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CONTENTS

	TRAINING, COACHING, SPORT PERFORMANCE	9
A.Manolova	BALANCE ASSESSMENT AFTER TWO TYPES OF BADMINTON TRAINING	11
E.Stoimenov, I.Kiuchukov, I.Yanev	IMPACT OF PRECEDING HANDSPRING UPON KINEMATIC CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT SALTO BACKWARDS	16
I.Dimova, A.Slavchev, G.Gutsev, P.Petkova	SPECIFIC FEATURES OF STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE PREPARATION FOR THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL RECORD OF ATHLETIC PENTATHLON (GIRLS UNDER 18)	21
K.Atanasov, Z.Zsheliaskova- Koynova	JUDO LEGENDS LOSE FROM OUTSIDERS	25
P.Peev, M.Gadev, B.Petrova	CHANGES IN ANAEROBIC POWER OF YOUTH SOCCER PLAYERS IN AN ANNUAL TRAINING CYCLE	30
R.Lambros, D.Shalamanova	STRUCTURE OF THE POWER POTENTIAL OF ADOLESCENT RACERS IN RUNNING AT 800M.	34
K.Dunayev, S.Seyranov	THE PREPARATION OF YOUNG BIATHLETES IN THE ANNUAL CYCLE	38
S.Bahchevanski	DETERMINATION THE MAIN INDICATORS OF SAILING PERFORMANCE IN OPTIMIST SAILOR'S	41
N.Kurtovic	QUANTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF THE KATA PERFORMANCE IN SPORTS KARATE	46
G.Gutsev	SPORT RESULTS DYNAMICS IN AGE ASPECT OF BULGARIAN 110M HURDLERS	52
I./Bonova, Y.Karabiberov, V.Mihajlov, B.Petrova, G.Maximov, K.Kisiov	COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGES IN THE CARDIO-PULMONARY TEST FOLLOWING A PROLONGED INTERVAL NORMOBARIC HYPOXIC TRAINING OF TRACK AND FIELD MIDDLE AND LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS	56
B.Dimitrova, N.Tankusheva, M.Petrova	FORECAST MODEL TO OPTIMIZE THE PREPARATION ON BALANCE BEAM	61
M.Petrova	EXPERT ANALYSIS OF THE FLOOR EXERCISE TRAINING SYSTEM	66
D.Velcheva	WORKOUT DYNAMICS OF NATIONAL TEAM IN RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS WOMEN'S ENSEMBLE	70
G.Gantcheva, M.Damjanovska	RHYTHMIC GYMNASTIC MOVEMENTS AND FOLKLORE DANCES IN STUDENTS' COORDINATION ABILITIES	73
H.Guteva	SURVEY OF FEMALE FOOTBALL REFEREES ABOUT THEIR PHYSICAL CONDITION	77
R.Karapetrova, G.Stoykov, S.Stoykov	MODELLING ANTHROPOMETRY OF TENNIS PLAYERS (AGE 17-18-YEARS)	81
D.Zagorsky, M.Gikova, O.Tishinov	RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOINT MASTERY AT ONE HAND AND THE ANTHROPOMETRIC, KINEMATIC AND STABILOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SELECTED SPORTS TECHNIQUES IN SHOTOKAN-KARATE	85
Y.Yankov, T.Simeonova	PHYSICAL AND TECHNICAL READINESS OF 12 YEAR OLD BOYS FROM BASKETBALL CLUB SHUMEN	91
Y.H.ÜNLÜ	EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF STRENGTH BUILDING EXERCISES ON THE STAGE PERFORMANCE OF PROFESSIONAL FOLK DANCERS	97
V. Tsvetkov, M. Gadev, P.Peev	DETERMINATION OF MOTOR MOBILITY SPEED ZONES FOR PLAYERS FROM AGE GROUPS U16 AND U17	102
Vesela Ivanova	ASYMMETRY IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MOTOR QUALITIES	106

