

TREND ANALYSIS OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF SPORTS TEACHERS AND COACHES

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Abstract. Current reforms in the Latvian general education system, which require switching to competence-based learning, have determined the topicality of the study. An interesting issue is the development of basic professional competences of working educators. Thus, the research aim is a comparative study of manifestations of professional competence in Latvian sports teachers and coaches. The research method used was Medvedeva's Teacher General Education Competences Survey (TGECS), which contains 46 items combined into 5 professional competency scales: project development; organizational; student achievement and education problem monitoring; interaction in the education process, and professional self-improvement. Based on the results obtained, professional competence profiles of sports teachers and coaches are suggested. High professional competence scores were established for coaches. Important profile features of professional competence are organizational and interaction competences. For both sports teachers and coaches, the monitoring competence shows lower scores.

Keywords: competence profile; professional competences; sports coach; sports teacher

Introduction

Historically, professional competences have been developing together with public economy. Society sets requirements for the practical training of specialists because oftentimes the professional skills they acquire are unrelated to real life (Ringstad 2013). The education system is sometimes based on formal acquisition of knowledge, i.e., teaching and reproductive learning. Professional competences require the specialist to have diverse abilities, including to work and communicate in a group, be prepared for changes in society and education, be independent and show initiative (Ilisko & Ignatjeva 2014; Peklaj 2015). Professionally trained

competent specialists tend to aspire for success and are usually more productive in entrepreneurship, creativity, and science (Guseva, Dombrovskis & Capulis 2018; Spivak, Omelchenko, Petrova, Kurinna & Kurinnyi 2021). The teacher's organizational, personal growth, achievement and monitoring, cooperation, and planning competences form the core of student initiative, responsibility, and learning activity development (Gonzalez & Wagenaar 2003).

The TUNING project was implemented in order to reach the aims of competence-based learning. The notion of competence is understood as a dynamic combination of competencies, i.e. knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities. In this context, competences or a set of competences mean that a specialist uses a specific ability or skill and fulfils a task in a way that allows assessing their performance level (Dyukarev, Gilpin & Karavaeva 2013).

Sports teachers and coaches are considered competent in their practical activity and experience if they are able to manage relationships with students effectively, helping and guiding them to the achievement of their goals (Campos, Del Carmen, Ries & Del Castillo-Andres 2011). Professional competences of sports teachers and coaches are based not only on core knowledge, but also include teaching skills, which determine the formation of student intellectual and motor skills. Individual work style and personality traits are also important components of professional competence. High success level in the education process also needs to be emphasized as a component of professional competence. These competences allow sports teachers and coaches to organize high quality training and be professional in their work (Casolo, Coco, Frattini, Vago & Casolo 2019).

The professional competence of sports teachers and coaches is formed and improved during their activity and can grow as they accumulate experience (McKenzie & Lounsbery 2013). Thus, modern reforms in the education system call for a study and analysis of the characteristics of the professional competences of sports teachers and coaches in Latvia.

Specialists with diverse competences and aspiration for success achieve higher results in several areas of professional activity. Competence-based education does not deny the traditional view of the education content but promotes activation of knowledge in the context of activity by developing professional competences (Lawrence & Lorsch 1967; McClelland 1973; Diachok, Chernukha, Tokaruk, Udovenko, Petrova 2020).

The concept of competence applies to various parameters and demonstrates the level of working ability. In the context of education, professional competence is the system of knowledge, skills, methods and techniques of realization in professional activity (Mitina, Mitin & Anisimova 2005).

Competence can be defined as a set of positive knowledge, abilities and preparedness, which allows the teacher to deal with changing situations successfully and responsibly (Weinert 2001; Schinkel 2009). Professional competencies are

viewed as a condition for the development of an individual's continuous education system (Otala 1997; Raven 1982; Revans 2011). These include a set of such traits and competencies as motives, confidence, values, analytical thinking and leadership potential (Mirabile 1997). Professional competencies in sports include the components required for obtaining qualification, performing professional tasks, and social interaction (Bhargava & Paty 2010).

