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A Study on the Sports Training and Instruction in Turkey: An Overview of Higher Education Programs in the Area of Sports

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Abstract: The higher education system in Turkey is governed by the Council of Higher Education (COHE). The higher education institutions providing training and instruction related to sports within this system are highly popular in Turkey. The purpose of this study is to analyze the higher education institutions providing training in the area of sports in Turkey. In this study, the document analysis method, which is one of the qualitative analysis methods, has been used. It has been noted as a result of the analysis that there are 82 higher education institutions and there are 54.419 students receiving training in these institutions. Graduate programs are available in 33 of these higher education institutions. As a result, it is thought that the physical conditions in the training environment and the number academic staff per student are related to the quality of training. Therefore, it may be considered that the improvement of the training conditions in the existing training institutions may contribute to increasing the quality of training and instruction in these institutions. In addition, the success of the studies carried out in the area of sports the education may provide opportunities to raise athletes who may be more successful in national/international competitions.

Key words: Sports · Higher Education · University · Turkey

INTRODUCTION

The higher education system in Turkey is supervised by the COHE. The COHE is an autonomous institution which is responsible for the planning, coordination and governance of the higher education system in Turkey in accordance with the Turkish Constitution and the Higher Education Laws. Universities make their own academic calendars; the academic year generally starts in September and ends in June. There are winter and summer breaks. Summer school is also available at some universities. Turkish universities offer associate's degree programs, undergraduate degree programs, graduate programs and post-graduate programs. Associate degree programs take two years. Vocational high school graduates can qualify for the associate degree programs without taking any centralized entrance exams. Undergraduate degree programs generally take four years. Specialized undergraduate degree programs, such as medicine (six years), may be longer. Universities in Turkey offer a wide range of graduate programs. While graduate programs take about two years (non-thesis master's programs generally take 1.5 years), doctorate programs take about four years. Post-graduate opportunities are also available in universities in Turkey. Duration depends on the program and university. The National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQFHE/TYYÇ) developed with reference to the Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area and the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning was adopted by the COHE in 2010. The levels of the NQFHE/TYYÇ with reference to the European overarching qualifications frameworks as well as that to ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits and student workload are shown below [1].

Universities in Turkey have been brought together under the roof a body called COHE with a Law passed in 1981. The Turkish university system has attained a united structure as of 1982 with 27 universities and the faculties, institutes, colleges, conservatories and vocational colleges under these universities. Having reached 2016, there are now 193 universities in Turkey which include 109 state universities, 73 private universities and eight private

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vocational colleges. Among these universities, the number of universities that provide training in the area of sports is 82, where 6 are private universities and 76 are state universities [2].

A system set up by the COHE is employed in accepting students to higher education institutions offering programs in the area of sports [3]. In this system the university entrance exam points, secondary education (senior high school) cumulative grade point averages and the points received in the special physical skill tests conducted by the higher education institutions within their own framework are calculated and a specified number of students are admitted by each institution of higher education. Although the special physical skill tests vary among higher education institutions, as a general principle, these tests test the candidates' basic motor skills and their skills that pertain to specific branches [4-6]. The basic motor skills that are generally tested in these tests are endurance, speed and skill coordination abilities. Endurance is tested by long-distance runs against time, speed is tested by short-distance sprints and skill coordination is tested by stations consisting of different components. While the testing of the basic motor skills of endurance, speed and skill coordination is considered adequate in the admission of students to the physical education instruction and recreation departments in the entrance examinations of many colleges, special tests, specific to the coaching branch applied for are conducted in addition to the test aimed at testing the basic motor skills of the candidates [5, 6]. With regard to student admissions to the sports management departments however, although student admissions have been carried out on the basis of special skill tests for many years, there are applications on carrying out student admissions on the basis of centralized examinations to sports management departments in recent years and it is expected that all sports management departments will take up student admission procedures on the basis of a centralized system in the near future [4, 7-10].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the document analysis method, which is one of the qualitative analysis methods, has been used. Document analysis covers the analysis of the written materials containing information on the phenomenon or events intended to be analyzed [11]. In this regard, the purpose of this study is to carry out a detailed examination of the programs of higher education institutions offering training and instruction in the area of sports in Turkey. Documents related to the subject, available in the web sites of the COHE and the universities, have been used as the data source. General information pertaining to the total number of universities, types of universities and durations of training and instruction in Turkey have been accessed within the scope of the study. In addition, information on the higher education programs in the area of sports at the universities in Turkey has been collected as well. Information regarding the types of higher education institutions in sports, student quotas, numbers of teaching staff, total numbers of student enrollment, numbers of new enrollments, in 2015, distribution of the number of students by sub-divisions and numerical values for sports related departments admitting students without physical skill examinations but on the basis of written examinations has been attained.