V.Kotev	MAIN TRENDS IN ORGANIZING THE ATTACK OF THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL VOLLEYBALL TEAM ON MEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POLAND2014	110
G.Ignatov, E.Atanasov	RESEARCH OF THE PRESSING APPLIED BY THE NSA „VASSIL LEVSKI“ FOOTBALL TEAM, DURING THE NATIONAL STUDENT CHAMPIONSHIP OF BULGARIA	115
I.Lazarov	COMPARATIVE ANALYSE OF BASIC PHYSICAL MARKS WITH MEN AND WOMEN – RUNNERS OF MIDDLE AND LONG DISTANCES	120
M.Živković, V.Jovanović, K.Herodek, Z.ilanović, V.Antić	DIFFERENCES IN THE MOTOR ABILITIES OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS IN RELATION TO THEIR POSITION ON THE TEAM	126
M.Borukova, M.Kuleva, A.Tsarova	FACTOR STRUCTURE AND BASIC FACTORS OF THE SPORTS PREPAREDNESS OF 15-16 YEARS OLD NATIONAL BASKETBALL COMPETITORS	131
B.Zauranbekov, L.Kudashov, N.Kafer, ZI Andryushkin, I. L., Kudashov, E.S.	STUDY OF THE DYNAMICS OF PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF STUDENTS OF BASKETBALL IN THE ANNUAL MACROCYCLE	136
M.Akhmetkarim R.Tzarova, L.Kudashova, N.Kefer, I.Andryushkin	MORPHOLOGICAL MODEL RELATIVE INDICATORS OF STUDENTS – BASKETBALL PLAYERS IN PRE-CONTEST PERIOD	141
R.Dyussupova, L.Kudashova, Zh.Dyussupova	FORMATION OF THE CULTURE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION OF PHD DOCTORS OF THE SPECIALTY “PHYSICAL CULTURE AND SPORTS”	145
I.Yazarer, M.Borukova, A.Tsarova	COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIFIC EFFICIENCY OF STUDENTS-BASKETBALL PLAYERS FROM TURKEY	149
M.Đurović, T.Okčić, D.Madić, M.Dopsaj, V.Thanopoulos, G.Rozi, M.Pešić, M.Trivun	THE INFLUENCE OF FLEXIBILITY ON THE SPECIFIC MOTOR SKILLS IN BOY-SWIMMERS AGED 10–12	154
V.Petkova, S.Yordanov	CHARACTERISTICS AND ADVANTAGES OF THE EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING PROCESS IN CHESS OF CHILDREN-TWINS	159
Z.Tasevski, N.Markovski, S.Gontarev	ANTHROPOMETRICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SOMATOTYPE OF YOUNG MACEDONIAN SOCCER PLAYERS AGED 11–18	163
U.Mitrović, D.Bjelja	MULTILAYERED EFFECTS OF NEW MEDIA AND SOCIAL NETWORKS ON CONTEMPORARY SPORTS	168
	SPORT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AND INCLUSIVE PHYSICAL EDUCATION	173
F.Akcakoyun, V.Mutlu, Z.Punduk, Y.Alper, Z.Göktaş	EATING HABITS AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OF GRADE 9 AND 12 STUDENTS IN BALIKESİR SCIENCE SCHOOL	175
E.GÜLGÖSTEREN, P.DEMİRCİ, A.DEMİRCİ, N.DEMİRCİ	WHAT SHOULD BE MINDED WHEN FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN ARE PLANNING A SUMMER VACATION?	178
V.Alexandrova	ADAPTED SWIMMING FOR CHILDREN WITH DOWN SYNDROME	184
A.Evald, M.Albert, E.Dimitrova	SURVEYING THE INFLUENCE OF THE KINESITHERAPEUTIC COMPLEX ON THE SOCIAL AND MENTAL STATUS OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL DISTURBANCES	187
	SPORT PSYCHOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY	193
Z.Zsheliaskova- Koynova	RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SPORT PERFORMANCE IN ORIENTEERING	195