The structure of professional competences can be divided into key, basic and special competencies. Key competencies are required for professional activity related to success in a rapidly changing world. They manifest in the ability to solve professional problems using information technologies and communication (Ivanova 2019; Tanriverdi & Pinar 2020). Basic competencies reflect the specific nature of educational and professional activity. Special competences are the realization of key and basic competencies in a specific profession. All competences are interrelated and develop simultaneously (Mitina, Mitin & Anisimova 2005; Eurydice 2002).

Sports teachers and coaches need to have basic competencies that include the planning competency, implementation competency, personal and social competencies, motivation competency (Al-Tawel & AlJa'afreh 2017). The planning competency includes: observing the needs of students in accordance with their demographic characteristics, learning interests and health; choosing appropriate education aims and objectives; using appropriate teaching methods; designing daily, weekly, annual teaching plans; choosing appropriate educational sports teaching methods. The implementation competency enables students to complete individual and group learning tasks based on their interests, individual differences and needs. Teachers and coaches are able to demonstrate their sports skills, which promotes effective communication between students and teachers.

The personal and social competence includes knowing the characteristics of the local community and the social environment of the students' immediate circle; the ability to solve different social problems; noticing changes in student behavior; participation in projects; encouraging students for social activity; developing students' personality in the area of social relationships; developing social skills and value orientations in students, which promotes successful social interactions (Opstoel, Chapelle, Prins, De Meester, Haerens, van Tartwijk & De Martelaer 2020; Petitpas & Champagne 2000; Linde & Petrova 2018)). The motivation competence includes creating a mentally comfortable learning environment, which promotes in students the formation of a positive attitude to learning, considering positive stimuli, which motivate and encourage their readiness to learn (Duda 2001, 2005).

Medvedeva, Martynyuk, Pankova and Solovyova (2008) distinguish five general education competences in the educator's profession: project development, organizational, student achievement and education problem monitoring, interaction in the education process, and professional self-improvement, which are required in a teacher's professional activity. Based on the competences offered by the

authors, the characteristics of professional competences is suggested where structural components of basic competences are distinguished. The competences characteristics is suggested as a professional tool, which helps to determine the necessary competences in the field of educational activity (Tab. 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of professional competences

Professional Competences	Characteristics of Competences
Project Development Competence	Readiness to plan; analytical skills; ability to apply knowledge in practice when solving problems; research skills; creativity; project and innovation management; mediation; flexible thinking
Organizational Competence	Reflection skills; criticism, self-criticism; mobility, independence; ability to take responsibility; discipline; ability to organize work individually and in a team; time management; initiative; motivation to perform professional activity
Student Achievement and Education Problem Monitoring Competence	Innovations; original ideas; core knowledge in different areas; professional training; problem solving; decision making; aspiration for student success; teaching strategies; ability to evaluate student results and achievements; ability to react to different needs of students; ability to improve the learning environment
Interaction in the Education Process Competence	Written and oral communication; knowledge of foreign languages; intercultural communication; readiness for leadership; ability to work in a team; cooperation skills; ability to negotiate; considering other's interests and opinions; conflict management
Professional Self-Improvement Competence	Aspiration for personal development; ability to learn; ability to work independently; leadership skills; information analysis; generating new ideas; initiative; aspiration for success; caring about quality; knowledge management

Source: Created by the authors.

Since no fully developed psychologically valid technology currently exists for the formation of a professional competence system, this study draws attention to the development of its separate components. Although a number of studies have been devoted to this issue, the developmental dynamics of professional competences of sports teachers and coaches have not been studied sufficiently, although professional competences are required for their activity.

In competence-based education, education content needs to be flexible and needs to correspond to the requirements of modern society. Modern reality has changed the lifestyle and thinking of sports teachers and coaches. Many students have lost

interest in the learning process or individual school subjects. Parents criticize the education system for overloading children or for redundant and unnecessary knowledge not related to real life. Employers are dissatisfied with the professional skills and practical training of novice teachers. Thus, sports teachers and coaches who lead a quality learning process also have an important role in promoting motivation and achievements of students, as well as their physical and intellectual development (Siegle, Rubenstein & Mitchell 2014).

