

Scientific substantiation of the fitness consultant's professional standard in Ukraine

USENKO DARIA¹, DUTCHAK MYROSLAV², POTOP VLADIMIR³, KATERINA ULYANA⁴,
KURDYBAKHA OKSANA⁵
^{1,2,4,5}National University of Physical Education and Sport, Kiev, UKRAINE, ³Ecological University of
Bucharest, ROMANIA

Published online: November 30, 2019

(Accepted for publication: November 15, 2019)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2019.s6353

Abstract

Purpose: The object of the study is the fitness consultant's professional activity. The purpose of the study is the scientific substantiation of the mechanism for developing a fitness consultant's professional standard taking into account international experience, the specifics of legislation and the peculiarities of the development of health fitness in Ukraine.

Material: We used the methods of literary sources analysis, functional analysis, content analysis, expert judgment and mathematical statistics. The principle of experts' mutual selection was used. We involved 124 specialists in the field of health fitness (practitioners, employers, independent experts, scientists and others).

Results: By voting, they formed an expert group in the amount of the 30 most authoritative representatives. The typical professional standard model is defined. The algorithm for forming the professional standard of a fitness consultant in Ukraine is substantiated and implemented, which provides for four stages: analyzing the prerequisites for the formation; preparing a draft professional standard; project verification; implementing the standard in the field of health fitness.

Conclusions: The developed professional standard of a fitness consultant corresponds to the international requirements and reflects the specifics of Ukraine.

Key words: children, school, motric and psychological capacity.

Introduction

The one of the most problem in the life of modern people of all age is the improvement and prevention of health (Aftimichuk 2015; Andrieieva et al., 2019; Korobeynikov et al., 2019). That is why the organizing of fitness industry is very important for National health (Imaset et al., 2018).

Extending the standardization of the sphere of recreational physical activity has become an objective necessity to create a qualitatively new environment for its development (Aftimichuk 2015; Rutkauskaitė et al., 2017; Konttinen et al., 2019). The considerable attention is also paid to the issues of professional activity standardization at the state level. In Ukraine, the activities related to developing the National Qualifications Framework are being actively carried out today. The implementation of which will contribute to the specialists' professional growth in the process of their labor activity, for employers to achieve demand coordination and for individual citizens to choose a profession and obtain a professional career. The initiative to develop professional standards for fitness personnel is consistent with the national trend and has the necessary legislative basis (Pukhovskaya et al., 2014).

However, considering that the fitness industry in Ukraine is in the process of development, the analyzed sources of information are lack of approaches to developing the fitness consultant's professional standards, taking into account domestic peculiarities of the fitness services market development.

The purpose of this study was to establish the evolution of process of development of fitness industry in Ukraine.

Material and methods

We used the methods of literary sources analysis, functional analysis, content analysis, questionnaire, expert judgment and mathematical statistics. The functional analysis method involves the phased identification and consistent description of the hierarchy of labor functions and labor activities. The application of this method will provide a high degree of connectedness of the subject of study (professional standard) with the external environment (real conditions of professional activity). To formulate a list of labor functions and activities, as well as to verify the draft professional standard, the method of expert judgement was used. The procedure for selecting experts for an expert group involved several stages. The principle of mutual selection of experts was used. At the first stage, 124 specialists in the field of health fitness were involved (practitioners in the field of

health fitness, employers, independent experts, scientists and other specialists). The list of applicants for inclusion in the expert group was published on the website <https://uastandart.fitness>. At the next stage, by voting, the experts formed a list of the 30 most authoritative, which made up the expert group (composition by reference <https://uastandart.fitness/ekspertna-hrupa-profesiinoho-standartu-fitness-konsultant-health-coach>).

Results

At the initial stage, it is worth paying attention to existing approaches to determining the basic definitions of the study. In our opinion, it is advisable to take into account the interpretation of the terms in the votes of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, which proposes a hierarchy of related concepts 'skill' – 'qualification' – 'competence'. The term 'skill' is used in connection with the professional activity of a specialist, his work / occupation (job-related approach) to determine the necessary knowledge and skills to perform specific tasks. The term 'qualification' is broader and may contain a description of job requirements, as well as official recognition of formal education and training. The term 'competence' is the broadest and is associated with the ability of an individual to use the necessary knowledge and skills in a typical or changing situation (Bagarić et al, 2007).