I.Ivanov, G.Ignatov	COGNITIVE STYLES OF ELITE FOOTBALL REFEREES IN BULGARIA	200
L.Rogaleva, V.Malkin, A.Kim, N.Khon	ATTITUDES OF YOUNG HOCKEY PLAYERS OF 6–7 YEARS TO COMPETITIONS	205
V.Malkin, L.Rogaleva, I.Mamaeva	USE OF PSYCHODIAGNOSTICS IN THE WORK OF A COACH	209
M.Zdravcheva, K.Zgurovski	STUDY OF SITUATIONAL ANXIETY IN SNOW SPORT COURSES	214
T.Iancheva, M.Kuleva	GOAL ORIENTATION AND COPE WITH SUCCESS IN SPORT	218
L.Doncheva	PSYCHOLOGY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING – MOTIVATION AND LANGUAGE IDENTITY	224
T.Andonova	IMPROVEMENT OF THE PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL STATE OF PARAOLYMPIC SHOOTERS	228
M.Georgiev, N.Mladenova,, L.Doncheva	STRUCTURAL MODEL OF BURNOUT DETERMINING FACTORS WITH ATHLETES	231
I.Presnyakov, I.Andruchshishin, Y.Denisenko, A.Geraskin, D.Presnyakov	PERSONAL FACTORS DETERMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SKILLED PLAYERS	236
E.Savcheva	TYPOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS IN NATIONAL FENCING ATHLETES	241
SPORT AND TECHNOLOGIES		245
I.Nedelchev	SWOT ANALYSIS OF MOBILE SOLUTIONS FOR HEALTH PREVENTION, PROMOTION, AND FITNESS ACTIVITY	247
S.Napolitano, A.Ascione	STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL TACTIS IN WATER POLO THROUG VIDEO ANALYSIS	250
D.Stankovic, M.Kostadinovic	OPINION AND ATTITUDES OF CHILDREN HIGHER GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL ON ELECTRONIC SPORTS	256
I.Kabulbekova, L.Kudashova, E.Kudashov	BIOPEDAGOGICAL MODELING OF SPORTS PREPARATION OF VOLLEYBALL PLAYERS OF HIGH QUALIFICATION	259
Z.Kuderiyevev	CONTENT BASES OF GAMES IN AGONISTICS IN KAZAKHSTAN	265
SPORT MEDICINE, EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY, BIOMECHANICS, NUTRITION		271
G.Vanlyan, D.Dimitrova	STUDY ON THE FACTORS FOR MENSTRUAL DYSFUNCTION IN FEMALE ATHLETES	273
Z.Punduk, A.Hismiogullari, K.Rahman	AGE SUPPLEMENTATION MODULATES IL-6, IL-10 AND HSP27 RESPONSE IN HEALTHY MEN: EFFECT ON THE MUSCLE STRENGTH	278
V.Panayotov, K.Petkov, N.Iankova, J.Karabiberov	IMPLEMENTING A CUSTOMISED SOFTWARE FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESE PEOPLE	284
E.Miloshova	HEALTHY LIFESTYLE – A SURVEY AMONG YOUNG BULGARIANS	288
N.Zaekov, G.Bogdanov, M.Baymakova, M.Zaharinova	ANTHROPOMETRIC NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF 11–14 YEAR OLD PUPILS OF SOFIA MUNICIPALITY	292
B.Ilinova, M.Toteva.	ANTHROPOMETRIC AND SOMATOTYPE CHARACTERISTICS OF RACERS IN DIFFERENT SKI EVENTS	296
B.Jorgic, K.Petrović, S.Milenković, D.Živković	PILATES EFFECTS ON SPINAL COLUMN POSTURAL STATUS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW	299
I.Ivanov	WHOLE BLOOD VISCOSITY CHANGES AT COAGULATION UNDER COUETTE FLOW	304

