**Pre-graduate training of PE teachers and coaches**

As mentioned earlier, every profession has certain requirements on its practitioners. The personality of an educator is a structure consisting of an integral, open system the formation of which begins early during the teacher / coach training (in many cases even earlier) and continues and adapts throughout their professional career. Life-education, personal development and critical self-reflection play a major role as well.

**Expert knowledge and skills**

Pre-graduate training provides future teachers and coaches with professional education in their respective field of expertise. Knowledge and skills are the basic qualification criteria for this job. They can be divided to general and specialist. Teacher/coach training provides both types. General knowledge is necessary in order to get a broad understanding of the profession. Specialist knowledge (deep, narrowly focused knowledge) must be acquired both through theoretical study and long-term practical experience. There are both explicit and implicit types of specialist knowledge. Expert education, even the best in the world, cannot guarantee success! Practical skills and insight into how to use theoretical knowledge in real life come only with years of experience.

A teacher who has mastered expert knowledge and skills will have an easier time making adequate decisions in classes and interaction with students and finding optimal modifications to teaching methods. However, it is still necessary to … “adequately expand one’s specialist and general education to save the teacher from uncritical boasting and naïve confidence as well as potential feelings of inferiority when confronted with other people’s creative work.”

As for coaches, knowledge of rules, technical and tactical elements of the given sport is absolutely crucial. (Authority and students’ respect cannot be achieved without this kind of knowledge.) The more a coach knows about technical (or tactical) skills and how to teach them, the more likely he/she is to see good training results, avoid injuries and athletes’ frustration due to failure.

Advice to teachers and coaches:

• make constant expansion of your knowledge and skills your lifelong mission

• read expert literature, magazines, websites dedicated to professional matters

• attend seminars, science and expert conferences, teacher education courses, …

• observe the work of your colleagues, discuss and share your experience with each other

• if possible, become a member of a professional organization (for coaches or teachers)

**Pedagogical abilities and skills, psychological qualities**

Pedagogical abilities are one of the key prerequisites for all teachers and coaches. Externally, these abilities are registered in the form of specific skills (such organizing a circular operation). Pedagogical abilities are connected with moral and psychological qualities within the individual’s personality structure. They are closely linked to interests, values, convictions, character and psychological peculiarities (thinking, perception, emotions, motivation, will, etc.). Classifying pedagogical skills is not an easy task. One cannot draw any clear lines because different abilities overlap and complement each other and form an open system conditioned by the characteristics or peculiarities of psychological processes (cognitive, emotional, motivational and volitional) of each individual educator. Let us attempt a very general classification.

a) *Physical abilities and skills*

These represent the functional prerequisites for the didactic activities of the **teacher**. A PE teacher should be healthy and physically fit, capable of practically executing a wide range of physical skills and athletic activities. During his/her school career, a future teacher is likely to encounter a great variety of sport activities and other forms of physical exercises. The future teacher can hardly have enough time to get to know and master all knowledge and skills involved in all these activities during his/her studies. Some can be studied as selective subjects while others must be acquired through life-long education.

The basic principle of pre-graduate education at the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport is targeted development of physical docility. The aim is to develop the kinetic algorithms of a variety of physical skills. Gradually over time, the acquisition of other skills and abilities that can be added to the curriculum becomes easier thanks to ability transfer. However, the physical skills that the teacher wants to teach to his/her students should be mastered not only on the general kinetic level but also on the level of verbal generalization and assimilation. In other words, the teacher must be able to practically perform the skill but also understand the underlying principles and peculiarities of training.

Future **coaches** are trained in a manner similar to future teachers. However, emphasis is given to sport specialization rather than on “versatility”. The principle of “docility”, however, applies here as well. Although for most coaches, their work (especially in competitive sport) does not require a high level of physical skills and abilities it can be assumed that some proficiency in this respect will increase the coach’s personal and social status but also provide him/her with a deeper insight into physical activity in general.

b) *Didactic skills*

Advanced didactic skills allow both **teachers and coaches** to accurately and quickly determine what might be suitable for their students’ age or ability level and select an adequate style and methods. An educator should be able to precisely identify the difficult parts of an exercise and explain why they are difficult. Identification of critical parts during training can prevent problems through better organization, changes of methods, preparatory exercises, etc. Didactic skills enable the teacher/coach to have a differentiated and individual approach to students and give the educator creative freedom in dealing with didactically challenging situations.

