the literature by revealing the dynamics of the values of future sport teachers after applying a longitudinal study design. The hypothesis of the study is that the values of future sports teachers are different when they commence their studies and when they are in their final year of their studies.

The purpose of the research was to reveal the dynamics of the values of future sport teachers by employing a longitudinal study design over a period of four years. The following objectives have relevance:

1. To determine changes in the most important personal values of future sport teachers;
2. To reveal the dynamics of values held regarding the meaning of life by future sport teachers.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Study design

A longitudinal study was used, namely a repeated sociological study where the same respondents were involved over an extended period of time (in this case, 4 years). The cohort study model was used. The future sport teachers were surveyed in their first year of study and then 4 years later in their fourth year of study. The longitudinal study design was chosen because it provides the opportunity to detect changes in the characteristics of the target population (future sport teachers).

Sample

The study sample was chosen by means of proportional random sampling: every second student was selected for the questionnaire-based survey from a list of first-year students. In 2008, the research group consisted of 168 first-year students (86 males and 82 females) for the first part of the study. The second part of the study was conducted in 2012. The same respondents participated, but the research group was smaller due to students leaving their studies, refusing to take part or missing classes and consisted of 154 fourth-year future sport teachers (78 males and 76 females). Comparison of respondents by gender was not included in the analysis, as it was not an objective of this research.

Ethical clearance

The following ethical principles were adhered to in the study: written informed consent was obtained from the participants before their participation. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured using code names. The Ethics Committee of the Lithuanian Sports University approved the research proposal.

Measuring instruments and data analysis

To research the most important personal values of future sport teachers at the Lithuanian Sports University (LSU), the Rokeach Value Survey, modified by Smirnov and adapted by Sukys (2008), was employed.

The respondents were presented with 8 values (financial well-being, pleasures, family well-being, success, public recognition, health, true friendship and helpfulness towards other people), modified by Smirnov and adapted by Sukys (2008) for evaluation on an 8-point scale according to importance. Each version of a reply to the statements was evaluated accordingly: 1= *no significance* to 8= *very important*. Only the indicators of the highest rating (7-8 points) were calculated because these indicators showed which values were given highest priority. Thus, the rating mean and standard deviation were not calculated, and instead the percentage of respondents from each year (first and fourth) who evaluated each value highly (7 or 8 points), was computed. The most important personal values from the first (most important) to the eighth (least important) were rated.

Values regarding the 'meaning of life' and inherent to future sport teachers were evaluated using the Life Meaning Orientations Test (Leontiev, 1992). The reliability was affirmed in published studies (Malinauskas, 2006a; Malinauskas, 2007). The Life Meaning Orientations Test consists of 20 items, which are grouped into 5 scales: life goals (future agenda); process (active life full of impressions); results (satisfaction with one's activities); self-control (the ability to control life's events); and control of life circumstances (belief in being the master of one's destiny). The respondents rated their response to each item of the Life Meaning Orientations Test on a 7-point scale that ranged from 1 (*absolutely disagree*) to 7 (*absolutely agree*).

The results of values held regarding the 'meaning of life' were analysed in the same way; only the data of the most important personal values were studied. The percentage of the respondents from each year (first and fourth) who evaluated each value held regarding the meaning of life highly (36 or more points to the goals, process and control of circumstances; 30 or more points to the results; and 24 or more points to self-control) were computed. To reveal their dynamics, all values held regarding the 'meaning of life' from the first (most important) to the fifth (least important) were rated.

Statistical analysis

A two-proportion Z-test was used to locate the statistically significant differences between the proportions (percentage) of the first- and fourth-year students who evaluated values based on their importance.

RESULTS

Health was one of the most important values to the first-year future sport teachers (Table 1). By the fourth year, the students placed this value in second place, but it still held a significant position in the hierarchy of values. No statistically significant differences regarding the rating of the 'health' value were determined between the first- and fourth-year students ($p > 0.05$). By the fourth year, the students believed that the most important value to them was *financial well-being* (a financially stable life).

