

## SPORTS, EXERCISE ONLINE? THE OPINION OF SPORT MAJORS ON THE NON-ATTENDANCE TUITION

O. Nemeth-Toth<sup>1</sup>, J. H. Ekler<sup>2</sup>, J. Patakine Bosze<sup>3</sup>, M. Koltai<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

**Aim of the study:** The aim of our research is to map out the new aspect of life, in one section of higher education, created by the epidemiological situation, to get to know the methodics used by the teachers of the two sport science institutes (ESI, STI) in our faculty, and get to know our student's opinion on the topic. **Methods:** We worked with our own questionnaire, which includes the following groups of questions: demographic data, questions about the students' availability of tools, students' opinions about the requirements, communication with the instructor, the completion of the courses, changes in their own learning habits and their physical and practical preparation capabilities. The members of sample was studied at the Eötvös Loránd University PPK in Szombathely and Budapest by students majoring in sport field. **Results:** No difficulties were reported by our students, 90% had adequate tools. Their workload was much higher than in previous periods, which was reflected in a strong increase in time spent with studying ( $p < 0.01$ ). The lessons, tasks and dissertations carried out in the online learning space were a bigger challenge for the lecturers, based on the opinion of our students, the education did not seem more exciting or creative (2.8 on a 6-point scale). Opinions about the educational platforms used were evenly distributed, they did not find it difficult to navigate between the different surfaces (3.66 on a scale of 6.). **Conclusion:** The virtue of problem solving could be practiced in recent times. It is advisable to incorporate the experience of the recent period into the solutions of the important tasks ahead.

**Key Words:** student opinion, online education, sports practice, theory

### INTRODUCTION, ACTUALITY OF THE TOPIC

The epidemiological situation has put not only our country but also the whole World in an unusual situation. We can experience the impact of globalization firsthand through the varying severity of restrictions. But life can (could) not

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<sup>1,2&4</sup> Faculty of Education and Psychology, Institute of Sport Science, Szombathely  
[nemethne.toth.orsolya@ppk.elte.hu](mailto:nemethne.toth.orsolya@ppk.elte.hu)

<sup>3</sup> Institute of Health Promotion and Sport Science, Budapest

stop thus we had to adapt quickly to the changed circumstances. After the government decree, introducing the non-attendance tuition, teachers in our institution, because of advancing the spring break, had about one week to convert to non-attendance tuition which was unprecedented in our institution's history. A very particular situation emerged at the majors of Sport Bachelors and Unanimous Physical Education Teacher Training, because in what we specialize in is basically practical, with a strong theoretical base. The adaptation of exercise materials for courses that can solely be practically implemented – like athletics, gymnastics, ballgames, martial arts, racket sports, camps, teaching methods – seemed at first, like an impossible task to solve in an online environment. However, with teaching management, which required quite a sacrifice from the students, as well as teachers and people managing the teaching methods, processing the theoretical curriculum of the former semester became possible, which in this semester was followed by blocks of practical courses with quite busy schedules for the teachers and students too.

### **THE PURPOSE/QUESTION OF THE RESEARCH**

We have decided to try and build in those activities used during the non-attendance tuition into the attendance tuition, for example in a correspondence course, which could be used there successfully and call them “good exercises”. In our research we were curious of the opinion of our students, how could they adapt their studying and preparation styles to this new situation. Does their generation – the Z-generation – whom were born into the digital world, find studying, tests taking, training and solving of tasks during the semester a problem free challenge?

### **PRELUDE OF THE RESEARCH, SYNOPSIS OF THE LITERATURE**

The handouts, decisions and the altered Student Requirements that are once again put into use (second wave) were put into shape by the ELTE Epidemiological Situation Operation Coordinating Body and were made based on laws regulating the epidemiological situation [40/2020. (III. 11.) Edict]. (Internet 1)

The pandemic situation, the modified teaching-studying environment, the non-attendance education did not only make us, the writers of this study, think about these topics for a research. According to the register of the Research Ethic Committee from the ELTE Pedagogy and Psychology Faculty there were altogether about fifty mainly psychology themed empirical research requests, small part pedagogy themed, some regarding sports, sport pedagogy themed research ethic requests put in by the teachers working on the faculty. Project ideas were also added to the treasury of solutions for this odd living condition.

