

# THE INDIVIDUAL ACADEMIC WORK IN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT SPECIALISTS

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**ABSTRACT.** In this article we approach the topic of individual academic work in the vocational training of specialists of physical education and sport. This activity, very important in the university educational process, is promoted both within classroom hours and outside of them, but most often individual work is promoted within seminars, laboratory hours, projects, practical works, competitions and performing tasks at home. Individual work is one of the main forms of study of subjects by students specializing in physical education and sport, expressed by studying theoretical topics, performing control and laboratory work and applying knowledge to carry out semestrial, periodical and final assessments. Starting from the analysis of references on the mentioned topic and ending with qualitative and quantitative reflections from the specific university context, we highlight the aspect of the individual work of the students from the point of view of professional training. It is carried out for the purpose of students specializing in physical education and sport acquiring general and special professional skills, including the ability to use the knowledge acquired in the professional field. An important result of the individual work of students is the formation of their ability to train individually in order to obtain knowledge, skills, competences for the purpose of continuous professional development.

**Key words:** *Physical education and sport, vocational training, individual work, high education, student, teacher, curriculum.*

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**REZUMAT. *Lucrul individual academic în formarea profesională a specialiștilor de educație fizică și sport.*** În acest articol abordăm tema lucrului individual academic în formarea profesională a specialiștilor de educație fizică și sport. Această activitate, foarte importantă în procesul educațional universitar, este promovată atât în cadrul orelor auditoriale, cât și înafara acestora, dar cel mai frecvent lucrul individual se promovează în cadrul seminarelor, a orelor de laborator, a proiectelor, a lucrărilor practice, în cadrul concursurilor și la efectuarea sarcinilor pentru acasă. Lucrul individual este una dintre formele principale de studiu al disciplinelor de către studenții specializați în educație fizică și sport, exprimat prin studierea temelor teoretice, efectuarea lucrărilor de control și de laborator și aplicarea cunoștințelor la susținerea evaluărilor semestriale, periodice și finale. Pornind de la analiza surselor de referință la tema menționată și finalizând cu reflecții calitative și cantitative din contextul universitar specific, evidențiem aspectul lucrului individual al studenților din punct de vedere al pregătirii profesionale. Acesta se desfășoară în scopul dobândirii de către studenții specializați în educație fizică și sport a unor competențe profesionale generale și speciale, inclusiv capacitatea de a utiliza cunoștințele dobândite în domeniul profesional. Un rezultat important al lucrului individual studentesc este formarea la aceștia a capacității de a se instrui individual pentru obținerea de cunoștințe, abilități, competențe în scopul dezvoltării profesionale continue.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Educație fizică și sport, formare profesională, lucru individual, învățământ superior, student, profesor, curriculum.*

## INTRODUCTION

The qualitative training of specialists in the field of physical education and sport leads to the need to strengthen the efficiency of the teaching-learning-evaluation process of students based on individualization and differentiation, allowing them to fully highlight their intellectual potential.

Currently, the process of differentiation and individualization of higher education must be the permanent, primary concern of both teachers and students.

Higher education, according to the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (2014), is organized and conducted based on content standards, competence standards, national reference standards and accreditation standards.

In the conditions of the increase in social, community and individual requirements towards higher education, it seems logical to implement a type of educational management that leads to the increase of the offer of services, their efficiency, to the promotion of performance in conditions of competitiveness (Volcu, 2017).

Thus, any higher education institution is responsible, autonomously, for the development of a culture of quality, i.e. policies, techniques and practices consistently applied and thoroughly documented to obtain those results/performances that are consistent with the expected objectives.

Student-centered education focuses on putting the emphasis on students' thinking, on their involvement in the realization of projects, on solving problems tangential to practical life (by finding new and original solutions), on scientific investigation and learning new research techniques, stimulating thinking, imagination, creativity and originality of the learner and thus removing the lack of motivation and interest. These take shape during lectures, seminars, practical and laboratory hours, but more importantly, within the individual activity of the student. Therefore, in the current system of vocational training and "lifelong learning" competence, the essential role is played by individual work, the dominant activity, which constitutes one half of the teaching-learning process.

Individual work is an educational and scientific research activity, which aims to develop the necessary skills and is carried out with the teacher's methodical guidance, but without his direct participation. It is an important form of training, aimed at training a specialist who will operate efficiently with professional skills, being capable of continuous development throughout life.