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS (%) ACROSS AND RANKING OF MOST IMPORTANT VALUES

Most important values	1 st -year 2008		4 th -year 2012		Z-value
	%	Rank	%	Rank	
Financial well-being	77	2	86	1	-2.10*
Family well-being	61	4	63	4	-0.37
Success of the activities	67	3	73	3	-1.17
Public recognition	47	7	61	5	-2.54*
Health	82	1	81	2	0.23
True friendship	48	6	36	7	2.20*
Understand importance of other people	36	8	33	8	0.57

* $p < 0.05$

For future sport teachers in their first year of study, *financial well-being* was also one of the most important values. In the first-year, 77% of the students assessed 'financial well-being' as very important. The same assessment occurred with 86% of the respondents in their fourth year. According to the data provided by the fourth-year students, 'financial well-being' was placed first because it could be that the graduating students were striving to become independent from their parents. The third place in the hierarchy of values inherent to future sport teacher respondents in their first year and fourth year was *success of the activities* (achievements), while the fourth place was reserved for *family well-being* (caring for people one is close to).

During their studies, the need to gain *public recognition* (respect and authority) in the eyes of society increased for the students. In the first year, the students placed this value in the seventh position in the value hierarchy, while in the fourth year they deemed 'public recognition' to be fifth in terms of importance. 'Public recognition' was statistically significantly more important to the students when they were in their fourth year ($Z = -2.54$; $p < 0.05$) than when they were first-year students. One should note that *true friendship* was less important in the fourth year of the future sport teachers ($Z = 2.20$; $p < 0.01$) than in their first year. They also cared less ($Z = 2.00$; $p < 0.01$) about 'pleasure' (joy and lifestyle full of entertainment). The last position (eighth) in the hierarchy of most important personal values, understood *that one is truly important to the lives of others* (satisfaction with their own activities).

Based on the study results, it became clear that the future sport teachers were prone to a positive evaluation of values held regarding the ‘meaning of life’ (Table 2).

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS (%) ACROSS AND RANKING OF MOST IMPORTANT VALUES REGARDING ‘MEANING OF LIFE’

Values regarding ‘meaning of life’	1 st -year 2008		4 th -year 2012		Z-value
	%	Rank	%	Rank	
Future agenda	54	3	81	1	-5.42**
Active life full of impressions	83	1	73	2	1.97*
Satisfaction with one’s activities	66	2	55	3	2.03*
Ability to control life’s events	39	5	44	5	-0.91
Belief of being master of one’s destiny	47	4	51	4	-0.72

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

The data in Table 2, at the first- and fourth-year, future sport teachers indicate that they highly value an *active life full of impressions* (83% and 73%, respectively). Half of the first-year respondents found *future agenda* and *satisfaction with one’s activities* very important. While the first-year students placed ‘future agenda’ (clear life goals) in the third place among the values held regarding the meaning of life, the assessment data in the fourth year presented it as the first position ($Z = -5.42$; $p < 0.001$). This was influenced by the fact that in the fourth year the students might have thought more deeply about their life goals and strove to graduate successfully in order to implement their ideas. ‘Satisfaction with one’s activities’ moved from the second position to third by the fourth year. The graduating students found the ‘future agenda’ (clarity of set goals) more important, and an ‘active life full of impressions’ dropped from the first position to the second ($Z = 1.97$; $p < 0.05$). ‘Satisfaction with one’s activities’ was a significantly less important value for the fourth-year future sport teachers than it was for them in their first year ($Z = 2.03$; $p < 0.05$).

The fact that the *ability to control life’s events* and a *belief in being the master of one’s destiny* (the architect of one’s own future), were placed last and second last in the hierarchy, suggests that the future sport teachers lacked resolve and initiative when planning for their future and their professional career. Presumably, the 39% in the first year and the 44% in the fourth year future sport teachers were not prepared for further changes in life because the ability to control one’s life events was not as important to them as the other values. No statistically significant differences were found between their first year and their graduating year regarding their ‘ability to control one’s life events’ and their ‘belief in being the master of one’s destiny’.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis that the importance of specific values of future sport teachers at the start of their studies is different to those held in their graduating year. The results of the present study are in line with the data of earlier research, which suggests that personalities evolved through the selection and development of values by

different future sport teachers (Malinauskas, 2006a). The study showed that the most important personal values of future sport teachers were the following: 'material well-being' (financially secure lifestyle); 'health' (good physical and psychological status); and 'achievement' and 'family well-being' (caring for the people one is close to). In the fourth year, 'true friendship' (close communication) was placed seventh, which was also reported in earlier studies (Malinauskas, 2007). The future sport teachers considered values, such as 'pleasure' and 'importance to others' as least important.