M.Zaharinova, N.Zaekov, K.Rankov, M.Nikolova	CHRONOTYPE IDENTIFICATION OF BULGARIAN SPORTS STUDENTS	308
N.Stojiljković, M.Bratić, S.Pantelić	HEALTHY AGING – THE ROLE OF SPORT SCIENCE	313
M.Mathunjw, S.Mugandani, A.Kappo, S.Ivanov, T.Djarova-Daniels	MOTOR ABILITY PROFILE OF JUNIOR AND SENIOR MALE SOUTH AFRICAN TAEKWONDO ATHLETES	318
S.Mugandani, T.Djarova-Daniels	DIFFERENCE IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF SELECTED BLOOD VARIABLES AMONG ATHLETES DURING A COMPETITION PERIOD	323
Dilyana Zaykova, Lubomir Petrov, Albena Alexandrova	USE OF NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS BY MALE GRECO-ROMAN WRESTLERS	326
HEALTH AND FITNESS		331
M.Angelcheva	EXTRACURRICULAR SPORT ACTIVITIES AND INSTITUTIONALIZED CHILDREN. SOCIALIZATION EFFECTS	333
P.DEMIRCI, N.DEMIRCI, E.DEMIRCI	THE EFFECTS OF EATING HABITS, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, NUTRITION KNOWLEDGE AND SELF-EFFICACY LEVELS ON OBESITY	337
I.Nesheva	DYNAMICS THE RR FOR EVALUATION OF INTENSITY OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY UNTO PREGNANT WOMEN	343
S.Kolimechkov, L.Petrov, A.Alexandrova	PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT USING A MODIFIED PAQ-C QUESTIONNAIRE	346
D.Zivkovic, N.Randjelovic, M.Djordjevic, D.Pirsl	CHANGES OF PARAMETERS OF METABOLIC SYNDROME UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF TRAINING PROGRAM	351
PHYSICAL EDUCATION, QUALITY IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION, TEACHING AND LEARNING		357
E.Mileva, I.Klincarov, B.Popeska, M.Kovac, G.Starc	TENDENCIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN BULGARIA, MACEDONIA AND SLOVENIA	359
A.Buyuklieva	ANALYZING TEST RESULTS IN BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT AT 5–7 YEAR OLDS	364
I.Vladova	ATTITUDES OF THE STUDENTS AT THE NATIONAL SPORTS ACADEMY “VASSIL LEVSKI” TOWARDS WORK IN MULTICULTURAL ENVIRONMENT	370
B.Popeska, I.Klincarov, E.Mileva, N.Goran	EDUCATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN MACEDONIA AND BULGARIA	375
N.Zhunisbek, N.Mavrudieva, L.Kudashova, N.Kefer, I.Andrewishkin, E.Kudashov	SCIENTIFIC SUBSTANTIATION OF EFFICIENCY OF CONTROL OF PHYSICAL PREPATIVITY OF HANDBALL	380
Y.Nasiyev, M.Shepetyuk, B.Konakbayev, B.Dzhamberbayev	FORMATION OF JUDO TECHNIQUE, USING OF THE BASE OF TECHNICAL PREPARATION OF WRESTLERS OF NATIONAL WRESTLING “KAZAKH KURES”.	385
S.Abildabekov, I.Andruchishin,	FEATURES OF CHANGES IN INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL PREPAREDNESS OF 6–9 GRADE STUDENTS	391
SPORTS PEDAGOGY, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND MOTOR DEVELOPMENT AND MOTOR LEARNING		397
L.Dimitrova	SURVEY OF CHESS “PROFILE” OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS	399

V.Slavova, N.Iankova, V.Panayotov	STUDY OF THE APPLICATIONS OF PUNISHMENT AS AN EDUCATIONAL METHOD	402
B.Dimitrova	RECREATIVE INDUSTRY, INNOVATIONS AND THE BULGARIAN EDUCATIONAL MODEL FOR SPECIALISED STAFF	406
K.Zgurovski, M.Zdravcheva	MODERN DESIGN OF A CHILDREN 'S ZONE IN NATURAL PARK VITOSHA	411
N.Mavrudieva, D.Zhunisbek, P.Mavrudiev, M.Kuleva	FACTORIAL STRUCTURE OF PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT AND PHYSICAL ABILITY OF STUDENTS	417
B.Peneva, V.Chernev, L.Borisov	POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WESTERN THEORIES FOR MOVEMENT LEARNING	421
M.Kuleva	DETERMINING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE EDUCATION IN A DISTANCE LEARNING PLATFORM	424
	SPORTS MANAGEMENT, INTEGRITY OF SPORT, GOOD GOVERNANCE, LEGAL ISSUES AND VOLUNTEERING	429
V.Dimitrov	INTEGRITY OF SPORT, GOOD GOVERNANCE, LEGAL ISSUES	431
Se.SAMUR	UEFA CRITERIA AND CLUB MANAGEMENT	435
S.Djobjova	THE ROLE OF SPORT IN THE MODEL OF EU YOUTH POLICY	440
	ETHICS, SOCIOLOGY, SPORT STATISTICS AND ANALYSES	443
A.Dimitrova	SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE FIELD OF SPORT	445
P.SCHOLZ	ON THE FOOTBALL TERRACE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC	449
J.Gošnik, K.Žažar	HEALTH AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF CONDUCTING SPORTS ACTIVITIES	455
	PHYSIOTHERAPY IN ORTHOPEDICS AND TRAUMATOLOGY	461
L.Sazdova,	CLOSED KINETIC CHAIN EXERCISES FOR TRAINING OF THE DYNAMIC STABILIZATION IN SHOULDER IMPINGEMENT SYNDROME	463
N.Popova, G.Petrov, D.Mileshkina, I.Nesheva	PROGRESSION OF THE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AFTER DELIVERY BY CAESAREAN SECTION	469
T.Grueva, K.Stambolieva	STABILOGRAPHY A RELIABLE METHOD FOR MEASUREMENT OF POSTURAL BALANCE IN PATIENT AFTER ANTERIOR CRUCIATE LIGAMENT RECONSTRUCTION	474
D.Mileshkina, D.Popova-Dobreva, N.Popova	DISTRIBUTION OF LOWER LIMB EDEMA IN PREGNANT WOMEN	478
V.Taskova, S.Rusev, D.Ganchev	INJURY ASSESSMENT OF ANTERIOR TALOFIBULAR LIGAMENT IN KARATE ATHLETES	482
R.Tasheva, K.Kolev, V.Belchev, V.Dalev, D.Popova, G.Mitrev	DIAGNOSTIC OF THE FOOT IN CHILDREN VIA A TENSOMETRIC PLATFORM	485
Hudáková Z., Lysá E., Lesňáková A., Kurzeja P.	POSITION AND STABILITY OF THE BODY IN CASE OF CHILDREN IN YOUNGER SCHOOL AGE	488
Lesňáková, A., Hudáková, Z., Kolárová, M., Rusnák, R.	INTERDISCIPLINARY COOPERATION IN DEALING WITH SPINAL DISEASES	493
	PHYSIOTHERAPY IN CARDIO AND RESPIRATORY DISEASE	499
A.Dimitrova, Z.Koleva, I.Maznev, N.Izov, D.Lubenova, K.Grigorova- Petrova, M.Nikolova	PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAM IN PATIENTS WITH TRANSCATHETER AORTIC VALVE IMPLANTATION	501