Approaching in an empirical way the development of autonomous learning competence in students, the researcher M. Ștefan (2014) experiments with several strategic options for facilitating autonomous learning, including: experiential learning, simulated learning, self-directed learning, reflective learning and learning with the help of new information and communication technologies, thus opening perspectives of differentiation and individualization, but also of relevant contextualization of the university training process.

In order to carry out the individual work more efficiently and effectively, the student needs a wide range of basic skills, which are essential in a wide variety of situations. But the most important thing for students from all cycles is the ability to develop appropriate independent learning strategies (Goraș-Postică, 2019).

The main purpose of the individual work of students specializing in physical education and sport is to improve their professional training and specialized knowledge, aimed at the formation of an effective system of fundamental and professional theoretical-practical knowledge, skills and abilities that they could apply in practice. Thus, we are talking about the training of tomorrow's specialists, who will be globally competitive, who will be able to solve creatively with the help of knowledge, tasks in their field with the most significant effect both for themselves and for society as a whole.

According to the Framework Plan for Higher Bachelor Studies (cycle I), of master (cycle II) and integrated higher studies (2020), the ratio “direct contact hours - individual study hours” is established depending on the field of specialized professional training/ master’s program, the study objectives, the specifics of the course unit/module, the degree of novelty and/or complexity and the methodological-didactic assurance. This report is established by the relevant chair/department, based on a specific methodology for each general field of study, approved by the Senate, upon the proposal of the Faculty Council that organizes the respective study program.

For the efficient organization of individual work, the teacher must take into account some conditions that will ensure the successful completion of this activity. We mention first of all the motivation of the students regarding this training activity, that is to explain to the students: for what?, why?, what does it help? Then follows the exposure of some cognitive tasks, as well as the clear definition by the teacher of the types of tasks, the workload, the time interval for their completion. No less important are the assessment, reporting criteria, etc., as well as the types and forms of control.

## **OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESIS**

Through this paper, we aim to effectively contribute to the vocational training of the physical education and sport specialist by promoting individual activities to students/master students, so that to be competitive on the labor market.

In this research, we started from the hypothesis that the active involvement of students/master students in activities of an individual character will significantly improve their professional development.

The purpose of the research is to emphasize individual academic work in the vocational training of specialists in the field of physical education and sport.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

We used the following methods of research: theoretical analysis, statistical-mathematical method, graphical method, investigation method, interview, observation.

Data collection was carried out by developing a questionnaire and filling it in by the students. Participants were asked to provide an answer for each item. For this, the respondents were given general instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, as well as the use of the data provided by them.

At the same time, an analysis was carried out of some documents that regulate the university study process, such as: Framework plan for higher studies; Education plan, Curriculum; SUPES Quality Manual etc.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

For each course unit/module, the Curriculum (curricular program) is developed by the department and approved by the Faculty Council. It includes the description of the course unit/module and the actual content. The content of the course/module in the curriculum includes suggestions for individual activity, including the description of the interactive forms for individual study guided by the teacher, used by the teaching staff, the topics, the tasks and the number of hours.

Sv. Focşa-Semionov (2010), in a valuable study, claims that “at the university level, achieving academic performance within the curriculum requires a certain logic of the student’s movement towards mastering the subjects, as well as the self-regulation of this movement, that is, of their own learning process. At each learning stage, corresponding to the basic form of the activity carried out, the subject forms and develops specific regulation mechanisms, skills and self-regulation abilities. It remains essential that the process of self-regulation of the learning activity, complex by its nature, functions as an integral unit, only that at one stage or another of the learning the focus shifts to one of its components”. Thus, self-regulation of learning is recognized as a central competence in the context of academic learning, equally, as a determining condition of learning efficiency, as well as an essential objective of university education of all times; however, in the Information Age it takes on complex connotations.

Thus, one of the most requested activities for the materialization of individual student work is the elaboration of reports, for which we recommend suggestions (Table 1), regarding their implementation.

The report consists in the elaboration of a work based on individual investigation, in which the essence of a problem or an idea is synthesized from works close to the theme, including personal opinions on the subject addressed. The content of the report must be logically structured, presenting arguments in support of the ideas addressed.