In international practice, the development of professional standards is most often regulated by the state, and is carried out by subjects of the labor sphere (Dutchak et al, 2018). In Ukraine, professional standards are being approved at the state level.

Taking into account the existing foreign approaches to the development of professional standards (Pukhovskaya et al, 2014; Rutkauskaitė et al, 2017; Konttinen et al, 2019) and methodological recommendations of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, we have determined a typical model of the standard. The model consists of the following parts: general provisions, general information about the profession, the map of the professional activity type, a list of basic labor functions (units of a professional standard), a description of the main labor functions, technical specifications. As a rule, professional standards are formed from separate units, each of which describes the requirements for performing a specific labor function (Dutchak et al, 2018). Moreover, each unit contains a list of actions that will ensure the implementation of this function, the necessary knowledge and skills, as well as an indication of the degree of complexity of these actions and the level of responsibility and independence in their implementation.

During the study, we determined the algorithm for forming a professional standard for a fitness consultant, which provided for four stages: analysis of the prerequisites for the formation, preparation of a draft professional standard, draft verification, implementation of the standard in the field of health fitness.

1. *Analysis of the prerequisites for the formation of a draft professional standard.* To make a decision on the draft professional standard development, it is necessary to study the actual conditions and perspectives of a fitness consultant's employment.

The study of current trends in the development of the professional market segment was carried out according to the analysis of information resources, including statistical studies of the European Health & Fitness Market, The U.S. Health Coaching Market. It has been established that the professional activities of specialists in preserving and strengthening health in Europe and the USA are in demand and are popular. In the United States, the profession of a fitness consultant is defined as Health Coaching. According to researches, in 2018 the market numbered about 109 thousand specialists. Abroad, the activities of a fitness consultant are regulated by professional standards, which are consistent with the national qualifications framework and are the basis for developing educational standards. In Europe, these are the Exercise for health specialist standards and the standards of related professions Health and fitness advanced specialist, Pre-Diabetes Exercise Specialist, Weight Management Exercise Specialist (developed by the Europe Active Standardization Committee). In the USA, they use the Health & Wellness Coach standard of the National Consortium for Credentialing Health and Wellness Coaches (NCCHWC). In the UK, the Specialist in exercises for health standard is developed under the auspices of the Skills Active organization, National Occupational Standards. In Ukraine, there are no standards for the professional activities of a fitness consultant. The size and profile of the professional market segment in Ukraine were determined based on the results of the annual FitnessConnectUa study, information from the State Statistics Service, and materials from employers' organizations (Dutchak et al, 2018; Andrieva et al, 2019). It was found that 1.02 million people enjoyed fitness services in 2016, and about 1.09 million people – in 2017, which is 2.4% in 2016 and 2.6% of the total population of Ukraine in 2017. The annual market turnover in 2016 amounted to 201.8 million, and in 2017 - 251.4 million €. It is noted that in 2017, 1569 fitness facilities functioned. According to a survey of employers in the field of fitness, it was found that 86.4% of respondents believe that the lack of qualified personnel is one of the factors limiting the quality of the provision of fitness services. The most acute shortage of qualified personnel is seen in relation to the profession of a fitness consultant. Specialists holding the positions of fitness consultants make up only 1.7% of the total number of people employed in the sphere providing fitness services. Based on the results of the survey, only 9.3% of employers say that they have health preserving and health promotion specialists in their staffing table (4.1% are consultants on a healthy lifestyle, 3.4% are fitness consultants, 1.8% – primary functional diagnostics doctor). The study of the actual conditions and perspectives of a fitness consultant's labor activity allows us to state the relevance and timeliness of this issue.

2. *Preparation of a draft professional standard.* In the course of the research, it was established that the functional analysis method is the key to the development of professional standards (Pukhovskaya et al, 2014).

We conducted a study of the structure, order and principles of functional analysis, approaches to the description of general information, tools for functional analysis (questionnaires for the survey, forms and tables, etc.).

At the first stage of the analysis, we collected and summarized the information about the labor functions and the activities of the fitness consultant; provisions of current industry regulations; general and professional competencies; requirements for knowledge, abilities, skills, level of qualification, medical contraindications, work experience, level of education, etc.