M.Nikolova, N. Izov, I.Maznev, I.Ivanov, D.Vasileva, A.Dimitrova, K.Grigorova-Petrova	PHYSIOTHERAPY IN PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC RESPIRATORY FAILURE IN CLINICAL STAGE	506
PHYSIOTHERAPY IN NEUROLOGY AND PSYCHIATRY		511
D.Lyubenova, T.Bizheva, N.Izov, I.Maznev, A.Dimitrova	PRINCIPLES OF MODERN PHYSIOTHERAPY AFTER SURGICAL TREATMENT OF LUMBAR SPINE PAIN (REVIEW ARTICLE)	513
T.Bizheva	THE INFLUENCE OF PHYSIOTHERAPY ON GAIT AFTER SPINAL SURGERY	518
D.Vasileva, N.Izov, I.Maznev, D.Lubenova, K.Grigorova-Petrova	MOTOR ACTIVITY IN PATIENTS WITH SUPRATENTORIAL UNILATERAL STROKE	521
D.Marinova	USE OF PHYSIOTHERAPY TO IMPROVE FATIGUE IN PATIENTS WITH MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS	526
PHYSIOTHERAPY IN PEDIATRICS AND GERIATRICS		531
N.Gencheva, A.Malinova, R.Mitrova	APPLICATION OF A PHYSIOTHERAPEUTIC PROGRAM IN CHILDREN WITH PNEUMONIA	533

EDUCATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN MACEDONIA AND BULGARIA

Biljana Popeska, Ilija Klincarov,

Eleonora Mileva, Nikovski Goran

ABSTRACT

Effectiveness and quality of physical education teaching process is determined by many factors. The key factor in this process is the teacher, particularly his/hers abilities to plan, organize and realize the PE teaching process according to students abilities and interests, following the prescribed curriculum and using all available resources and equipment. Educating future physical education teachers is not a simple process of transmission of knowledge, but it is also a process of training for practical work of students – future teachers. The aim of this research is to analyze and compare the initial education of future PE subject teachers and general classroom teachers that will teach PE in primary schools, studying at the Universities in Macedonia and Bulgaria. The analyses of documentation and comparative analyses are used as a research method. Similarity in some components of the programs are established. Similar study programs and exam requirements could be note at Teaching faculties in Macedonia and Bulgaria that prepare generalist teachers as well as certain similarities between requirements for PE specialists educated at Faculty of sport and PE and National Sport Academy. Different requirements and approaches in realization of teaching practice and practical work of students' future generalist's teachers and PE specialist in Macedonia and Bulgaria can be outlined. Recommendations are given for improving the current situation in both countries.

Key words: teacher education, curriculum, physical education, teaching practice

Introduction

Effectiveness and quality of physical education teaching process is determined by many factors. The key factor in this process is the teacher, particularly his/hers abilities to plan, organize and realize the PE teaching process according to students abilities and interests following the prescribed curriculum and using all available resources and equipment. Organizations such as EU Commission and UNESCO recognize physical education teachers as key agents for putting physical and sport policies into practice (European Commission, Expert Group on Health-Enhancing Physical Activity, 2015).