**Table 1.** Suggestions for individual work

<b>The structure of the product</b>	<b>Achievement strategies</b>	<b>Deadline for the submission</b>
<b>REPORT</b>		
<p>1. <i>Title page</i></p> <p>2. <i>Content</i></p> <p>3. <i>Introduction</i> (displayed on 0,5-1page), which will refer to:</p> <p>3.1. <i>The relevance and importance of the topic</i> (briefly exposed in an alignment);</p> <p>3.2. <i>The purpose</i> (reflects the finality of the investigation carried out, the meaning of the study, the goal pursued) and the concrete objectives of the study (denoting the expected results following analyses, calculations, solving theoretical and methodological problems);</p> <p>3.3. <i>The object of the study renders the field, sphere, sector, branch, economic entity, subdivision, etc. to which it refers;</i></p> <p>3.4. <i>Applied research methodology</i>, which includes:</p> <p>a) the information base (legislative and normative framework, methodological sources, monographs, scientific works, statistical databases, etc.)</p> <p>b) the research methods used (quantitative and qualitative);</p> <p>3.5. <i>Key words.</i></p> <p>4. <i>Presentation of the content</i> in 2 subjects (3-5 pages for each subject).</p> <p><i>Subject 1.</i> It will contain the theoretical approach to the studied problem with a review of the most relevant opinions of noted specialists in the field according to the bibliographic material;</p> <p><i>Subject 2.</i> It has an analytical character and can contain quantitative and qualitative analyzes of the real situation of the researched object, critical assessment of the current state, highlighting existing problems, etc.</p> <p>5. <i>Conclusions and recommendations</i> (~1page). In this compartment, conclusions are formulated and some recommendations are put forward regarding the highlighted problems.</p> <p>6. <i>References to bibliographic sources</i>, cited in the main text of the report, completed in the appropriate manner, not less than 5 sources.</p>	<p>1. Choice of subject</p> <p>2. Bibliographic study</p> <p>3. Delimitation of the study area:</p> <p>3.1. The temporal dimension (the period under analysis);</p> <p>3.2. The spatial dimension (the information system, the information security system, information technologies in ensuring national security, etc.);</p> <p>4. Formulation of objectives</p> <p>5. Selection of the necessary methodology for the study (reading, observation, analysis of normative acts, document analysis, statistical analysis, etc.);</p> <p>6. Analysis and processing of information;</p> <p>7. Rendering the content according to the drafting rules in force and perfecting the report itself;</p> <p>8. Presentation of the product and its support within the established terms.</p>	<p>At least 2 weeks before the end of the semester.</p>

The individual academic work of students has the following *advantages*:

- Facilitates the development of an independent work of the student, helps him to organize, monitor his own learning and activity;
- Stimulates confidence in one's own powers and abilities;
- Forms skills to use and work with different tools and equipment;
- Stimulates the work of research and scientific investigation;
- Stimulates the activity of the teacher and his ability to apply strategies and techniques based on the individual work of students in teaching/evaluation.

I. Neacsu (2006), argues the usefulness and functionality of the concept of independent learning, based on the changes that have occurred in recent years in the academic environment, proposes various strategies, methods and techniques of independent academic learning and opting for "a university policy of the culture of independent academic learning, became not only a component, but also a standard of the quality of processes, products, satisfaction, efficiency and effectiveness, but also the competitiveness of the university".

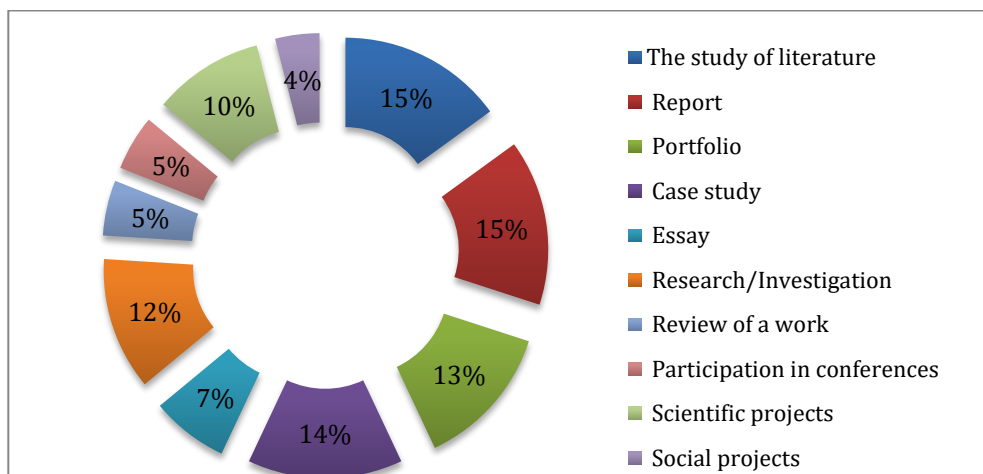
The individual study of the student guided by the teacher is carried out depending on the specifics and particularities of the course unit and is provided for all course units in the curriculum of the study program. The ratio of direct contact hours and individual work is 1:1 in full-time education (the exception is practical subjects, where the ratio is changed in favor of direct contact hours (2/3 to 1/3) and 1:3 - for part-time education.