Modern education specialists need to be prepared and able to use communication skills, be able to work in a team, be proactive and independent. Competence-based approach to educational self-improvement requires the specialist to be able to learn in order to improve their qualification, perform independent analysis, adapt to new situations, solve problems and make decisions, take responsibility for the quality of their work and be tolerant in intercultural relations (Tul, Leskosek, Jurak & Kovac 2015). Moreover, demonstration of competence during training sessions is the main predictor of building trusting relationships with athletes (Kao, Hsieh & Lee 2017).

In accordance with the Sports Law of the Republic of Latvia, a coach is defined as a specialist who performs his or her activities in the field of sports by carrying out educational, methodological, referee or other types of work¹⁾.

Thus, having determined *the research aim* as a comparative study of the manifestation of professional competence in Latvian sports teachers and coaches as educators, an appropriate methodological approach to such a study was proposed.

Materials and methods

Participants

The participants of the study were 153 sports teachers and 150 coaches with different specialties aged 26 to 63 ($Mdn = 43$ years). Before the survey, the participants were informed about confidentiality of the results. The instructions and approximate time required to complete the survey were discussed. The survey was conducted using the Google Docs platform.

Instruments

The Teacher General Education Competences Survey (Medvedeva, Martynyuk, Pan'kova & Solovyova 2008) contains 46 items. The survey allows assessing 5 professional competences of the participants: project development, organizational, student achievement and education problem monitoring, interaction in the education process, and professional self-improvement.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated in order to assess internal consistency and reliability of the scales used in the study. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient of the survey (N of Items – 46) $\alpha = .93$; on the project development competence scale (N of Items – 9) $\alpha = .84$; organizational competence scale (N of Items – 8) $\alpha = .76$; student achievement and education problem monitoring competence scale (N of Items – 11) $\alpha = .81$; interaction in the education

process competence scale (N of Items – 9) $\alpha = .81$; professional self-improvement competence scale (N of Items – 8) $\alpha = .71$. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is .93, which testifies to high reliability of the results.

Statistical analysis. The data obtained were processed in the SPSS 23.0 software. The non-parametric Mann-Whitney U-test was applied in order to find out whether any statistically significant differences exist between the results of the two independent samples.

Results

To perform qualitative analysis, the mean values for the professional competences of sports teachers and coaches were calculated. The figure shows diagrams of the mean values of professional competences for sports teachers and coaches. The comparison of the mean values of professional competences for sports coaches and sports teachers shows differences on all competence scales (Fig. 1).

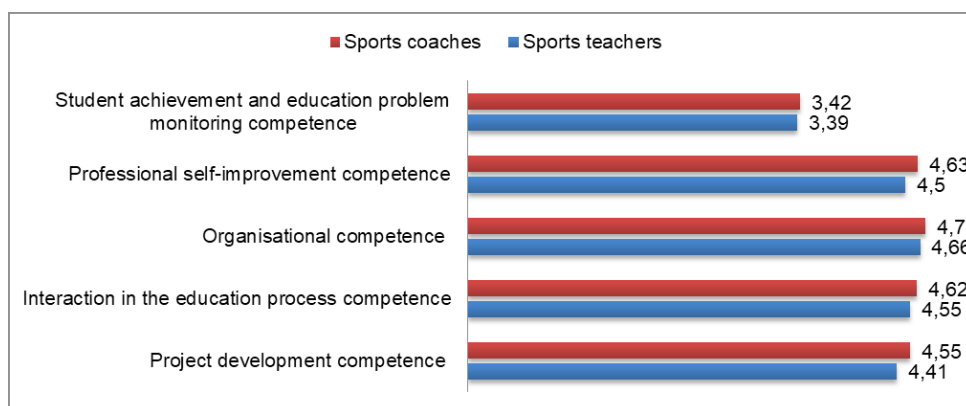


Figure 1. Mean values of professional competences for sports teachers and coaches

The results show that organization of the education process is the most developed competence in sports teachers and coaches. Whereas monitoring of student achievement and education problems is where sports teachers and coaches are the least competent. It is noteworthy that the values for all professional competences are high, which testifies to a high competence development level. To study significant differences in the results obtained for specialists, mean values of professional competences for sports teachers were compared with the values for coaches using the nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test designed for finding differences between values.