The status of PE as school subject and the status of PE teachers are determined by many factors. One of the leading one is the quality of professional education of PE teachers or generalist teachers that deliver physical education. The Recommendation 13 of the EU Work Plan for Sport (2014–2017) clearly states that qualified PE teachers should be preferred at all educational levels. In this regard, the subject of our study is directed on education of teachers delivering PE in primary schools in Macedonia and Bulgaria.

Aim and objectives of the study

the aim of this study is to analyze and compare the initial education of future generalist teachers that deliver PE in the basic primary education and future PE specialists, studying at the Universities in Macedonia and Bulgaria. The analyses and comparison were based on several key aspects including the following elements: learning programs at the universities – contents, structure, time allocation, exam requirements, ECTS credits; realization of teaching practice; general requirements for teacher's competences; requirements for employment, etc. Similarities and differences between countries related to PETE are used as a foundation for future improvement and for recommendations for future development of PETE. The analyses of documentation and comparative analyses are used as a *research method*. Several documents from both countries related with teachers education, law regulations and regulations for teachers competences. For the state in Macedonia, the following documents were analyzed: Law for Primary education (2015); Conception for nine-year compulsory primary education (2007); Regulation for teacher's development; PHE curricula from 1st to 9th grade; study programs of

the faculties that educate generalist teachers that deliver PHE and PE specialists. From Bulgaria, following documents were analyzed: National strategy for the development of physical education and sport 2012–2022 in Bulgaria, Regulation № 12 (from 01.09.2016) for status and professional education development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists. Special emphasis was given at analyses of the study programs from the both countries, differences regarded contents, maintains of the subject, exam requirements and practical teaching.

Results

The analyses of teachers education can't be made or at least can't be done completely if we don't know the general educational perspective and structure in each of analyzed countries and in these frames, the position and state of physical education. In this regard, based on the information from official documents and some national studies realized in Bulgaria (Mileva, 2012) and Macedonia (Malcev & Popeska, 2017; Popeska, Klincarov, Mitveski & Nikovski, 2017) and comparative studies including this countries (Klincarov, Popeska, Kovac, Starc & Mileva 2017) some similarities but also differences regarded the state and structure of educational system and position of PE in both analyzed countries could be noted. One of the main differences closely related with the object of this study is the general structure of the educational systems in both countries (Klincarov et al., 2017). In Macedonia, the compulsory education starts at the age of six, named as compulsory nine years primary education, realized in three cycles of studies, (1st – 3th grade, 4th – 6th grade and 7th – 9th grade). The first stage of primary education (1st – 5th grade) is known as classroom teaching delivered by generalist teachers. The second stage of primary education is subject teaching (6th–9th grade) realized by subject teachers. In Bulgaria, the general structure of education system is following: primary education from 1st to 4th grade, pro-gymnasium (Junior High School) from 5th to 7th grade, followed by secondary education from 8th to 12th grade, realized in two stages (high school from 8th to 10th grade and secondary school from 11th to 12th grade). This structure of the educational system within two countries indicates the different education and preparation of the teachers. Comparative studies among two countries (Klincarov et al, 2017), suggest on certain similarities regarded physical education. In both studied countries, physical education is an obligatory school subject in all levels of

the educational system, practiced three times per week. In Macedonia, the subject is named “physical and health education”, while in Bulgaria is named “physical education and sport”. Regarded the number of classes, in Bulgaria the third PE lesson is provided usually as module education out of PE classes.

Education of generalist teachers and preparation for PE in Macedonia and Bulgaria

The education of the teachers for PE is related with the low requirement for delivery of PE classes in different stages of education. In Macedonia, the subject physical and health education is delivered by generalist teachers in the stage of classroom teaching (1st to 5th grade) and by PE specialist in the stage of subject teaching (6th to 9th grade). Similar situation is noted in Bulgaria, where in primary education (1st – 4th grade), PE is delivered by generalist teachers, while in the next stages of education (5th to 12th grade), PE specialists realize PE classes.