O. Dandara (2009), investigated independent academic learning as a way of training professional skills, explaining the reason for reducing the hours of direct contact with students by focusing professional training on training skills; or, competence whose components are ability and attitude is formed only through own effort. Hence the insistent promotion of ideas: the active involvement of the student in his own training and the teacher-student educational partnership. In the given study, the author concludes that "if the teacher wants the student to work more individually, then he must work more with the student", in the classroom and through systematic individual consultations, we believe.

T. Repida (2015) makes a brief, but approved and important retrospective of the connections and continuity in the organization of individual student activity through a historical approach, based on the analytical programs in the universities of the Republic of Moldova, advocating for the improvement of process and time monitoring necessary, but also of the cooperation between university professors, who teach at the same faculty/year of studies.

The individual activity guided by the teacher includes the additional study of course materials, additional consultations for students with a low rating, who encounter difficulties in completing study tasks, the organization of didactic activities with the use of various interactive forms, including discussions; carrying out current assessments; checking essays, papers, reports, projects, portfolios, case studies, etc.

The individual study guided by the teacher is included in the Chart for guiding individual work at each department and is part of the weekly workload of the teaching staff and the student. Within the departments, various forms of organization of individual work are applied, presented in the curriculum by study subjects, their share is reflected in Figure 1.



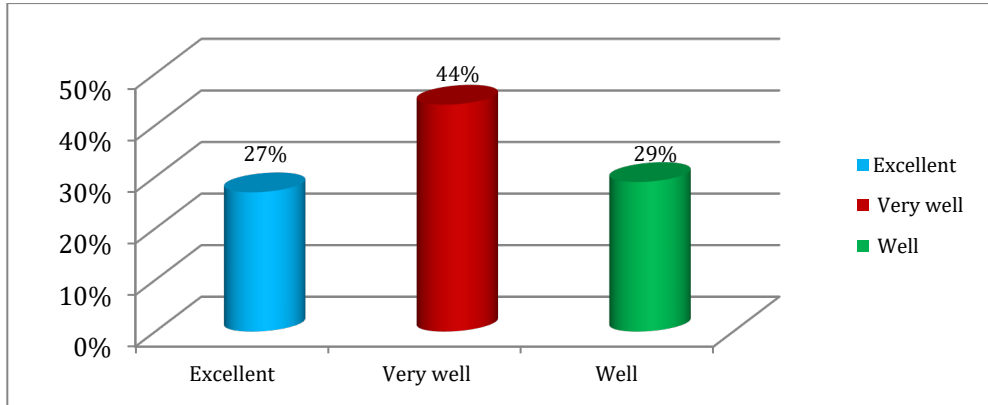
**Figure 1.** The share of individual work organization forms

One of the indicators of the effectiveness of the Quality Management System in the university is the evaluation process, taking as a measurement parameter the satisfaction of the students.

Students are not only clients/beneficiaries of the institution, but also products of the university, as participants in the vocational training process, by assimilating the knowledge and skills that form their professional competences, certified by university diplomas. In this context, students participate in all the activities of continuous improvement of the quality of the processes, aiming to satisfy the requirements of the university's customers (Manolachi, Demcenco, Ghețiu, Zavalîșca and Mocrousov 2018).



Thus, the assessment of individual work by students (Figure 2) is evaluated with the qualification “very well” - 44%, “excellent” - 27% and “well” - 29%.



**Figure 2.** Appreciation of individual work by students

Analyzing the obtained results, we can mention that the individual academic work of the students is carried out in various forms of organization and is appreciated by the respondents (71%). This suggests that students engage in individual activities and as a result their professional development is enhanced.

## CONCLUSIONS

Individual academic work has a great influence on the professional development of physical education and sport specialists, being an important form of training aimed at training a specialist capable of operating effectively with professional skills.

The diversity of the forms of organization of individual academic work makes this activity more attractive and efficient, and the result of its appreciation (71%) by the respondents indicates that they are actively involved and ultimately contribute to their professional development.

Despite the fact that the paradigm of initial training is gradually changing at an accelerated pace and innovations on multiple dimensions are timely, the aspect of individual study will be current and beneficial, especially in distance education through information and communication technologies.

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