Didactic skills come to the fore when dealing with questions of targeting, content and methods involved in the educational process:

• setting educational goals

• constructing and reconstructing the content of classes in light of the set goals

• selecting teaching methods, strategies, procedures, differentiation and organization

• selecting adequate teaching and educational methods

• setting an optimal load, dosing and repetitions for each exercise

• intermediate and final evaluation of students in terms of their developing physical skills and abilities and their attitude to physical a sport activities.

c) *Perception skills*

Perception skills are the sum of a teacher’s/coach’s cognitive dispositions that help with observing, recognizing and diagnosing (students’ mental state, interpersonal relationships, etc.). This includes not only sense organs (sight and hearing) but also socio-psychological facts and experience. Successful coaches and teachers are able to “read” their students and understand their thought processes, feelings and emotions and work with this information in the future. (The ability to “read” others is sometimes called empathy.) In teaching and in some sports, there is high pressure on the intensity and distribution of attention. A educator must be able to concentrate while working with small groups or individuals without losing sight the rest of the class or team.

Let’s not forget about memory. Deficient memory (forgetting the names of students, faces, behavioral quirks, educational progress) can greatly complicate a teacher’s work.

d) *Organization skills*

These skills play a prominent role in the professional life of a teacher or coach. They affect productivity, optimal use of time and good work climate. Good organizers careful prepare their plans, are able to keep track of time, take into account factors that might affect the course of a class, keep them under control and make corrections as necessary. It was found that learning and experience even during the pre-graduate period help develop organization skills.

e) *Expressive and communication skills*

The teaching and coaching professions are, fundamentally, based on communication. Communication is a means of interaction between the educator and the students. Information can be shared verbally or non-verbally (through gestures, facial expressions, posture, …). A teacher can give information (in the form of instructions, encouragement, …) or receive it (reaction to your instructions). Information always has two components: factual (the essence of the instruction) and emotional (expressing your feelings). Children are often unable to clearly express information in words. It is up to the educator to use his/her experience, perception skills and empathy to decode what the student tries to communicate. Many mistakes can occur during the communication process both on the side of the educator and the student. There may be negative effects due to the environment (noise, etc.) or stress (e.g. during matches). Communication style also reflects the temperament, education and character of the communicating parties. Let’s have a look at some recommendations, principles a specificities:

**for teachers**

• in PE classes, verbal communication is typically brief and even minimalist – no long speeches and wasting of time (verbal communication is often dominated by counting, rhythmisation)

• the more directly and deliberately a teacher speaks (effective verbal communication), the more efficiently the information will be transmitted (a good teacher speaks in a lively manner, eloquently, with good intonation and precise diction, without phonetic and grammatical errors, at an adequate speed and loudly enough to be heard)

• agreeing with student on non-verbal signals such as whistling will make class organisation easier and help you protect your voice

for coaches

• coaches are usually rather good at sharing information but many of them could improve their “art of listening”

• you should communicate messages with high informative value (merely acknowledging mistakes or failures will not help you student improve)

• you must learn to keep your emotions in check, especially during tense situations (vulgar comments directed to the referee will not win you any popularity)

**Personality requirements**

Stem from a whole range of demands. Research has shown that teaching is one of the most difficult jobs. A teacher’s performance is constantly being monitored and judged. There is an immense load on the locomotive system, voice, hearing and the nervous system.

The main psychological requirements on those who want to become teachers (and, by extension, coaches) include:

• stable personality (balanced personality, healthy confidence, emotional maturity)

• moral maturity and sense of fairness

• patience

• independence and proactive behavior

• quick and adequate reactions

• intelligence and creativity

The personality requirements on PE teachers and coaches also include:

a) focus

Interest in physical activities and sport are often the primary motivations that lead people to apply for teaching or coaching study programmes. However, it would be a mistake to take this career route after completing the degree if sport is the only object of interest and the candidate finds no satisfaction in teaching. Focusing on athleticism and performance can easily skew a teacher’s choice of curriculum or lead to unreasonable demands on students.

b) connection with people (children)

A positive attitude to other people is related to sociability and empathy. Teachers are often motivated by an inner need to help others. Leadership and management skills are very often found among coaches, too. However, the relationship with students must be based on mutual understanding and trust, responsibility and respect.