Regarded teachers education, in Macedonia, generalist teachers are educated at Teaching Faculties in Skopje, Stip and Bitola or at the Faculty of Philosophy – Institute of Pedagogy in Skopje and Tetovo. The professional qualifications at the Teaching faculties are Bachelor in primary education or “graduated primary school generalist teacher” and at the Institutes of Pedagogy is Bachelor in pedagogy or “graduated pedagogic”. For both diplomas, 240 ECTS are required. Regarded the preparation for physical and health education there are differences in study programs between Teaching Faculties and Institutes of Pedagogy. Courses for methodic of physical education are included in the study programs at all Teaching Faculties in Macedonia At the Faculty of educational sciences at Goce Delcev University in Stip, during the 5th and 6th semester of study, students learn Basics of Physical and Health education with methodic 1 (6 ECTS) and Physical and health education with methodic 2 (8 ECTS) (<http://arhiva.ugd.edu.mk/mk/fon/studiski-programi/oddelenska-nastava.html>). Both courses included theoretic lectures, practical exercises, independent work on projects and presentations, observation classes and obligatory practical realization of PHE classes in schools. Special attention is given to practical work and practical realization of PHE classes in schools. These classes are instructed and supervised by teacher – mentor and professor – mentor and obligatory for all students during all 6th semester. Individual realization of PHE classes

in each grade, positively estimated by the university professor are one of the requirements for final exam from this subject. In the 8th semester, in period of 4 weeks, students have obligatory internship training or “pedagogic work”. During this period, students are fully involved in the teaching process in schools, teaching all school subjects including PHE. All students’ activities are noted in their “diary for practical work”. The whole process is monitored by university teachers and guided by mentor – teacher. This practical work is precondition for getting the final diploma. Related with PHE, beside mentioned courses, students can also learn “Sport and recreation”, “Theory and practice of movement games”. Similar situation, with different names of the subjects and different maintains by semesters is noted at other Teaching faculties in Macedonia.

Compared with this, at the Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Pedagogy, beside fundamentals of pedagogy, didactics, methodic of educational work, there is no subject related with PHE and methodic and didactical aspects of realization of PHE (http://www.fzf.ukim.edu.mk/ddtest21/public/uploads/files/00programinovi/Predmetni_programi_-_Pedagogija_finalna.pdf). Similar situation is noted for art and music education as well.

Similar situation as one presented for education of generalist teachers at the Teaching faculties in Macedonia is also noted in Bulgaria. Namely, the generalists teachers in Bulgaria who teach PE in primary school study the specialties Pre-school and Primary school pedagogy or Primary school pedagogy with Foreign language in the Universities in Bulgaria to Faculties of Pedagogy. The professional qualifications are: Bachelor in pedagogy – pre-school and primary school teacher or primary school teacher with foreign language. All regular students study the module Theory of Physical education for one semester in the second study year between 3 and 5 ECTS. In the third study year the generalist students learn Methodic of Physical education (5 ECTS – lectures, seminars and ongoing pedagogical practice) (<http://uni-sz.bg/>). During the practice each student observes and when it is possible he/she provides part or whole PE lesson under the supervision of teacher mentor and after consultations with the university assistant. In the 8th semester (last) is organized the pre-graduate internship/training, which takes place in two cycles: in elementary school – 4 weeks and in kindergarten

– 4 weeks. During the internship, future primary school teachers teach lessons on all subjects, including PE. According to the new Regulation № 12, each mentor teacher has 2 students allocated. The internship (16.5 credits) runs under the guidance of an assistant who keeps in touch with mentor teachers. Each cycle ends with a state practical examination before a state exam committee. An oral exam is also held by the State Examination Commission on private methodic, with questions in the field of PE (being equal to those in mathematics, etc.). There are four state examinations: written theoretical exam (general in pedagogy and psychology), oral exam on Methodology of pre-school and primary school education and two practical – in kindergarten and elementary school. Other disciplines offered to the bachelors as optional are: “Motor training and APA”, “Motor training and Kinesitherapy” “Sports animation”, “Bulgarian folks dances” with 2 to 3 credits.