The table below shows the results obtained after studying the differences between professional competence levels using the Mann-Whitney U-test (Tab. 2).

Table 2. Differences between professional competences levels of sports teachers and coaches

Variables	Differences found	Differences in Statistical Significance
Project Development Competence	The difference in the values for sports teachers and coaches is random	Insignificant difference $U = 329, p = .072$
Organizational Competence	Sports teachers show lower values than coaches	Very significant difference $U = 253, p = .003$
Student Achievement and Education Problem Monitoring Competence	Sports teachers show lower values than coaches	Very significant difference $U = 253, p = .003$
Interaction in the Education Process Competence	The difference in the values for sports teachers and coaches is random	No difference found $U = 334, p = .084$
Professional Self-Improvement competence	Sports teachers show lower values than coaches	No difference found $U = 265, p = .006$

For further analysis, sports teachers and coaches were divided into groups according to the median value for the professional competence, distinguishing participants with low and high professional competence values. Figure 2 shows mean values of professional competences values for sports teachers and coaches with low competences levels.

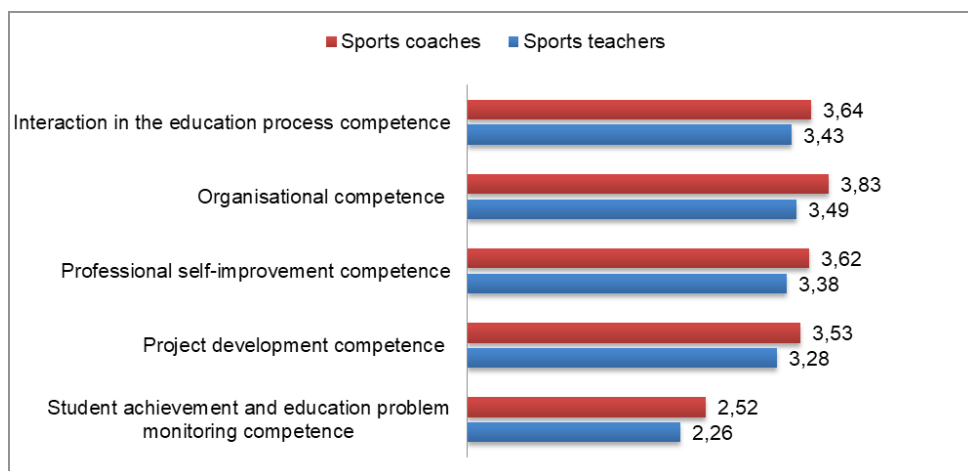


Figure 2. Mean values of professional competences of sports teachers and coaches with low competences levels

A comparison of the mean professional competences values of sports teachers and coaches shows differences on all competence scales. In the group of participants with low competences values, the most developed competences are interaction in the education process and organization of the education process. Sports teachers and coaches perform less monitoring of student achievements and education problems. Figure 3 shows mean values of professional competences values for sports teachers and coaches with high competences levels.

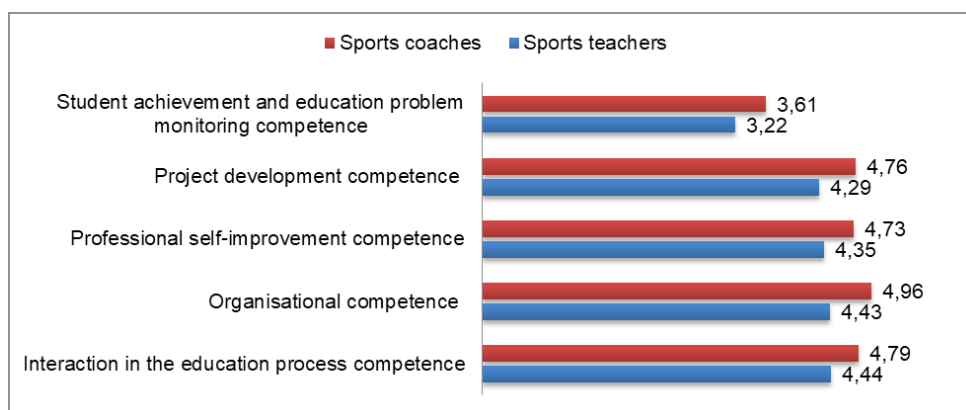


Figure 3. Mean values of professional competences of sports teachers and coaches with high competences levels

