

# THE PECULIARITIES OF MOTIVATION FOR APPLYING FOR MASTER'S LEVEL STUDIES REFERRING TO GENDER, AGE, GRADUATED UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC RECORDS

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## ABSTRACT

*The reform of education system and therefore the reform of higher education system became necessary after Lithuania had become an independent country. Since 1991 we have had a three-level system of higher education (studies of Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees). Discussions about learning motivation of adults are not so frequent in higher education didactics. We feel duration of theoretical and empirical research in this field, thus our article is devoted to present a little segment of the long-lasting research about evaluation of changes in structure of students' learning motivation for Master's level studies. The aim of this article is to discuss the motives for enrolment to the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education (LAPE) Master's studies in 2003, referring to such criteria as graduated university, age, gender and academic records of Bachelor's studies. 253 persons who had officially applied for enrolment to the LAPE and agreed to fill in the questionnaire. In the study the following research methods were applied — questionnaire survey, statistical analysis. Some differences of female and male, older and younger persons were determined investigating peculiarities of motivation for applying for Master's studies at the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education.*

**Keywords:** *graduate studies, motivation for applying for studies.*

## INTRODUCTION

The right to learn and obtain the adequate education is the natural human right. The education system should be organized in such a way, that any person had his individual right to learn, despite his age or living place, as well as choose the learning forms and intensity, according to his skills and possibilities. The education system should be available and enable any person to study “from cradle to grave” (Šeščilienė, 1997). Master's studies, the second stage of higher education, was introduced in Lithuania in 1991, based on the Lithuanian Law of Science and Studies. Later, prestige of Master's degree increased, as training level for Bachelor's

degree didn't satisfy both graduates and the employers.

Efficiency and productivity of any activity, including learning process, depends not only on individual abilities, but on learning motivation and adequate learning and teaching methods as well. Learning motivation and motivation to study is a worldwide education issue (Pear, 2001; Bitinas, 1998). The lecturers during education process usually influence or reform the learning motivation of their students, so they are supposed to know the psychological features of motives and its dynamics. Indication of real motives for learning activities makes students adaptation

process to higher school requirements less complicated, provides more efficiency to lecturer's activities, because it enables to adapt the training process referring to the psychological state of a particular student (Šeščilienė, 2000; Cross, 1988). Students' learning process depends on a variety of factors. Motives for all activities, including learning, are not permanent, they change because of character features, age and socio-cultural environment (Šeščilienė, 2001). Every person usually has several learning motives, and the interrelation among the existing motives is in a permanent change. However, in order to analyse the learning motivation properly, not just a single motive is regarded as an issue, but its relation to other motives is of great significance (Šeščilienė, 2000). There is no use in trying to influence any single motive separately. In fact, learning motivation could be changed by purposefully controlling and influencing the main structural part of motivation in any particular case (Šeščilienė, 2001; Klein, 2002).

Making sense of what an education means to a person and understanding what motivates her / him in learning involve assessing one's preferences and making choices (Carter et al., 2002). Motivation issues were always in the range of view by both theorists and practitioners, but learning motivation in formal or informal education institutions, referring to students, who continue studies after high school, for adults and middle age persons, lacked scientific attention in recent years. Despite solitary instances in the research of postgraduate studies' motivation it is felt the lack of systematic analysis either from theoretical or practical aspects of this phenomenon (Urbonienė, 2004), so pending

scientific problem could be stated by such questions — how graduated university, age, gender and academic records of Bachelor's studies influence motivation for Master's studies.

Textbooks and manuals published in Lithuania were related to the issue just in general terms, meanwhile, some authors (Laužikas, 1974; Poškus, 1988; Rajeckas, 1994; Stulpinas, 1998) conducted famous research in this field. Referring to higher school pedagogics, there are even less research of this kind (Leonavičius, 1997; Minkutė, 1997; Urbonienė, 2004).

The research for enrolment to second study stage and learning motivation on Master's level were carried out at the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education (LAPE) since 2002 / 2003 school year. The aim of this article is to analyse the motives for enrolment to the LAPE Master's studies in 2003, referring to such criteria as graduated university, age, gender and academic records of Bachelor's studies. Object of the research is motivation for Master's studies.