There were similar studies conducted at BME, PPKE, ELTE TÓK, BCE, SE, SZTE, Óbuda University and the teachers at ELTE BDPK have also published relevant articles.

IKT provided tools

Besides other topics, the online surveys analyzed the tools available for the students. Németh Tamás's (2020) research is an interesting one from a student's point of view. The author asked his fellow students (N=30). Answers to his survey showed similarities to our results in accordance with the tools available for the students (laptop, smartphone), platforms used by the teachers and test taking, examinations. A survey made by the ELTE Pedagogical and Psychological Faculty showed similar results, in other words, our students have smart devices needed for a non-attendance education, only the lack of headsets arised as a potential problem.

Problems caused by the sudden change – difficulties of the conversion

The sudden problem needing a solution, conversion to non-attendance tuition, has *created a challenging situation for the students and the teachers as well*. This idea is backed up by the study of Zheng and his colleagues (2020). 332 people participated in this survey (including teachers and students form Islamabad, Pakistan). By looking at their answers it can be clearly seen that a proactive personality, social capital, online interaction and social support are strongly in connection with each other and it can be declared that these elements strengthen each other. The situation created by the pandemic could be solved by the mutual effort of students and teachers whom are self-sufficient, proactive and willing to help each other. However, there were quite some many students who felt like it was *hard for them to deal with* this new situation. According to the study of Kovács and et al. (2020), which was based on feedback from the students, it can be said that the lack of real-life lessons and the lack of communication with group members *caused the problem* for most of them. The research of Kasza Georgina (2020) on this topic concluded that the academic achievements of the students was greatly affected by the epidemiological situation. A number of them got into life situations that could not be solved easily (stress, isolation and getting used to the new way of studying), although being at home in the digital world they had troubles with studying alone and had other technical difficulties due to the lack of resources. All of these contributed to the difficulty of adjusting to the non-attendance education. On the contrary, there is a related study from Schreiber (2020) made at Universität Hamburg. From the more than 6000 students asked, little more than half said they think they could cooperate with the altered teaching – studying conditions pretty well.

The help provided by the university for the conversion

The responders to the survey in Universität Hamburg (Schreiber 2020) were satisfied with their own technical resources and the ones provided by the university also the technical solutions known beforehand but not often used have been put to work in a greater quantity. The information handling strategy of the university, and last but not least the flexibility and the positive attitude of the teachers contributed to the opinion-shaping of the students as well. The study made by Serfözö and colleagues from the ELTE Teacher and Kindergartener Faculty (2020) talks about the observations of the non-attendance education up until now, it mentions advantages and disadvantages too. According to this survey, in the opinion of the students, advantages include flexible time management, the possibility of self-development and the convenience of their homes. What appeared to be a challenge was the lack of personal contact with other students and teachers, the independent studying and using the technical devices, probably because of its varied appearance, which seemed to cause a problem even though the students involved with non-attendance education are part of “generation Z” whom are considered to be “native digitals” (Prensky, M. 2001). For this generation it is almost automatic to be able to do multiple digital tasks simultaneously and the use of smart devices. (H. Ekler and et al., 2018)

A survey conducted by the German Higher Educational and Scientific Research Center- DZHW (Internet 4) shines a light on the lack of relationships between the fellow students and the teachers. According to the results it can be said that the students are suffering from isolation: 79 percent of them said that they miss the personal conversations with their fellow students (Kovács et al., 2020). At the same time there were the about 28.000 students studying in German universities that were interviewed and 86 percent of them had no or barely no problems while adjusting to the digital courses, 78 percent had suitable technical devices to be able to participate with. Two thirds of the students were happy for the flexible time management and were satisfied with the implementation of the examinations.

