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**DESIGNING SPORTS AND RECREATION CONTENT TO
SUPPORT DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVENESS AMONG
STUDENTS**

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Abstract

The paper justifies the relevance of fostering competitiveness of students while keeping up and strengthening their health. It underpins the interrelation between a number of personal qualities and characteristics being among indicators of competitiveness and physical, mental, psychological and social health of a person. The importance of ensuring this process in terms of personal and social development is explained. The paper also highlights that it is desirable to integrate the processes of health promotion and competitiveness enhancement among students. The paper provides evaluation outcomes substantiating the idea that it is feasible to specify the main characteristics attributed to organizing students' physical activity that promote health and competitiveness through the interrelations between personal health and competitiveness indicators. Goals set out within the study were solved using the following main methods: theoretical analysis of scientific literature on the issues related to systematization and concretization of the obtained data; correlation and comparative analysis of the intensity of students' health and competitiveness indicators; etc. The paper presents the generalized insight into the scope of analyzed concepts and their interrelations; characteristics of physical education resources that are feasible to achieve the goal of the study; etc. It assumes the likelihood to improve the quality of higher education through the organization of described activities and presents a number of system attributes of designed sports and recreation support for enhancement of students' competitiveness as a comprehensive result of theoretical and empirical research.

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Keywords: Competitiveness, health, physical activity, training, sports.



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1. Introduction

The development of higher education in Russia is currently based on the assumption that the training of competitive specialists for various branches of industry should be adopted as the target guideline. The renewal of goals and objectives of higher education is stipulated by grand policy provisions of the Russian Federation, determining the overall strategy to ensure the global competitiveness of domestic industries and recognizing the significance of human capital and human resources in its successful implementation (Andreev, 2004; Khazova, Tuguz, & Karyagina, 2014; Shapovalov, 2003).

On the other hand, the urgent need of Russian society is to keep up and strengthen the health of its citizens. This is relevant for people of all ages, however, from a purely economic standpoint, it is particularly important with regard to younger Russians including young students – future university graduates, young specialists, etc. (Kuvshinova, 2009; Shapovalov, Gunazhokov, Khazova, & Begidova, 2016).

A theoretical analysis of scientific literature suggests that the two processes mentioned above — the preparation of competitive specialists and the care of students' health— can and should be built in an integrated manner. This is justified by the two aspects. Firstly, competitive-related traits embrace various personal indicators of physical, mental, social and psychological health. Secondly, competitive environment and involvement in competition pose risks to human health. Unless some prevention is guaranteed to mitigate possible negative impacts (Andreev, 2004; Mezinov, 2009; Khazova, Tuguz, & Karyagina, 2014; Shapovalov, 2003), the process of enhancing students' competitiveness will be impeded.

Finally, a healthy lifestyle is thought to be a composite prerequisite for keeping up and strengthening national health. Its crucial component is a person's physical activity. Therefore, streamlining the degree and content of students' physical activity can be rightfully considered an important condition for both health and competitiveness promotion of students. Moreover, theoretical search brought about the conclusion that along with direct impact on students' health, active sports activities can enhance their competitiveness indirectly due to the availability of resources affecting a number of competitiveness indicators (Barchukov, 2006; Stolyarov, 1988; Chulanov & Popov 2005).

Thus, the mission, the starting point of the present study, that consists in a chain of logical reasoning and conclusions, is stated as follows: health is one of the instruments for a person's competitiveness, physical activity is one of health factors, and sports and recreation activity is a prerequisite for strengthening and keeping up health, hence, the organization of sports and recreation activities of students is one of the most crucial conditions for enhancing their competitiveness. Meanwhile, the basic provisions of physical education, personal advancement and formation of personal qualities, abilities, etc. allow to assert that physical activity will have a beneficial effect on personal health and competitiveness provided that, besides being inextricably intertwined with physical load and intensity, it is tailored to individual needs, interests and capacities of those involved (only in this case, consciousness and activity can be achieved). In addition, its content should include such means, methods and activities that will assure the development of specific health and / or competitiveness indicators (or groups of indicators) of a person.