## METHODS

*Samples.* 253 persons in total who had officially applied for enrolment to the LAPE and agreed to fill in the questionnaire participated in the first research stage (it forms 99.2% of all applicants). The second stage was conducted during the first month of the LAPE Master's studies. In order to get data on motivation changes, the third research stage was carried out after the first study session. This article will refer just to the first stage of the research.

Demographical data of respondents is indicated in Table.

Factor \ Graduated university	LAPE	VPU	ŠU	VDU	VU	KTU	Other	Total
	Number of respondents	225	5	4	3	6	3	
Factor	Academic record of Bachelor's level, points							253
	Up to 7.5	Up to 8	Up to 8.5	Up to 9	Up to 9.5	Up to 10	10	
Number of respondents	13	56	59	66	41	15	3	
Factor	Age, years							253
	21—24	25—30	31—40	41—50	Over 50			
Number of respondents	160	66	18	8	1			
Factor	Gender							253
	Women				Men			
Number of respondents	172				81			

Table. Respondents grouped by various criteria

**Note.** LAPE — Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education, VPU — Vilnius Pedagogical University, ŠU — Šiauliai University, VU — Vilnius University, KTU — Kaunas Technological University.

*Instruments.* Research methods comprise questionnaire survey and statistical analysis (data processed by SPSS). Research structure consisted of the three-level questionnaire survey made in 2003. The questionnaire was an original one, formed according to the analysis of literary sources. In designing the questionnaire the researchers referred to such methodological attitudes as M. S. Knowles's (1993) concept of andragogy and concept of interfluent education (Butkienė, Kepalaitė, 1996). The relevance and correctness of the questionnaire was checked by a probationary research (Puidokas, 2002). The questionnaire was formed of the three-question groups: 1) reasons to enrol for second-stage studies in generally (6 propositions); 2) reasons to enrol in Master's level studies exactly at the LAPE (5 propositions); 3) reasons to enrol in a particular study program (8 propositions). The respondents could choose several answers, indicating priorities by corresponding numbers (1 — the main, etc.). This article will refer just to the first two key groups of reasons.

## RESULTS

Initially, the research results for reasons to enrol in second stage studies in generally will be provided. The research data indicate, that for the total amount of respondents the following two reasons are the key ones. First, career perspective, which was indicated as the main or very important factor by 177 respondents, or

69.9%, and second — advanced training in particular field, respectively 154, or 59.8% of the students.

Motivation for Master's studies differ just slightly referring to age. Age has no influence for many motives to enrol in Master's level as advanced training in particular field ( $\chi^2(4) = 16.80$ ;  $p = 0.157$ ), influence by friends or acquaintances ( $\chi^2(4) = 0.58$ ;  $p = 0.965$ ), parent's influence ( $\chi^2(4) = 3.57$ ;  $p = 0.990$ ). The reliable difference occurs, indicating the career as a motive for Master's studies ( $\chi^2(4) = 22.083$ ;  $p = 0.037$ ) — the research data confirm, that career is a more important motive for the youngest group of the respondents (21—24 years), because 73.8% indicate this motive as the main or very important (Fig. 1).

Candidates to enrol in Master's studies, both men and women, differ only in one motive of future studies — career ( $\chi^2(4) = 20.80$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Data indicated in Fig. 2 confirm, that 14.8% of men and 2.9% of women indicated this motive as the main or very important. Referring to other motives for Master's studies, gender makes no significant difference, advanced training in particular field ( $\chi^2(4) = 3.40$ ;  $p = 0.334$ ), career ( $\chi^2(4) = 4.84$ ;  $p = 0.184$ ), influence by friends or acquaintances ( $\chi^2(4) = 0.47$ ;  $p = 0.492$ ), parent's influence ( $\chi^2(4) = 3.21$ ;  $p = 0.361$ ).