In the group of participants with high competences values, the most developed competence is organization of the education process ($M=4.96$) in the case of coaches and interaction in the education process ($M=4.44$) in the case of teachers. Sports teachers ($M=3.22$) and coaches ($M=3.61$) perform less monitoring of student achievements and education problems. A comparison of mean professional competences values for sports teachers and coaches shows that coaches have a higher competences level than sports teachers.

Figure 4 shows of professional competence profile for sports teachers and coaches.

Professional competence values are high in both groups. It can be stated that the most developed competences of specialists in both groups are organization of the education process and interaction with students. The lowest competence level has been established for monitoring student achievements and education problems. It is noteworthy that specialists in both groups generally have a high level of professional competence. A comparison of mean professional competence values for sports teachers and coaches shows that coaches have a higher competence level than sports teachers.

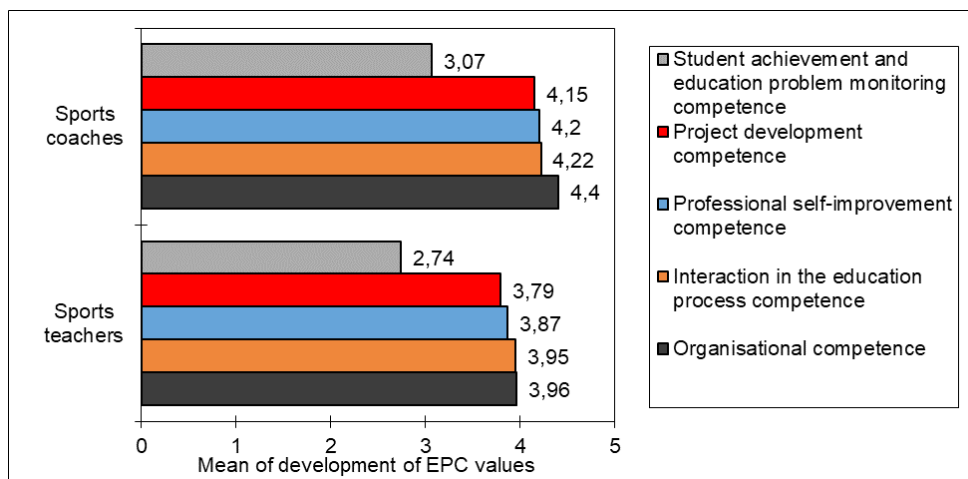


Figure 4. Professional competence profile of sports teachers and coaches

On the basis of the data obtained and using the professional competence profile, the competences required for sports teachers and coaches have been summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Characteristics of the professional competence profile of sports teachers and coaches

Sports Teachers' Competences	Description of Competences	Sports Coaches' Competences
Organizational Competence	Reflexive, critical and self-critical, mobile, independent, responsible, disciplined, proactive, motivated to manage time and people	Organizational Competence
Interaction in the Education Process Competence	Communicative, with knowledge of foreign languages, a leader who considers the interests and opinions of others when managing conflicts	Interaction in the Education Process Competence
Professional Self-Improvement Competence	Strives for personal development, learning, independence, always analyses information and generates new ideas, strives for success, cares for quality and manages their own knowledge	Professional Self-Improvement Competence
Project Development Competence	Ready to plan, able to think analytically, study, apply knowledge in practice while solving problems; creative and flexible when managing projects and innovations	Project Development Competence

Student Achievement and Education Problem Monitoring Competence	Innovative, competent and professionally trained in several areas, quickly solves problems and makes decisions, strives for achievement and its evaluation while considering student needs and improving the learning environment	Student Achievement and Education problem Monitoring Competence
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It is noteworthy that sports teachers and coaches both have the same structure of professional competences; however, there are differences in the expression of the competence levels.