2. Problem Statement

Modern higher education system is aimed at the organization of sports and recreation support at a HEI to facilitate the enhancement of students' competitiveness. However, at present, the solution of this problem is difficult, due to the lack of scientific information regarding the specifics of the relationship between personal health and competitiveness; the impact of the level and forms of physical activity on health and competitiveness of a person; subjective and objective requirements for the organization of physical activity of students, ensuring the enhancement of their competitiveness and health care. This deficiency of knowledge delineates a range of research questions and determines the need to set and solve the following scientific tasks: 1) to clarify the components of competitiveness and personal health, the potential of physical culture in their improvement; 2) to identify the current level of health and competitiveness encouragement among students, the level and forms of their physical activity and preferences; 3) to determine the relationship between health and competitiveness indicators and the level of physical activity of students; 4) to identify key areas and the general content of sports and recreation support to enhance students' competitiveness, making allowance for individual levels of physical activity.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the research is a set of content-methodical and organizational characteristics of physical education of university students, ensuring the integrated enhancement of students' competitiveness and health.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of the research is the rationale of the directions and content of sports and recreation support to enhance the competitiveness of university students.

5. Research Methods

To organize and conduct the study, the following methods were used: theoretical analysis of the scientific literature with a view to clarifying the components of competitiveness and personal health and the resource potential of physical culture for their advancement; diagnostic methods (questioning, testing) to identify the current level of health and competitiveness components among students, the level and forms of their physical activity and preferences; correlation and comparative analysis to determine the links between health and competitiveness indicators and the level of physical activity of university students; theoretical modelling to determine the key areas and the general content of sports and recreation support to enhance students' competitiveness, making allowance for individual levels of physical activity. The diagnostic study was conducted at Kuban State University in 2018. It involved 696 students of 1-4 years of study.

6. Findings

1) According to scientists, the key personal outfit contributing to competitiveness includes the following: competitive personal orientation and the will to win, creativity and desire for innovation,

emotional stability and efficiency, thirst for self-development and commitment, ability for self-presentation, willingness to cooperate, etc. (Andreev, 2004; Mezinov, 2009; Khazova, Tuguz, & Karyagina, 2014; Shapovalov, 2003). The entire set of competitive qualities, as well as scientific insights into possible embodiments of competitiveness, including the differences between them in present and future specialists, makes it possible to identify six main indicators of students' competitiveness: orientation to participate in competition in competitive environment; positive emotional attitude to the competition as taken for granted in certain daily situations (professional and social interaction), willingness for justified risk; motivation to achieve success in competitive environment; determination to mobilize and express personal expertise (knowledge and skills, abilities, time, etc.); experience of effective participation in competitive environment.

The basic attributes of human health are as follows: normal vital functioning of the organism, the absence of diseases; dynamic balance of the organism and its functions, harmony with the environment; the adaptability of the organism, the personality as a whole, the ability to adapt to changing external conditions and function properly in them, while remaining in harmony with oneself; sociality, commitment to perform social functions, social activity (professional, public) (Grigoriev, 2004; Salakhutdinova, 2011; Shuvalov, 2004; Shuvalov, 2009). Within the health framework, most researchers distinguish the following main types: biological or physical, mental, psychological and social.

Indicators of physical health are the absence of physiological / physical diseases, the normal functional state of the human body, its tolerance to environmental factors, normal physical development and physical fitness, etc., as well as energy potential (as an opportunity to receive energy from the outside, accumulate and use it to ensure the functioning of the body, personality) and related performance and adaptability. The attributes of mental health are adequate self-perception and perception of the environment, the ability to retain information, critical and positive thinking, adequate behavior, control and ease of emotions and behavior, the ability of self-control, adaptability in microsocioal relations, the ability to withstand ordinary life stresses, safety of physical and mental (optimal) state. The most common components of psychological health include a number of personality traits (optimism, gravity of behaviour, an adequate level of aspirations and self-esteem, commitment, self-confidence, independence, benevolence, self-control, free will, get-up-and-go, ambition, determination, etc.) and values (virtues and human freedoms, self-actualization, individuality, spirituality, culture, etc.). The criteria for social health include the ability to harmoniously interact, to communicate with people, to adapt to the society, to use initiative and imagination in practical work, to keep a healthy lifestyle, morality, the ability to prevent, reduce and overcome negative effects of social environment, resistance to addictive factors, moral sustainability to destructive phenomena.