At the second stage of the functional analysis, we compiled a list of labor functions using the information obtained at the first stage of the analysis. For this, labor activities were grouped into labor functions according to the degree of similarity, complexity, relationship. We have allocated a list of 9 labor functions and 69 labor activities performed by a fitness consultant.

At the third stage of the functional analysis, an expert survey was conducted among professionals with a view to possibly supplementing this list. The expert group was asked to judge the proposed labor functions and activities according to two criteria: the degree of significance and frequency of use. In the course of the study, it was found that some functions are performed very rarely, but they have a significant impact, while other functions can be often performed, but have limited criticality, so it is necessary to evaluate functions according to two criteria. The results were correlated with a rating scale, in accordance with which each labor activity was assigned a corresponding score. Statistical processing of the results of the study showed that the experts' opinions were consistent (the concordance coefficient was $W \geq 0.7$). It was found that only 2 labor activities, out of 69 presented, were identified as such that they lost relevance and were excluded from the draft professional standard.

At the fourth stage, the final version of the list of labor functions was formed by sequentially placing them in order of importance (Table 1). The ranking of labor functions was due to the necessity of principal factors while determining the level of knowledge and skills.

At the fifth stage of the functional analysis, the professional competencies, knowledge, skills necessary for performing the corresponding labor function were determined. In the process of determining professional competencies, we used the criteria presented in the special scientific and methodological literature. The list of general competencies of specialists correlated with levels 7 and 8 of the National Qualifications Framework. For the profession of a fitness consultant, priority is given to such general competencies. They are the ability to search, process and analyze information; adaptation and action in a new situation; ability to identify and solve problems; motivate people; communicate with representatives of other professional groups; work in an international context; evaluate the quality of performed work; show initiative and entrepreneurship; elaborate and manage projects.

Table 1. List of a fitness consultant's labor functions

Labor functions	Rank
Development of a recovery programme taking into account the results of the initial diagnosis of client's health indicators	1
Conducting primary research of screening (diagnosis) of health indicators, risk factors for diseases;	2
Establishing communication interaction;	3
Developing and implementing a recovery programme for people with deviations in health status and special categories of the population;	4
Organizing and conducting fitness classes for various categories of the population;	5
Motivating clients to change behavioral strategies and create an environment aimed at creating health;	6
Implementation of marketing and management activities;	7
Continuous professional development;	8
Interaction with specialists in the field of physical education, sport and healthcare in order to ensure the quality of services.	9

3. *Verification of the draft professional standard.* To verify the truth of the forecasted draft standard, we used an expert judge method. Based on an intuitive-logical analysis, the experts proposed evaluating the feasibility, effectiveness, and correctness of the developed project. The criteria used to determine such levels: the validity of the forecasting object (the reasonability of the above characteristics, as well as the balance between accuracy and completeness of description); connectedness of the object with the external environment (compliance with modern requirements of the professional market segment); the probable effectiveness of its implementation in professional activities. The experts judged the compliance of the draft standard on the scale where 1 point is the lowest rating and 10 is the highest, with the determination of the coefficient of variation.

The highest rating (8.96 points) with a slight variation (5.01%) was received by the criterion of the object being connected with the external environment. In our opinion, this is due to the use of two key principles in the formation of the draft standard. The first principle is the use of the functional analysis method; the second is the creation of a system of interaction between scientists, employers and specialists in this field, which helped to ensure compliance with the requirements of the professional market segment.

4. *Determining the ways of the standard implementation in the field of health fitness.* The study identified the target audience for implementing professional standards. It includes specialists (to assess their own professional level, planning further professional growth); employers (determination of selection criteria for hiring, job descriptions, certification, personnel reserve planning); educational institutions (the formation of educational standards, programmes and educational disciplines); government bodies (formation of employment policy, forecasting labor market needs, social development planning). Determining ways to implement the standard involves the development of clear recommendations at each of the levels presented.

Discussion

The purpose of the study was the scientific substantiation and development of a fitness consultant's draft professional standard. During the study, it was grounded that the development of a professional standard for a fitness consultant should be based on legislative acts of Ukraine (Pukhovskaya et al, 2014; Dutchaket al, 2018), take into account international experience, as well as the peculiarities of developing a professional market segment in Ukraine.

We analyzed the Exercise for health specialist professional standards (Europe Active Standardization Committee), Health & Wellness Coach (the National Consortium for Credentialing Health and Wellness Coaches (NCCHWC), Specialist in exercises for health (the GB Skills Active organization - National Occupational Standards) and other standards.

