

## **The justification of the demand for university faculty training of physical education teachers in Greece**

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**Abstract:** Even though the EASA (National Academy of Physical Education) has been in operation from 1939 to 1982, it was never regarded as a university institution prior to 1983 and the upgrade to an accredited university took place in 1983 when EASA was renamed TEFAA (Department of Science of Physical Education and Sports). The purpose of this particular research project relates to the justification of the arguments in favour of transitioning from EASA to TEFAA in the 1980s from the individual point of view of professors that taught in both institutions. For this purpose, eight professors/ informants, who taught in the two institutes during that period, were selected using the critical case sampling method, with whom a semi-structured interview was carried out.

**Keywords:** Physical education, Teachers, University

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### **1. Introduction**

The Department of Physical Education and Sports Science (TEFAA from here on) operated for the first time as a part of the University of Athens in 1983. The prospect physical education teachers of Greece began studying in this department the same year. The specific department was established by law 1268 of 1982 article 47 which abolished the pre-existing school called "National Academy of Physical Education (EASA from here)" that was not of university level. The upgrading of the studies of physical education teachers at university level is a phenomenon that has been examined and studied in Europe throughout the twentieth century. Countries such as Italy (Gori, 2015), Germany (Krüger, 2015), Spain (López-Villar & Ramírez-Macías 2020), Croatia (Čustonja & Škegro, 2015), Belgium (Delheye, 2014), the Netherlands (Renson, 1989), United Kingdom (Reilly, 1983), France (Saint-Martin & Attali 2015) and Turkey (Özmaden, Soyer & Özmaden 2018) are prime examples of places where said phenomenon was studied. University courses for physical education existed in the United States from very early in the twentieth century but were oriented towards the career of teacher rather than scientist (Paul, 1996). The shift towards the more scientific aspect of it occurred in the mid-1960s (Shultz, 2017).

In Greece, the upgrade of physical educator's studies has been recorded as a fact (Giannakis, 1998; Zannas, 2003; Kantzidis 2002; Melistas, 2016; Lambrou, 2016) but has not been extensively researched. The causes that contributed to the development of the training in Greece in the early 1980s, the protagonists of this process as well as the reasons for their actions have not been the subject of a thorough historical study until today. Specifically, the study curricula of EASA and TEFAA (Zannas, 2003; Melistas, 2016; Lambrou, 2016) and the support of individuals in the upgrading of studies have been comparatively investigated (Giannakis, 1998; Kantzidis 2002), however the views of persons who participated one way or another in this upgrade have not been included. Such a category of people is the professors who taught in the first years at TEFAA and/or in combination with classes at EASA. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the reasons cited by teachers who taught in both institutions in the period from 1980 to 1990.

### **2. Review of related research**

Whitson and Macintosh (1990) documented throughout the twentieth century that in the United States of America a process of gradual scientization of physical education was introduced. This process seems to occur in Europe as well (Renson, 1989) or at least at the developed countries of Western Europe. The same process seems to have been adopted with a slight time delay in Southern European countries such as Italy (Gori, 2015), Spain (López-Villar & Ramírez-Macías 2020), and France (Saint-Martin & Attali 2015).

Regarding the improvement of the studies of physical education teachers in Greece, historical research has uncovered the following. EASA operated from 1939 to 1983 and the duration of the study program was three years. Yet, as early as 1953, the physical education teachers' trade union body (called the Union of Gymnasts of Greece EGE from here) had requested the establishment of a University Graduate School (Lambrou, 2016). In the 1960s, the particular demand became more intense with EGE again as the core

protagonist (Lambrou, 2016). Ionas Ioannidis, who was the highest administrative official in the Greek state, portrayed one of the most important roles in this whole effort. Ioannidis was born to wealthy parents in Pontus in 1910 and in 1922 he came to Greece as a refugee and settled in Thessaloniki (Kantzidis, 2002). He began and completed studies at the International School of Physical Education in Geneva as a scholarship recipient and continued his postgraduate studies at the University of Hamburg, where he also completed his doctoral studies in 1938 with the title "The continuum of physical education in Greece" (Kantzidis, 2002). In 1964 he became a consultant on physical education in a state institution that had been founded that same year by the then Prime Minister and Minister of Education Georgios Papandreou, which aimed to promote the educational reform planned by the then government. As part of his responsibilities, Ionas Ioannidis, having visited universities in Europe and America, proposed the elevation of the studies at EASA. Among other proposals was the introduction of a fourth year of study and the inclusion of all coaching schools of various sports under the supervision of EASA (Lambrou, 2016). The coup of the colonels in Greece in 1967 suspended all these discussions as well as the reform of the government.