The comparison of the identified competitive personality qualities, arranged in accordance with personal spheres, and the traits presented above, otherwise known as the characteristics of human health, indicates that a number of health indicators directly or indirectly correlate with components / tools of competitiveness. Meanwhile, such competitive qualities as emotional positive attitude to competition, willingness for justified risk, motivation for success, and determination to mobilize and use available resources act as indicators of various components of human health. The remaining components of health are correlated with many of the identified qualities, attributes of personal competitiveness.

The capacity of physical culture in strengthening the health of students and enhancing their competitiveness is built through the content of physical education at the university, as well as various sports activities. It refers to (Barchukov, 2006; Nikolayev & Baranov, 2005; Stolyarov, 1988; Chulanov & Popov, 2005) all the content-targeted areas of physical education (body conditioning, applied, special (sports-oriented), popular sport, therapeutic (adaptive), hygienic) directly or indirectly provide health care and enhance competitiveness. All means of physical education have resources geared to promote health and competitiveness: physical exercises, health-improving nature, hygienic factors, etc. A positive effect, within the study, can be achieved with the reasonable application of all methods of physical education (strictly regulated exercises, circuit training, games and competitions).

2) An empirical study was conducted for targeted, organizational, and substantive differentiation of sports and recreation support to enhance students' personal competitiveness. Based on the survey results, the students' needs for health and competitiveness promotion, as well as the level of students' physical activity were identified. The analysis of the results showed that only 43.4% of students have sufficient physical health, 75.8% – mental health, 68.7% – psychological and 71.4% – social health.

The majority of respondents (72.1%) generally had a good idea of what competition and competitiveness involve. However, both of these concepts were primarily associated with work or with sports. As per the tools for enhancing competitiveness, students' knowledge in this respect was rather fragmentary and was not entirely plausible at times. Health was not mentioned by any of the respondents as a tool for competitiveness. In addition, students also did not mention any of the estimated indicators of competitiveness as a driving force for its enhancement. The level of self-competitiveness (in total and in individual indicators) was determined by the majority of respondents as average (42.1% - 64.8%).

One sixth of respondents (15.5%) were not engaged in physical culture and sports for health purposes at all, a slightly larger number of students (23.3%) did this sporadically (less than once a week). The level of students' physical activity decreased from course to course.

The most favoured forms of physical activity for respondents were health and fitness classes (yoga, etc.) – 56.9%, trainings in sports clubs under a sports student club – 79.9%, sports and recreation activities – 57.3% (including hiking trips, sports events, holidays, Health Days, etc.).

3) To determine the links between indicators of health, competitiveness and the level of physical activity of students, all respondents were differentiated according to the levels and forms of physical activity into the following groups:

- motor-passive (MP) students, involved in physical activities solely (or almost solely) within the educational process in physical culture (48.8%);

- motor-active (MA) students, taking exercise independently in their free time (with different time intervals, but at least once a week) in different forms (37.8%). The group fell into several subgroups: non-organized forms – physical activity in the form of morning exercises, recreation, etc., otherwise known as hygienic and physical recreation activities (HPRA – 13.3%); organized forms – training in sports clubs within popular sports (PS – 15.6%); classes in sports and recreation centers and groups, etc. (SRCG – 2.6%); training in several forms combined (6.3%), including HPRA + PS (2.8%), HPRA + SRCG (1.1%), PS + SRCG (2.4%) (of course, other combinations are possible, however, only those listed were identified);

- students involved in sports for setting records (SSR - 13.4%).

Concerning self-assessed physical health, SSR and MA groups were not statistically different from each other upon the number of respondents with low and medium levels ($P > 0.05$). However, there were much fewer respondents among the athletes (SSR) than among the motor-active students, who assessed their own physical integrity as good ($P < 0.05$). Motor-passive students had lower self-assessed physical health than SSR and MA groups ($P < 0.05$). Thus, inactivity had an unambiguously negative effect on the physical integrity of students. With regard to individual indicators of physical health, students with the highest possible level of physical activity (groups of SSR and HPRA + SSR) had higher health and well-being indicators than the other groups ($P < 0.05$). Physical development was assessed as high by more students of SSR group, in the other groups the priority was given to the level above the average ($P < 0.05$); physical fitness was significantly higher in SSR and PS groups, compared to the other groups ($P < 0.05$).