It can be suggested that the physical activities of future sport teachers create favourable conditions that nourish such values as 'health' and a 'desire to be recognised by society'. This also confirms data from other research (Sniras & Malinauskas, 2005; Malinauskas, 2006b; Malinauskas, 2007). 'Financial well-being' as a priority value was also reported in other studies that examined the opinions of Lithuanian students and high school students. For instance, Ciuzas and Ratkeviciene (2000), who analysed the value orientation of Lithuanian high school students, noted that material well-being was important to them as much as other universal values. This research, however, confirmed that the younger generation of Lithuania differs from their peers in other European countries because they place more value on material assets and money.

The results of this study are similar to those that suggest that Lithuanian residents show a clear preference for health, family and material well-being (Lazutka *et al.*, 2004). The largest portion of respondents of the present research considered these values to be of the highest priority. The first position was rarely taken by 'pleasure' (placed eighth and, in the present study, sixth), 'public recognition' (seventh place and, fifth in the present study), or 'active life full of impressions' and 'friendship' (fifth and sixth positions and seventh in the present study). As indicated by Lazutka *et al.* (2004), as respondents become older, their beliefs change regarding the three most important values of health, family well-being and material well-being. Furthermore, both male and female respondents, aged 17-24 years, are more inclined towards an active life full of impressions (Lazutka *et al.*, 2004), which is further confirmed by the results of the current research.

Future sport teachers and other students seem to have similar values (for instance, health and family well-being), and the differences are small (Smolicz *et al.*, 2001). It has been suggested that globalisation has not seriously damaged traditional values even though several of these values (for instance, moral values) have evolved (Smolicz *et al.*, 2001). The analysis of the dynamics of values held by future sport teachers revealed that 'health' is one of the most important values to them (82% in the first year and 81% in the fourth year). These results are in line with data from similar research (Meek & Cutner-Smith, 2004; Murphy *et al.*, 2011). According to Perenyi (2010), such development is logical because health is very important to people who choose to become sport teachers.

According to the results of this study, 81% of fourth year students found 'future agenda' to be very important. The fact that 'satisfaction with one's activities' was a less important value in terms of statistical reliability for fourth-year future sport teachers compared to their first year, may mean there is possible dissatisfaction with the professional activities among some future sport teachers. The explanation for this could be that the fourth-year future sport teachers

found themselves embarking on a new stage of life. These results are in line with data from similar research (Malinauskas, 2006b).

The study of the values held regarding the meaning of life showed that students valued 'a life full of impressions' the highest. It could be that participation in sport activities created favourable conditions for spending one's time actively and entertainingly. Other authors (Ciuzas & Ratkeviciene, 2000) have also mentioned this. Again, the 'ability to control life's events' and a belief in being the 'master of one's life' (the architect of one's own future) were placed last and second-last, respectively. This suggests that the future sport teachers lack initiative and responsibility, an observation also reported in earlier studies (Malinauskas, 2006b; Malinauskas, 2007).

Further studies could be conducted to determine whether the students who chose the career of a sport teacher later distanced themselves from the values they thought most important at the beginning of their studies.

CONCLUSIONS

When comparing personal values, health and material well-being seemed to be the most important for future sport teachers. However, there were no statistically significant differences between their rating of health in the first and the fourth year. The data suggested that material well-being (a financially secure lifestyle) and public recognition (respect and authority) were the most important and statistically significant values in the fourth year ($p < 0.05$) compared to the first year. The fourth-year future sport teachers cared less ($p < 0.05$) about pleasure (joy and a life full of entertainment) and true friendship than when they were in their first year.

For the first-year students, future agenda (clear life goals) was placed third in terms of importance in the hierarchy of values held regarding the meaning of life, and by the fourth year, the students placed future agenda (clear life goals) in the first position. Future agenda ($p < 0.01$) was a more important value in the fourth year than in the first year. According to the results of the study, satisfaction with ones' activities was a significantly less important value to the final year future sport teachers ($p < 0.05$) than when they were first-year students.

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