Furthermore, information pertaining to the graduate and doctorate programs related to sports has also been obtained within the scope of the study. The numbers of these graduate programs, the numbers of students enrolled for 2015 and the total numbers of students enrolled are among the main topics of information. Information on the numbers of teaching staff in these programs and the numbers of students per each academic staff member has been presented within the scope of the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

It has been noted upon examining the results of the study that the units providing training in the area of sports at the universities in Turkey are grouped under three main headings. These are: "The Faculty of Sports Science", "Academy of Sports Science and Technology" and "Vocational Schools of Physical Education and Sports" [2-10].

The sub-divisions providing training under these different higher education institutions are: "Physical Education Instruction Department". "Coach Training Department" "Sport Management Department", "Recreation Department", "Department of Physical Education and Sports for the Handicapped" and "Department of Animation". In 72 of the 82 higher education institutions providing training in the area of sports, there is a physical education instruction department in 74, a coach training department in 79, sports management department in 79, recreation department in 33, department of physical education for the handicapped in one and animation department in one [12]. Numerical values for these departments are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of students and teaching staff by educational institutions

INSTITUTION	STUDENTS (2015)			TEACHING STAFF(2015)						
	Newly Registered Students	Registered Students	TOTAL	Professor	Assoc. Prof.	Assist. Prof.	Instructor	Specialist	Research Assistant	TOTAL
THE FACULTY OF SPORTS SCIENCE	1873	4363	5436	18	23	81	89	1	68	286
ACADEMY OF SPORTS SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY	188	882	1070	2		9	3	2	5	21
VOCATIONAL SCHOOL OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS	9568	38245	47813	26	114	433	307	13	342	1145
TOTAL -->	10829	43590	54419	54	143	523	399	16	315	1450

Table 2: Number of Master and Doctorate Students

	MASTER STUDENTS (2015)			DOCTORATE STUDENTS (2015)		
	Newly Registered Students	Registered Students	TOTAL	Newly Register	Registered Stu	TOTAL
SPORTS SCIENCES	106	550	656	18	141	159

As noted in Table 1, the total number of students receiving instruction in the physical education and sport departments is 54.419 according to the 2015 data. 1450 academic staff members and other teaching staff, consisting of 54 professors, 143 associate professors, 523 assistant professors, 399 lecturers, 16 specialists and 315 research assistants are performing instruction duties. According to these data, the number of students per each academic staff member is 75 in the area of physical education and sports. The number of students per each member of the teaching staff however, is 37. On the other hand, the average in the higher education system in Turkey is 48 students per each academic staff member and 21 students per each teaching staff member. It is observed that the number of teaching staff per student and the number of academic staff members per student in the higher education institutions providing education in the area of sports are considerably below the average for Turkey. While there were physical education and sports departments and physical education and sports colleges in the 1990s, there is a tendency towards forming faculties of sports sciences as we approach the present. Colleges which are able to provide adequate academic staff and other required conditions are engaged in efforts to convert into the faculties of sports sciences. In 2016, there are still 14 faculties of sports sciences. In addition to these, there are three colleges of sports sciences and technologies [13].

Students who graduate from "faculties of sports sciences", "colleges of sport sciences and technologies" and "colleges of physical education and sports" can attend graduate and doctorate programs in their areas. There are graduate training programs related to sports in 33 of higher education institutions connected to the higher education system in Turkey [14]. Numbers of graduate schools and doctorate students according to the data for 2015 are given in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, there are a total of 805 students enrolled in the graduate program in the area of sports sciences as of 2015. 656 of the 805 students are attending programs at the master's level and 159 are attending programs at the doctorate level [14].