The research results confirm, that motivation to enrol in Master's studies is not influenced by either previous university, where graduates were awarded Bachelor's degree, or academic record

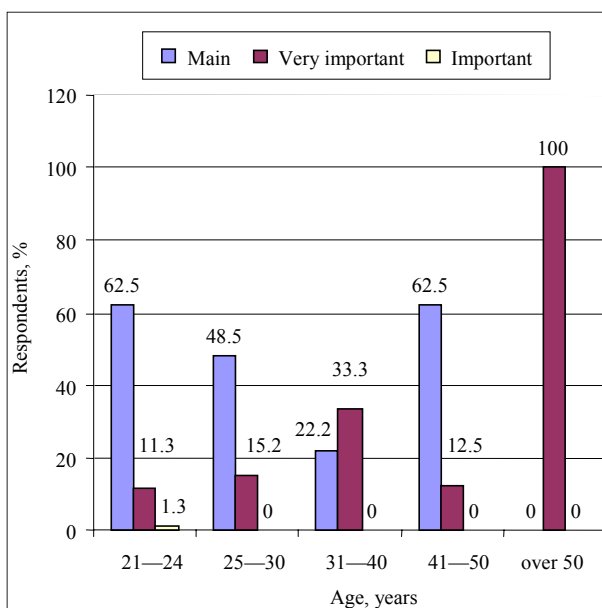


Fig. 1. Career as a motive for respondent groups of various age

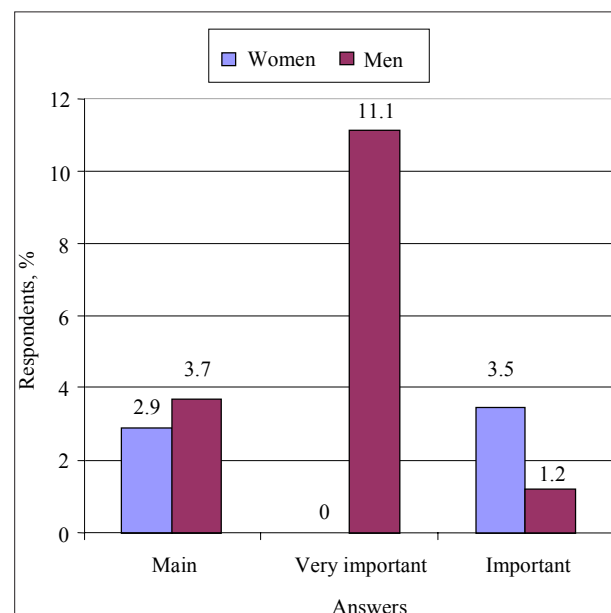


Fig. 2. Career as a study motive referring to gender

of Bachelor's level studies. According to the research graduates from different universities do not differ in such study motives as advanced training in particular field ( $\chi^2(4) = 13.864$ ;  $p = 0.738$ ), future perspective ( $\chi^2(4) = 17.992$ ;  $p = 0.456$ ), career ( $\chi^2(4) = 26.297$ ;  $p = 0.093$ ), influence by friends or acquaintances ( $\chi^2(4) = 0.125$ ;  $p = 0.911$ ), parent's influence ( $\chi^2(4) = 0.765$ ;  $p = 0.951$ ). According to our data respondents with different academic records of Bachelor's level also do not differ in those study motives (advanced training in particular field ( $\chi^2(4) = 16.91$ ;  $p = 0.530$ ), future perspective ( $\chi^2(4) = 19.31$ ;  $p = 0.373$ ), career ( $\chi^2(4) = 20.94$ ;  $p = 0.282$ ), influence by friends or acquaintances ( $\chi^2(4) = 5.19$ ;  $p = 0.52$ ), parent's influence ( $\chi^2(4) = 25.39$ ;  $p = 0.114$ ).

The research data on reasons to enrol in Master's studies in particular in our university indicate two main motives for selection precisely the LAPE. The circumstance that Bachelor's degree was awarded at the LAPE is the main and very important motive for 192 respondents (or 75.9%). The second very important motive for the respondents (respectively 64 or 15.3%) is their enjoying sports activities. According to our research results, age as a motive is of no significance to enrol in Master's studies at the LAPE. The applicants for Master's studies of different gender indicate various reasons, why they chose the LAPE for second study stage. Two motives, like sports ( $\chi^2(4) = 10.11$ ;  $p = 0.039$ ), and advice of competent person ( $\chi^2(4) = 12.403$ ;  $p = 0.006$ ) show the biggest difference between men and women. The first of these motives, like sports, was the main or very important for 19.8% of women and 37% of men. Respectively, 4.8% of men and 11.7% of women indicate "followed advice of competent person" motive as the main and very important. The research of other motives for selection of Master's studies at the LAPE indicate no significant differences referring to gender.