The possible solutions for non-attendance education for different universities, bodies coordinating the non-attendance tuition

In the article of Kraus (2020) he talks about the difficulties of teaching management in German sport universities and offers similar solutions to the ones ELTEs’ management has put to use in the sports faculties. After the theoretical blocks the solution could include making blocks out of practical parts of some curses. According to the author digital learning limits students participation in sports faculties. The survey made by the Student Council of the University of Technology and Economics in Budapest (2020 Internet 2) showed what kind of problems occurred, that were similar to educational organization

problems in the sport university, during the implementation of practical like courses. As a possible solution these practical courses were reassigned to another semester and during online learning establishing the theoretical knowledge, needed for the practical courses, was preferred. Results of the same study shows that according to the opinion of two-thirds of the students conversion to e-learning works well for the university thanks to the fact that most of the teachers have used some of these online platforms beforehand in their courses too. Based on the opinions of the students it can be said that the cooperation between teachers and students is working well but of course is not problem-free. The research showed that the workload of teachers has multiplied, because they had to produce the online curriculum, personalized tasks and helpful documents all in a short time. The University Studies Committee keeps tabs on the development and good practices, there is also a united committee of universities that came to be to coordinate the tasks during the non-attendance tuition. At our faculty “Metropont” is this committee, but before setting it up there was a questionnaire for the teachers in the faculty to collect data. The main goal of this survey was to see the digital competence of the teachers. Based on the answers there were mentor groups set up, each led by a helpful, and digitally highly qualified colleague, whom could help their 6-8 group members in questions regarding making a digital curriculum. Their work was coordinated by the mentor-coordinators. The faculty gave the teachers an issue written by Bereczky Enikő and colleagues (2020) the “A methodological toolkit to support non-attendance education for ELTE PPK educators”.

Online teaching – hybrid teaching – platforms

The results of Meulenbroeks R.’s study (2020) show that the students prefer offline tuition, although online teamwork has also gotten positive feedback and overall combined (hybrid) education is favored. At Misoram University, India, Mishra and his colleagues (2020) made a study dealing with the topic of online teaching-learning tools used because of COVID-19, and also with methods available to educational institutions, with which conversion to online learning could be carried out. The papers conclusions include the above-mentioned overload of the teachers and problems including the use of all these different digital platforms – Zoom, Teams, Skype, What’App, Google Meet, Google Classroom, e-mail. This is backed up by Parapatics and Vighs’ (2020) conclusion which says that while the wide assortment of online platforms are one of the advantages of non-attendance education, still disadvantages include the non-uniform use of these and also the initial insecurity of the teachers whom are not at home with using ICT gadgets or are using a certain platform for the first time.

## **MATERIAL AND METHODS**

We started our research in June 2020 in virtue of the 2020/183 sz. REC (Research Ethic Committee) permission. We have created a new and genuinely made questioner included the following question topics: demographic data, questions regarding tool availability for the students, the opinion of students in the question of requirements, communication with their teacher, if the courses are achievable, their own learning habits, changes in this and physical possibilities for preparation. The Hungarian sample base was from ELTE PPKs' Universities at Szombathely and Budapest locations the students majoring in Sports Science and students in Undivided Teacher Education Training majoring in Physical Education Teacher Training. The link of the online questionnaire was sent as a message in NEPTUN at the end of May 2020, end of June, and the first week of September, overall, three times. 244 students have filled out the questionnaire.

## **THE HYPOTHESES, QUESTIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

H1: Let's assume our students possess the technical equipment required for online-learning.

H2: Let's assume our students have difficulty acclimatising to the different distance-learning platforms used by the tutors.

H3: Let's assume the situation was a difficult for our students.

H4: Let's assume the learning methods of the students changed significantly.

H5: Let's assume during distance-learning the tutoring became more exciting and creative.

The questions of the research:

1. How do student prepare for practical exam?
2. What kind of devices do they use during their practical practice?
3. What types of training do they employ the most?
4. In this situation to what extent did they feel the curriculum was equivalent to normal theoretical and practical lessons, which they could have attended otherwise?

## **RESULTS**

Our students were able to attend the online education with the help of smartphones (99,6%) and laptops (95,5%). 87% of the available devices were suitable for the completion of the tasks, while 12% considered them as partly suitable for educational purposes. The students were able to give multiple answers. Only 5% encountered frequent technical issues, and most experienced little to none during the online lessons.

H2 Our students considered the platforms used by the tutors uniform, they were

able to navigate between them without difficulty. On a scale of 1-6 they received an average score of 3.66 (median 4, mod 5). The lower numbers of the Litker scale, which was used in the research, referred to “NO” answers in all instances, while the higher numbers referred to the various stages of the “YES” answers.

