

SWOT ANALYSIS OF ESTONIAN SPORT EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Introduction

The standard of education of the Estonian people is high. 16% of Estonians between the ages of 24 and 33 had graduated from institutions of higher education, 27% from professional secondary schools and 44% from secondary schools (vocational education included).

The choice of education for children rests largely with parents. Everybody is entitled to education in the Estonian language. In an educational institution in which minority students predominate, the language is chosen by the educational institution. Education is under the supervision of government. After the restoration of Estonia's independence, the laws regulating educational life were passed rather quickly, and on several occasions not all the circumstances were taken into account.

The Education Act states that in accordance with the UNESCO international standard of education classification, the following levels can be brought out: pre-school education, fundamental education, secondary education and higher education.

Approaching the sport education system as a whole, we have to speak at first about physical education in pre-school establishments and schools as nationwide sport education and finish with supplementary training and doctoral degree studies in universities.

Method

The changes taking place in the world of sport imply strengthening and regular updating the skills of sport organisations managers, coaches and instructors. By EZUS-Vocasport specialists vocational training in Europe is somewhat informal and the level is comparatively low. At the same time the level of academic training is formally high, but does not necessarily correspond to the needs of the labour market. (www.ezus-lyon.fr)

The following research methods were adopted in the process of data collection:

- a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the Estonian sport education system
- analysis of legal acts of Estonian sport education system

Results

As of the end of the 90s, the Estonian education system is characterised by the efforts of various education authorities and experts to improve curricula, make management of educational institutions more professional and effective and use means allocated for the education system more efficiently. The current priorities upon development of the education system are related to ensuring the quality and availability of education at its all levels.

The tasks of the Ministry of Education and Research are the arrangement of physical education at schools, the training of sport specialists and the development of sport science (www.hm.ee).

By statistics there are 100876 sports practitioners in Estonia (including 72% males and 28% females). We have 1900 clubs and 68 federations. The percentage of sport activities in the gross national product is 0.15%. The total number of people employed in sport sector is 3270.

(www.stat.ee)

The main strength of Estonia is that training of professional staff has been carried out on university level at the 2 major universities with appropriate facilities

Tartu University, Faculty of Physical Education offers two different kinds of curricula - physical education/sport and physiotherapy. In Tartu University it is possible to study at the Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels.

Tallinn University, Faculty of Physical Education trains physical education teachers and recreation specialists on Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels.

The preparation of staff on university level has been adequate for Estonia concerning quantity (also a strength). If there is a gap, it is filled by the 5-stage preparation of coaches, where the 3 lowest stages train beginner coaches. (strength)

And last, but not least- one strength lies in the fact that e-education in Estonia is going through rapid development and we could share our experience with others.

The main weakness of Estonia is that from year 1991 to 2004 1100 specialists have graduated, but only 50% have remained in this job. The main reason for leaving is low pay and lack of prestige. Second weakness is that the training of referees and coaches has only lately been started to run properly and this system still needs elaborating. Unfortunately teachers of physical education at schools are considered inferior. (weakness)

And last weakness is that the three first stages of European system of training coaches give equal rights with professional staff, which is going back in quality, the requirements and rights are inadequately specified.

Estonian sport education system has the following opportunities: 1) make the preparation more flexible in terms of additional subjects, as life and labor market requirements are changing; 2) enhance the system of supplementary education so that it would be possible to learn new skills or a new profession at any time; 3) use the possibility of studying in other countries, especially in doctoral studies, which has not been widely used so far; 4) traineeship of coaches with foreign clubs; 5) offer training to foreigners in Estonia in well-established areas such as recreation management in our unique, untouched nature; 6) introducing the third lesson of physical exercise (dancing, games, skiing, etc.)

The threats are: 1) there is high competition between applicants, but money is scarce; 2) swimming and gymnastics trainings are comparatively expensive and the number of methodical lessons on contemporary level should be increased; 3) methodology of research needs updating; 4) sports facilities of universities need updating, especially compared with EU level; 5) the biggest threat is underestimating the importance of physical education and the insufficiency of supervision in schools; 6) the sports facilities of 50% of schools don't meet the EU requirements; 7) there are strong arguments to give up giving grades or marks for physical education; 8) 50% of parents are unable to pay for the child's sporting service; 9) losing the borders between professional and non-professional staff.

Implications

The Estonian Sport Education System seems to correspond to the Copenhagen declaration closely. Developments of co-operation, partnership and other initiatives in Estonia are implemented via Socrates, Leonardo and other European programmes. The three Baltic countries have agreed on common co-operation program in sport. Exchange programmes for students and staff are very popular. Lisbon strategy is designed to promote enhanced European co-operation on sport education in Europe. In co-operation with European Education Council and European Commission, laying emphasis on lifelong learning and stressing the quality of education, the Estonian sport education system is increasingly meeting the social - and market requirements.

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