DISCUSSION

On the basis of the research conducted recently and the experience acquired in the area of sports training, an inclination has arisen to either reduce the weight of the skill tests or remove these tests completely in the admission of students to schools providing sports training and to install entrance examination systems, where sportive background or national/international successful sportive performances are assessed, instead. In this regard, numerous colleges are gradually also integrating the sportive successes and the successful performances attained in sportive branches, by students who are candidates for admission, into the relevant entrance examination systems. In entrance examinations of many colleges, considerable numbers of additional points are granted to athletes with a national team background or who have attained national/ınternational success in their own branches. In fact, some colleges are holding entrance examinations by using the sportive background and sportive success points in addition to

the central examination points and the senior high school cumulative grade points averages, fixed by the council of higher education, alone, without conducting skill tests at all. It is noticed upon examining the sports training policies followed and the student admission systems for institutions providing sports training in different countries, that there is not a standard procedure applied. Analysis of institutions providing sports training in the continents of Europe and America reveals that these institutions admit students on the basis of very different systems [15-19]. While some institutions provide sports training without setting any prerequisites at all, some prefer to admit students on the basis of theoretical examinations measuring sportive skills. The fact that a specific standard could not be established in the world and similarly in Turkey, leads one to think that, this is due to the advantages and disadvantages the different systems bear and which are unique to each system. Institutions of higher education which fear that examination systems placing greater emphasis on sportive skills alone would include the students, whose academic formations are weak, in the systems, are inclined to increase the weight of the academic performance grade in their examinations. Some higher education institutions however, are applying examination systems that place greater emphasis on sportive skills as they believe that inclusion of only those students whose academic skills are high in the systems would create stress with regard to applying or getting others to apply these sportive aptitudes. Furthermore, some intuitions of higher education believe that student admission on the basis of academic success alone would involve certain drawbacks. Accordingly, the teaching of certain techniques by an instructor through actual demonstration in the field would either be highly difficult or impossible due to the lack of the physical skill required to demonstrate or perform a particular skill by the trainer himself. Although both points of view have advantages and disadvantages of their own, the general tendency is to place academic and sportive aptitudes in a balanced manner within the examination systems for student admission. Although there are different tendencies in Turkey as well, as it is the case in other countries, entrance examination systems aimed at testing sportive skills and academic performances in a balanced manner are applied [4-6]. High numbers of applications are made to higher education institutions providing training in the area of sports every year. In a study carried out, the response, given by %34.5 of the 730 students attending physical education and sports programs, to the question as to why they had preferred this department, was that because it was more active and pleasant [20].

In addition, another reason for the preference is that students who graduate from these programs will have many employment opportunities, is also a widespread opinion. There are nearly 12.000 students who graduate from these colleges in the country every year [12]. Students who graduate from Department of Physical Education and Sports can undertake jobs as instructors at the primary, secondary and higher education institutions, as administrators and trainers within the central and rural organizations of the "Sports General Directorate", as trainers, monitors and conditioners at universities and sports clubs [3-6]. Students who graduate from the Departments of Sports Management can undertake jobs as managers at different levels in service units that suit their area of specialty within the central and rural organization of the "Sports General Directorate" and in sports clubs and sports establishments and as administrators in private sports hall establishments, private and public establishments employing more than five hundred workers and civil servants and in the related body of staff of local governments [4-7, 20]. Students who graduate from the Department of Recreation can undertake positions as leisure activity and recreation specialists in touristic establishments [5, 6, 10]. Students who graduate from the "Departments of Exercise and Sports Training for the Handicapped" programs however, can work at rehabilitation centers operating under public and private establishments and perform as trainers for the handicapped athletes [21].

Employment opportunities foreseen for the students who graduate from higher education institutions providing training in the area of sports are working in positions related to sports in the public institutions and private establishments. However, research projects investigating the employment profiles of the students who graduate from the existing programs of the Physical Education and Sports Colleges reveal that there are serious differences between the number of graduates and the number of individuals employed in the sports area. While nearly 12.000 students graduate from Physical Education and Sport Colleges every year, it is observed that the number of individuals employed in the sports sector is quite under these figures. The yearly average of the number of individuals employed in the last five years by government establishments alone is limited to nearly 1.100. Considering the number of graduates that could not

be employed within the last fifteen years, it is estimated that 30.000 to 40.00 graduates of higher education institutions providing training and instruction in the area of sports, have been unable to find employment in their areas of specialty. It has been brought up in a considerable number of studies that many students who have encountered employment problems have worked in different sectors other than those in which they had received their training and furthermore, that students who were in their senior years of study were also inclined to take on jobs in sectors other than their own area of training [22, 24].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it may be thought that although there are an adequate number of higher education institutions in Turkey, the physical conditions and the number of academic staff are inadequate in certain institutions. It is believed that physical conditions in the training environments and the number of academic staff members per student are related to the quality of training received. Therefore, it may be thought that the improvement of the training and instruction conditions in the present higher education institutions may contribute to raising the quality of training and instruction in the area of sports. It is proposed that, as a result of these improvements, sportive success especially in international competitions may be enhanced by also providing positive support to improved sports policies in the country.

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