H3 During distance-learning our respondents, when asked about overwork, on average, rated it 3.85 on a scale of 1-6. (mod 4, median 4). The trend seemed to be that our female students felt overloaded to a greater extent than male students.

H4 The studying habits of our students also changed in this unusual situation, achieving an average score of 4.34, also on a scale of 1-6. (median 4, mod 4). 61% of our students reckon they spent more studying than before, 26% experienced no change, but 13% spent less time with preparation. There was a strong significant correlation between these two variables, in other words, their time spent studying increased drastically.

H5 During the use of the online platforms our students felt that tutoring became less exciting and creative, earning a 2.8 on a scale of 1-6 (median 3, mod 1).

Our students prepared for the autumn practical exam at home, 72% choosing (conditioning, aerobic, pilates) and a large proportion opting for mental and conditional preparation (60%). Most followed a training plan, used videos to prepare and utilised hand equipment (weights, elastic bands) as well as balls. (According to multiple choice answers). The preferable forms of training included body weight training, running, various fitness trends and cycling, in that order.

Our respondents gave an average score of 4.34 on a scale of 1-6 regarding the amount of time given to complete the tasks in the practical lessons (median 5, mod 5).

Our students felt that the mastering of practical curriculum was significantly more difficult than the theoretical curriculum, moreover, their opinions on this matter varied greatly. For the practical lessons our students preferred their mid-term grade to be proposed based on task completion during the semester. (52%) According to multiple choice answers.

## **DISCUSSION, HYPOTHESIS TESTING**

Our first hypothesis, in which we assumed our students have the necessary equipment for distance learning, turned out to be true. These results mirror the research of Németh (2020) that states ICT devices, required for distance learning, are at the disposal of the students. The smart devices, which this generation uses so naturally as they are digital natives (Prensky, M. 2001), made the swift transition to the new environment and the adjustment to the

various platforms used by the tutors possible. Therefore, our second hypothesis turned out to be untrue. The third hypothesis, which assumed the current situation was a burden on participants of the educational process, was confirmed by the opinions of our students. The circumstances were especially difficult for our female students. The research of Deés (2020) contains not only the increasing burdens on the students, but also on the tutors caused by the pandemic. The studying habits of the students changed drastically; this is clear from the answers to the relevant questions.—Close to 60% of our students reckoned they spent more time studying, more precisely more than 5 hours per week. As a result, we can consider the fourth hypothesis justified, since there is significant correlation between the change in studying habits and the time spent studying (Pearson Correlation  $-0.322^{**}$ ). These results are supported by the large-scale online questionnaire research conducted by Kasza (2020). Nearly 8000 students took part and 40% of them thought their time spend studying increased. The results of Rajcsányi-Molnár and Bacsa Bán (2021) are similar. Close to half of the respondents spent more time online with educational intent. We will discard out fifth hypothesis, since the students do not believe studying has become more exciting and creative on online platforms. It seems this is only the case for us “digital immigrant” (Prensky, M. 2001) tutors, who found educating in an online environment unfamiliar.

Based on the questions raised in the research, we can state that the students prepared at home, with the help of training plans or educational videos, calisthenics training and hand-tools available to them, for their practical courses. Outdoor activities were also popular, such as running or cycling. They found learning the practical curriculum harder, but in their opinion, they were satisfied with the time given to complete the tasks. In case of the practical subjects, the recommended mid-term grade was considered to be the most suitable to critique the first semester.

## CONCLUSIONS

The title of the article – “Sport, exercise online” contains an antonym, as sport activities demand physical movement while the online space requires the use of various ICT devices. In this research our aim was to find the common denominator between these contradictory concepts and their underlying meanings. The situation that has emerged has its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of distance learning include the improvement of digital competence among our colleagues, the expansion of problem-solving possibilities, e.g. the use of digital platforms. We hope we can apply this availability in the future to assist our correspondent students. A significant proportion of basic sport sciences and physical education teacher training is



practice orientated, thus the conversion of the course material into the online sphere is not an easy task. In some it was not even possible, various teaching arrangement solutions had to be applied. (Shifting courses to the next semester, combining subjects) We hope our vast experience will benefit us in the future, but not as a result of a pandemic.

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