Education of PE specialists in Macedonia and Bulgaria

In Macedonia and Bulgaria, PE specialist are delivering PE classes in the second stage of primary education (6th – 9th grade in Macedonia) or in the secondary schools (5th to 12th grade) in Bulgaria. In Macedonia, the oldest and leading institution in preparation of PE specialist is the Faculty of physical education, sport and health at the “St. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje. In the last few years, such studies are also realized at the Faculty of Sport at the University in Tetovo. Related with preparation for practical realization of PHE classes, students are prepared during 4 years studies at the study program “Physical and health education”, earning totally 240 ECTS. The professional qualification that students achieve is Bachelor in Kinesiology. Study program contains obligatory and optional courses from different areas of kinesiology. Students learn subjects related to different sports: gymnastics, sport games, martial arts, recreation; subjects with bio – medicine background; background in humanities – pedagogy, psychology, sociology; practical teaching in summer and winter sports etc. The subject dedicated to learning of methodic and didactic aspects of PE teaching process is named “Didactics of physical and health education”. This course is realized in the final year of studies, evaluated with 8 ECTS. Students are included in theoretic lectures, practical exercises in schools (observation and practical realization of PHE classes) and project activities The pre – exam requirement for final exam

are very similar with the practical work of students at the Teaching faculties. It includes observation classes, written preparations for the class, tandem realization of PHE classes in schools, independent realization, pedagogical work etc.

Similar, in Bulgaria in the secondary schools there are qualified specialists in physical education. In all schools in Bulgaria from 5th to 12th grade, PE teachers are specialists, who have graduated the National Sports Academy (Peneva & Mileva, 2005), or specialized in Physical Education at the Pedagogical Faculties of the Universities in Veliko Tarnovo, Blagoevgrad, Shumen, Plovdiv and Sofia. The Faculty of Physical Education at the National Sports Academy in Sofia has been the core of the National Sports Academy in Bulgaria since its establishing in 1942 (then as Higher Institute for Physical Culture) (Mileva, 2011). The professional area is currently defined as Pedagogy of Physical Education with Physical Education Major. Bachelor's Degree programs last for eight semesters in regular mode of study and ten semesters in part-time education. Both modes lead to obtaining 240 ECTS credit points. Graduation from the Faculty of Physical Education provides professional qualification "Teacher in physical education". Using modules of general preparation, students have the opportunity to obtain an additional qualification along with their major – Coach in sport or Sport manager, Sports animator, Coach in APA. During their studies the graduates of the Faculty can also specialize their initial qualification in post-graduate programmes (www.nsa.bg).

Regarded the structure of the study program, it contains Compulsory general theoretic subjects; compulsory specialized subjects, elective subjects – theoretical and practical, optional subjects; training courses in skiing, water sports, tourism, orientation and camping; Teaching practice at school and finaly state examination or defending a diploma thesis. Teaching methods at the Faculty include lectures and individual work as well as participation in projects development and implementation. Practical training is a key component of all qualification programmes. Training structures and programmes for obtaining a degree in physical education and teacher qualification are entirely in compliance with the European standards and requirements. The Faculty participates actively in all European activities intended to align the European higher education structure in sport science.

Studying at the Faculty of Physical Education at NSA in Sofia and at Faculty of PE sport and health in Skopje, encompasses the three educational and qualification degrees – Bachelor, Master and Doctor. The formal university education is only one of the segments of education of future teachers. Related with the professional competences of the teachers, in Macedonia they are defined in the Regulations for basic professional competences of primary and secondary school teachers (2015), defined in the Low for primary and secondary schools (2015). In Bulgaria, the State Educational Standards for Status and Professional Education development of teachers, principals and other pedagogical specialists are defined in Regulation № 12 (from 01.09.2016).

Discussion

based on the analyses of the national strategic documents for development of PE and of the study programs of the faculties that prepare generalist teachers and PE specialist from the both countries, similarities in some components of the programmes are established. Similarities are noted between study programs of the Teaching faculties in Macedonia and Bulgaria regarded the preparation of generalist teachers for delivering physical education. Similarities are noted in the contents, practical teaching and work, exam requirements. Exception is the profile of generalist teachers in Macedonia educated at Faculty of Philosophy, Institute of Pedagogy that can be also employed as generalist teachers but have no subject for methodic and didactic aspects of physical education. Existence of such profile of teachers with no specific education for PE, music and art in their university education have a great negative effect in their future work with children in primary school. From the aspect of the quality of delivery of PE classes by generalist teachers, lot of problems are noted in both countries (Klincarov et al, 2017). Possible reasons should be analyzed in wider context including conditions in schools, material facilities, structures of PE curricula, and possibilities for continuous professional development, improved cooperation with faculties for Sport and Physical education / National Sport Academy etc.

Different requirements and approaches in realization of teaching practice, the exam criteria and evaluation of PE specialists in Macedonia and Bulgaria can be outlined. In this regard, what can be done as a future step is international agreements and learning practices connect the Faculty of Phys-