In his research Melistas (2016) examined the TEFAA and EASA curricula from 1974 to 2014. Among his findings was that the EASA curriculum of 1974, 1975, and 1978 emphasized practical courses while the TEFAA courses in a very large percentage were focused on theoretical lessons. He pointed out that the programmes with a medical-biological content represented the highest percentages of all the programs of either EASA or TEFAA in relation to the rest of the theoretical course categories.

In his research Zannas (2003) pointed out that the advancement of studies in 1983 encountered many complications, not only because the minimal existing staff of EASA who held permanent organizational positions did not have academic qualifications to teach in a university faculty, but also because there were no physical education teachers with a doctorate degree. As a consequence, the critical condition of having a doctorate related to the subject was bypassed in the first years and thus the actual upgrade was delayed further.

Finally, Giannakis (1998), in his work titled "Travel for the sports science in Greece from 1834 to 1998", states the contribution of Professor Vassilis Kleisouras who was the first president of the university department. The contribution of Professor Vassilis Kleisouras to the improvement of the physical education teachers' schooling in Greece rests in his insistence on establishing a university department within the existing Universities and not an autonomous Higher School (Kotinos to Vassilis Kleisouras, 2017). This would ensure the higher quality of education.

### **3. Method**

Methodologically, eight professors who taught both at EASA and TEFAA were interviewed in this study. The semi-structured interview technique was used, and the main interview questions involved the study program in the EASA era, the focus of the program, and the reason why the educators requested the upgrading of EASA studies at a higher/university level.

### **4. Results**

When asked what the EASA program was, all the professors emphasized that the courses in the EASA era were mainly of a practical nature and encompassed few theoretical classes (anatomy, physiology, etc.). Characteristically, informant 6 reported:

"In any case, there were few theoretical and much more practical lessons. And I remember what we did. We did first year, second year, third year because I was a three-year student and in the three years, we did both athletics and gymnastics."

Informant 4 also mentioned features" Basically, the practical part was very intense. Endless hours of practice, i.e. the lessons we did back then, which I believe still remain the same today in terms of subjects. Every day we did gymnastics for too many hours, every day we had athletics, every day we did sports. That is, there was a very strong element of the practical part. Of course, we had theoretical courses, we had anatomy, physiology, biology, pedagogy, we had theoretical courses, which included the whole part of the curriculum".

All the informants without any exception to the question "what is the orientation of this program?", emphasized that the orientation of EASA was to form suitable physical educators for school education, so that they could adequately respond to what the educational curriculum demanded. The answer of informant 4 is typical,

"In other words, we were physical educators in the full sense of the word for school. In other words, we were trained, not to sit behind an office, for many years. Okay, we had learned the basics on a practical level, so that we could use them for several years.

Furthermore, they pointed out that scientific research was minimal to non-existent in the scientific subject of physical educators. In fact, informant 1 quoted in his testimony, that there were no books apart from a few theoretical courses such as sports medicine, physical therapy, physiotherapy, anatomy, etc. Where the

theory surrounding practical courses is concerned, it was in the form of notes, therefore, not scientifically proven. Informant 4 added, "What the concept of research is, no one ever taught us, it had not been instilled in us during the years of study. But we came out full physical educators. We went to the schools, and we knew all the equipment, we knew how to use it, we had no gaps in the purely high school practical part."

In his interview, informant 7 mentioned something as important, "Research etc. started after the curriculum was upgraded. I believe there was a big difference between the two time periods. In other words, in the first era, the program mainly concerned producing teachers for the school, that is, it was not for research that is being done now, then it was in its infancy." Informant 2 reinforced this view "The emphasis at that time was to get someone's degree, to apply to be appointed as a physical education teacher in secondary education."