Regarding self-assessed mental health, the vast majority of SSR respondents were characterized by nearly absolute health, demonstrating much better results than those in the MP group ($P < 0.05$). On this indicator, the MA group took an intermediate position. Its results were significantly better than those in MPS group, but worse than in SSR group ($P < 0.05$).

For a number of indicators to assess socio-psychological health, there were statistically significant differences between the groups, namely: there were much more SSR respondents than MA and MP ones, characterized by an excessive level of self-loyalty ($P < 0,0$); in SSR and MA, as contrary to the MP group, there were much more students with low levels of uncertainty of temper and satisfaction with the social environment ($P < 0.05$); in SSR there were much less students than in MA and MP with a high level of self-assessed socio-psychological health ($P < 0.05$); among the athletes and motor-active students there were much more respondents with high levels of creativity and self-confidence ($P < 0.05$), with an average level of humanism and empathy ($P < 0.05$); it's worthy of note that no students with a low level of these qualities were found in SSR, as contrary to the other two groups; in SSR and MA groups, compared to MP group, there were more respondents characterized by high levels of psychological health ($P < 0.05$). The students from the MP group had results either the worst or not different from any of the active groups.

b) The relations between the level of physical activity and the level of competitiveness of students: for the orientation to participate in competition in competitive environment, the highest results were shown by the students from SSR and PS groups, whereas the worst results were shown by the MP group ($P < 0.05$); for the positive emotional attitude to the competition as taken for granted in certain daily situations, no statistically significant differences were found between the results of different groups ($P > 0.05$); for the willingness to take justified risk, students involved in sports (both sports for setting records and popular sports) showed the highest results, with no significant differences ($P > 0.05$); motor-passive students were characterized by worse results compared to the other groups ($P < 0.05$); for the motivation to achieve success in competitive environment, the highest results were also demonstrated by the students engaged in professional or popular sports; the determination to mobilize and express personal expertise was most developed among professional athletes, and their results differed significantly from those of "non-sports" MA groups ($P < 0.05$); the worst results – in the MP group ($P < 0.05$); for the experience of effective participation in competitive environment, students from the SSR group were statistically superior to the representatives of all other groups ($P < 0.05$); the athletes involved in popular sports, lagging significantly behind the results in the SSR group, statistically greatly surpassed the remaining groups ($P < 0.05$); the

motor-active students from the remaining groups, in turn, were significantly better than the MP group ($P < 0.05$).

c) The relations between the indicators of competitiveness and health were determined by the method of correlation analysis (the tetrachoric Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated). The data previously described were used as conjugate indices. The strong positive links were found between: – sustainable efficiency and determination to mobilize and express personal expertise ($r_A = 0.85$, $P < 0.05$); – emotional positive view and positive attitude towards competition ($r_A = 0.95$, $P < 0.05$), as well as experience of participation in competition ($r_A = 0.82$, $P < 0.05$); – cognitive activity and focus to participate in competition ($r_A = 0.86$, $P < 0.05$), willingness for justified risk ($r_A = 0.87$, $P < 0.05$), experience of participation in competition ($r_A = 0.81$, $P < 0.05$); – adequate self-assessment and focus to participate in competition ($r_A = 0.71$, $P < 0.05$), motivation to achieve success in competition ($r_A = 0.87$, $P < 0.05$) and determination to mobilize personal expertise ($r_A = 0.76$, $P < 0.05$); – emotional stability and positive attitude to competition ($r_A = 0.81$, $P < 0.05$), readiness for justified risk ($r_A = 0.93$, $P < 0.05$), determination to mobilize personal expertise ($r_A = 0.82$, $P < 0.05$); – subjective well-being and positive attitude towards competition ($r_A = 0.87$, $P < 0.05$); – orientation to self-development and all components of competitiveness, except for the positive attitude towards competition ($r_A = 0.86 - 0.94$, $P < 0.05$); – communicative skills and focus to participate in competition ($r_A = 0.74$, $P < 0.05$), experience of participation in competition ($r_A = 0.89$, $P < 0.05$); – creativity and components of competitiveness except for the focus to participate in competition and the motivation to achieve success in competition ($r_A = 0.74 - 0.92$, $P < 0.05$); – social activity and focus to participate in competition ($r_A = 0.85$, $P < 0.05$), motivation to achieve success in competition ($r_A = 0.91$, $P < 0.05$), experience of participation in competition ($r_A = 0.95$, $P < 0.05$); – social qualities and orientation to participate in competition ($r_A = 0.76$, $P < 0.05$), readiness to mobilize personal expertise ($r_A = 0.89$, $P < 0.05$) and experience of participation in competition ($r_A = 0.71$, $P < 0.05$).