Discussion

In the Latvian education system, the professional competence of sports teachers and coaches is a primary factor that helps to introduce and implement the competence-based education process and promote the development of society. Quality education provided by competent and qualified specialists helps students to realize their potential, improve their communication skills and plan to obtain a profession (Guseva, Dombrovskis & Capulis 2015; Miletic & Djordjevic 2022). This is why the professional activity of sports teachers and coaches, which is based on the development of student physical and mental potential, also has an important role in the development of a physically and mentally healthy next generation.

In their professional activity and practical experience, sports teachers and coaches are seen as qualified and competent specialists only when they bring their activity in line with the needs and interests of their students (McLennan & Thompson 2015; Petrova, Popova & Dejniak 2020). Thus, the competences of sports teachers and coaches enable students to perform educational tasks individually and in groups, considering their individual differences in terms of needs and opportunities.

The professional competences discovered as a result of the study demonstrate the aspiration of sports teachers and coaches in Latvia for the high professional achievements of their students and athletes. A high level of general professional competence is closely related to continuous improvement of professional activity and personal growth in sports teachers and coaches; furthermore, it helps improve the trust of athletes and students in their coaches and sports teachers (Floden, Richmond, Drake & Petchauer 2017; Kao, Hsieh & Lee 2017).

Based on the results of our study, it needs to be emphasized that the most developed competences in the group of sports teachers and coaches are the organizational and cooperation competences. The results obtained correspond to previous studies in this area, for example, on the high level of cooperation with students (Baskonus & Ciris 2021) and team members (Kao 2019; Mowling, Brock, Eiler & Rudisill 2004).

It is also noteworthy that significant differences found in the organizational competence and monitoring of student achievement testify to the specific nature

of the professional activity of sports teachers and coaches. Moreover, both groups of specialists have demonstrated the lowest development of their monitoring competence. We believe this result reflects the indirect influence of the new approach to sports education in Latvian schools, i.e., sports lessons are viewed in the health maintenance paradigm.

For future studies, we can highlight the trend discovered that the competence development level in the group of sports teachers is somewhat lower than in the group of coaches. It can be assumed that sports coaches feel more productive in their professional activity.

It is also noteworthy that concurrently with reforms, some studies draw attention to the reconfigurations in the professional identity of a teacher, highlighting the necessity to understand the transformations happening in the profession of a teacher (Sarakinoti & Tsatsaroni 2015). It is also still necessary to observe how the European and global higher education policy affects the redistribution of pedagogical resources and forms of knowledge proposed to national higher education system institutions.

We believe that the new global management conditions make pedagogical higher education more open to change and reforms, raising the demand for the research on how the global policy for teacher education programmes is implemented in different national circumstances, emphasising the problem of selection, organisation of learning, pedagogical communication, evaluation of academic knowledge and competence of future sports teachers and coaches.

Conclusions

Development of professional competence is an important part of the education process in Latvia. The professional competences discovered help sports teachers and coaches to achieve a successful education process, which manifests as educational professional success. Competence-based approach in the Latvian education system requires of sports teachers and coaches a high level of educational professionalism and quality of work.

Despite the lack of a statistically significant correlation, there is a difference in the level of professional competences for sports teachers and coaches – professional competences of coaches are developed better than those of sports teachers.

Following the definition of professional competence as a harmonious combination of knowledge of the subject, didactic education and pedagogical communication skills, further development of a methodological approach to the study of professional competences of sports teachers and coaches is required.

The introduction of competence-based learning into school education clearly directs universities and other higher education institutions to prepare specialists for the real present-day requirements. This also gives rise to some concerns because seemingly reasonable reforms can lead to negative results due to unprofessional

implementation. Will the introduction of competence-based learning become a bureaucratic formality, a tool for progressive development or irreversible degradation — this question will only be able to be answered in a few years.

Limitations

The study did not take into account the participants' gender differences, age, length of work experience, and school size and the coaches' speciality in sports.

NOTES

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