The respondents, graduates from other higher schools, provide various reasons, why they chose Master's studies at the LAPE. Most significant differences are featured by such motives as, graduated Bachelor's studies at the LAPE ( $\chi^2(4) = 101.20$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ), and, followed advice by competent person ( $\chi^2(4) = 55.57$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). The research results indicate, that 84.8% of the applicants, who graduated from

Bachelor's studies at the LAPE, chose it for Master's studies. The data show that the applicants from different universities (4.4% from LAPE, 20% from Vilnius Pedagogical University, 25% from Šiauliai University, 66.7% from Vilnius University, 33.3% from Kaunas Technological University and 28.6% from other higher schools) find the advice by competent person as the main motive to enrol in Master's studies. However, from our point of view, this data is not pointedly, because the number of the students from other higher schools was comparatively low, making just 11% from the total number of applicants. Actually, the other motives for Master's studies at the LAPE, such as "easier to enrol and study here than other university" ( $\chi^2(4) = 16.456$ ;  $p = 0.561$ );  $\chi^2(4) = 20.427$ ;  $p = 0.905$ ), "like sports" ( $\chi^2(4) = 28.606$ ;  $p = 0.235$ ), are not influenced by previous studies in other universities.

The analysis of the research data on motives to enrol in Master's studies at the LAPE for Bachelor students with different academic records make no influence for such motives as "easier to enrol in the LAPE than other university" ( $\chi^2(4) = 25.25$ ;  $p = 0.118$ ), "like sports" ( $\chi^2(4) = 28.87$ ;  $p = 0.225$ ), "advice of competent person" ( $\chi^2(4) = 21.99$ ;  $p = 0.232$ ), "easier to study than in other universities" ( $\chi^2(4) = 38.37$ ;  $p = 0.140$ ).

## DISCUSSION

V. Kanopienė and D. Tureikytė (2002) have identified that more than 50 percent of the undergraduate students in Vilnius University are motivated for their studies by future motives and intention to have good profession (getting one's living). K. Kardelis and D. Karanauskienė (2003) have found that more than 80 percent of the undergraduate students at the LAPE are motivated for their studies mainly by vision of the future profession. The results of our study confirmed those facts. Our data analysis revealed that applicants emphasize two key motives for enrolment in Master's studies — future perspectives and intention of advanced training in particular field. It seems that either undergraduate or graduate students feel responsibility for future profession and job. Worthy of note that university students conceive of their aspirations. V. Kanopienė and

D. Tureikytė (2002) research reports that about 9 percent of the undergraduate students are influenced for their studies by adults (parents or teachers). Our preliminary analysis indicated no reliable influence for choosing Master's studies by neither adults nor even peers. Probably, this difference was determined by different respondents' age and experience.

The data indicated that mostly applicants would like to choose for their graduate studies the same universities (Is it possible that the familiar system of studies reduces anxiety of application and admission procedures?). It should be noted, that this research could be introduced as a pilot study to find relationship between the peculiarities of motivation for applying for Master's degree studies at the Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education referring to gender, age, graduated university and academic records.

## CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the results of the current study indicated that:

- undergraduate applicants emphasize two key motives for enrolment in Master's studies — future perspectives and intention of advanced training in particular field;
- age, gender and academic records of undergraduate studies influence the motives of applying for Master's studies. However, the previous university at which applicants were awarded Bachelor's degree, makes no influence on the issue;
- graduation from Bachelor's degree studies at the LAPE and interest in sports activities are the key motives for respondents to enrol in Master's studies, particularly at the LAPE;
- gender and lower level of Bachelor's academic records make influence for motives to select Master's studies, particularly at the LAPE. On the contrary, age has no such influence.

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