The results of the study revealed some differences regarding the definition of labor functions and actions of a fitness consultant in these standards. For example, in the standard Health & Wellness Coach (USA), the priority for the profession is recognized as the activity associated with the formation of motivation to change patterns of behavior, which leads to the disclosure of the individual's potential in promoting health. At the same time, for the European professional market, the key functions are those directly related to the planning and organizing clients' physical activity. The studies allowed forming a list of fitness consultant's labor functions.

At the same time, to take into account the national peculiarities of developing the professional market segment, we carried out an analysis of the actual conditions and perspectives of a fitness consultant's employment in Ukraine. We also involved a group of experts in this field, from which, by means of mutual analysis, 30 of the most authoritative were chosen. The experts were given a list of previously formed labor functions and activities of a fitness consultant, which, in turn, took into account the experience of European countries and the United States. During the study, the experts determined the most significant labor functions and activities of a fitness consultant, such as developing a comprehensive recovery programme taking into account the results of the initial diagnosis of client's health indicators. The experts also took part in determining general and professional competencies, knowledge and skills that will ensure the successful implementation of labor functions. Thus, we were able to develop a draft professional standard for a fitness consultant, which was developed in accordance with the Methodology for the Development of Professional Standards in Ukraine [2], taking into account international experience, as well as national peculiarities of developing the professional market segment.

Conclusions

Based on the results of the analysis of methodological approaches to the development of fitness consultant's professional standards, an algorithm for forming a professional standard was determined. In accordance with the algorithm, the actual conditions and perspectives of the fitness consultant's employment were studied. In the process of preparing the draft, we determined a list of labor functions, general and professional competencies, knowledge, skills that will ensure their successful implementation. During the verification of the draft standard, a high degree of compliance with the specified forecast model was established, using the criterion of the object being connected with the external environment. The target audience has been determined for implementing professional standards, which involve specialists, employers in the field of health fitness, educational institutions and public authorities. The developed professional standard of a fitness consultant corresponds to international requirements and reflects the specifics of Ukraine.

References

- Aftimichuk, O. (2015). Integrative coordination abilities of coaches in wellness types of gymnastics. *Baltic Journal of Sport and Health Sciences*, 4(99), 2-7.
- Andrieieva, O., Hakman, A., Kashuba, V., Vasylenko, M., Patsaliuk, K., Koshura, A., & Istyniuk, I. (2019). Effects of physical activity on aging processes in elderly persons. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 19, 1308 – 1314. doi:10.7752/jpes.2019.s4190.

- Bagarić, V., Djigunović, J. M. (2007). Defining communicative competence. *Metodika*, 8(1), 94-103.
- Dutchak, M., & Chekhovska, L. (2018). Staffing as a topical issue of the modern fitness industry. *Slobozhanskyi herald of science and sport*, 6 (68), 26-31. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.2553338.
- Konttinen, N., Kallinen, V., Mononen, K., Blomqvist, M., Tolvanen, A., & Lochbaum, M. (2019). Sports club participation impact on motor competences, dispositional goal orientations, and perceptions of school-based physical education among Finnish third-grade children. *Sporto mokslas*, 1, 3-11. doi: 10.15823/sm.2019.95.1.
- Korobeynikov, G., Glazyrin, I., Potop, V., Archipenko, V., Glazyrina, V., Dudnyk, O., Korobeynikova, L., Dakal, N. (2019). Adaptation to endurance load in youths. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 19, 1035-1040. doi:10.7752/jpes.2019.s3149.
- Pukhovskaya, L.P., Vornachev A.O., Melnyk, S.V., Kravets, Yu.I. (2014) *Professional standards and qualifications in countries with highly developed economies*. Kiev: Polygraphservice.
- Rutkauskaitė, R., Maciulevičienė, E. (2017). Students' academic achievements and their relationships to physical activity and physical fitness. *Sporto mokslas*, 4, 3-13. doi: 10.15823/sm.2017.33.
- Imas, E., Shynkaruk, O., Denisova, L., Usychenko, L., Kostykevich, K. (2018). Physical and mental human health in the contemporary information environment. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 18(3), 1791-1795. doi:10.7752/jpes.2018.03261.