4) The results of the empirical research enabled to determine the following key activities within sports and recreation support to enhance the competitiveness of students:

General, non-specific activities:

a) Diagnostic direction: the study of health and competitiveness indicators, lifestyle of students.

b) Educational direction: methods of health control; instruments to promote competitiveness, including those related to health indicators; parameters of the optimal physical state, the effective use of sports and recreation facilities in order to promote health; basics of self-training and effective organization of free time.

c) Stimulation direction: the formation of value, activity approach among students towards their health; the encouragement for active inclusion in various types of physical culture and recreational activities.

d) Development direction: targeted advancement of student competitiveness indicators.

Specific activities:

a) For motor-passive students – the maximum involvement in different dimensions of physical culture through a comprehensive targeted systematic educational, motivational and organizational work.

b) For students involved in sports for setting records – comprehensive educational, motivational and stimulating, methodical and consulting work aimed at mastering and using methods of promoting physical health and preventing sports injuries; strengthening social and psychological health.

c) For motor-active students – emphasis to the development of individual health and competitiveness indicators, insufficient levels of which are diagnosed during the comparative analysis.

Invariant and elective content of activity

The invariant content of sports and recreation support is common for all students. The elective content is specific, firstly, for students from different faculties and courses, and secondly, for students with different levels and forms of physical activity. The invariant support involves:

– from the educational standpoint: the influence of physical culture on the students involved; mutual impact of health and competitiveness indicators; methods, principles, etc. of self-selection and use of physical education for the promotion of health and competitiveness; self-assessment of health and competitiveness indicators;

– from the motivation standpoint: encouraging the expansion of sports activities, increasing physical activity;

– from the content standpoint: primarily, non-organized forms of physical activity (since this form of physical activity should become compulsory for all students, along with individually organized and selected forms).

The elective content, ultimately, is embodied in group, nuanced and individual programs of physical activity, designed in the wake of the need to improve specific health and competitiveness indicators and the corresponding physical and sports resources. The programs are provided with guidelines for students on the implementation of events and activities within the program, and for educators on the prevention or actual assistance for students to abide by the program. In addition, the choice of ways to stimulate specific students to physical activity is provided.

The presented relations between health, physical activity and competitiveness of students, the characteristics of physical education capacity in the context of the study, the described tasks of sports and recreation support for students and the corresponding targeted directions of this process make it possible to build a full-fledged framework at the university, the content of which will have a balanced positive impact on all health and competitiveness indicators of students.

7. Conclusion

Organizing a focused pedagogical activity at a higher educational institution that is aimed at the promotion and strengthening of the health of students can be a significant factor in increasing their competitiveness. The revealed resources of physical education for the enhancement of students' competitiveness while promoting and strengthening their health should be implemented within sports and recreation support. The specific nature of these resources enables to directly choose the means, methods, forms of physical education to improve definite indicators of competitiveness and / or health of students.

The results of students' assessment of their health status and their own way of life objectifies the need for implementing a system of measures to improve their health status, and the self-assessment of

competitiveness signifies the need to optimize the process of its creation. The provision of sports and recreation support at the university to enhance the competitiveness of students in accordance with the identified characteristics will facilitate the achievement of an integral result, i.e. the improvement of the health status and personal competitiveness of students.

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