Regarding the reasons why the physical education teachers requested the elevation of EASA, as all the informants independently emphasized, equally important was the quest for equalization with the rest of the pedagogical university institutions both in terms of prestige and salary scale and the improvement of the quality and level of studies by increasing scientific research in all aspects of physical education. Informant 1 highlighted this perspective, claiming: "And secondly, it was that we wanted written evidence, scientific books. Let us get away from the just practical, because you experience that firsthand when you are a student, come on, after 10-15 years you can show some things at school or in the club, but then when you get old, your hands and feet cannot hold you anymore."

In the same context, informant 2 stated: "In other words, we could not accept that we regarded as inferior to our colleagues, playing second fiddle as educators, with what this entails in the salary part as well as in the scientific possibility of advancement and in the positions and administrations of the schools and what this includes in the progression which until then, had not been a possibility. I am noting this because I experienced it myself, the physical education teacher was a second-rate teacher."

Informants 2, 7, and 8 argued that with the improvement of the department, fellow physical educators with notable scientific research that were employed abroad, would be enticed to return to our country and contribute to the growth of the quality of the studies in a more scientific direction, to reach the standards of physical education provided by university institutions abroad.

Finally, informant 6 cited one more reason. Specifically: "Moreover, the need that slowly arose was due to the development of sports at higher levels that had a higher need for "scienceness". It was the need stemming from the sporting world for a more scientific approach to sports. I think that this need evolved naturally, for the request to upgrade the department, the years of study and the needs of society and the sports world."

On the question of whether all the physical educators asked for said department upgrade and if not, for what reason, it is worth pointing out that they all agreed on the upgrading of the EASA. The only disagreement that occurred was with what the direction the school would take. In addition, some EASA lecturers intended to delay the promotion of the faculty so that they would acquire the appropriate academic qualifications in order to maintain their positions. A very typical response to the prevailing mentality is the description of informant 1: "So, during the time when we were fighting for the faculty to become the highest school, it was sabotaged by some professors, because if the upgrade took place then, that is, from 1975 to 1979, because the school was upgraded in 1982, they would not be able to teach and thus acquiring the title of lecturer, since they did not have a Ph.D. They were delaying it on purpose, that is, it was sabotage from the inside. As they did not have the qualifications and they were afraid that the positions would be advertised and would be taken by someone who had not spent their years in this particular academic establishment. Another testimony of informant 3 states "At first most of us did not know what a doctorate was, I say it clearly, we were asking each other, 'what is a doctorate'".

## **5. Conclusions**

First of all, the EASA courses had a purely practical direction regarding the knowledge of any sport. Each sport was taught throughout all three years of study. In their first year, students had the technical part, in the second the tactical part and in the third year the didactic part. On the other hand, the research was almost non-existent. The theoretical courses were few and had a mainly medical-biological focus (e.g. anatomy, physiology, etc.). The direction of EASA was predominantly intended to form suitable teachers so that they would be able to respond to the role required by the school system. Secondly, to be good coaches in sports clubs by maximizing the performance of their athletes.

The arguments justifying the transition from EASA to TEFAA in the 1980s were mainly professional. In Greece, the theoretical reflection on the field was not developed, like it happened in the USA (Renson, 1989) or in developed countries of Western Europe (Delheye, 2014). The lack of theoretical discussion on the part of the professors of that period is explained by their lack of training and the lack of theoretical education of the physical educators of that period did not lead to theoretical discussions.

#### 6. Other recommendations

As future proposals for further research, the experiences of the students who lived through the corresponding period or even the administrative employees who lived through the specific period could be recorded. It would also be important to investigate the transcripts produced at that time on the issue of progress in making the EASA a university institution. Manuscripts such as the records of the general meetings of the faculty, the records of general meetings of the students of the School, introductory reports of laws, etc. Finally, comparative research between the evolution of the various TEFAAs would highlight the wider area of Physical Education and Sports Sciences in Greece and a study of the educational textbooks that were used, would highlight the epistemological orientation of Sports Sciences in Greece.

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