

CURRICULUM QUALITY AND ACADEMIC REPUTATION OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION COLLEGES IN HEALTH – FITNESS JOB MARKETING IN JORDAN

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of quality P.E curriculum that meets the standards of (ACSM) personal trainer certificate on the academic reputation of P.E graduates in Jordan in the health fitness job market as reflected by the owners and managers of 14 first class health fitness clubs in Jordan including fitness clubs in 5 star hotels which served as sample of the study. The samples were requested to answer a questionnaire that requested to rate the best P.E graduates qualified to work in the health fitness business. The results indicated that the Hashemite University is regarded as the best source of P.E graduates qualified to work in the fitness club industry compared to the rest of Jordan colleges as rated by 72 percentages with a 66 percentage of employees in the 14 fitness club which served as sample of the health fitness job market. The Hashemite University is the only university in Jordan who adopted the content of (ACSM) personal trainer certificate study package which proves that the academic knowledge and skills of P.E graduates than other factors contributing to academic reputation such as history, size, and research activity.

Key Words: ACSM: American College of Sports Medicine, PTC: Personal Trainer Certification in Sport Medicine, AHA: American Heart Association, KSA'S: Knowledge Skills and Abilities, ARC: American Red Cross, P E: Physical Education

INTRODUCTION

Academic reputation is a product of a number of interacting attributes of academic higher education institutions such as history, size, admission and graduation standards and research activity of faculty members. However, job market evaluation of college graduates is more practical criteria in reflecting academic reputation of higher education institutions. One of the emerging job markets in

Jordan and the Arab world is the business of the health fitness and weight management clubs and spa's. In fact this job market is exclusively a physical education domain; after all, the motto of P.E colleges is within two philosophies, that is: (Ref 6,8)

1. Educating the physical
2. Educating through the physical

However, health fitness job markets care less about the philosophy of teaching in colleges of physical

education that is: "either philosophy is accepted in the health fitness job market as long as the P.E major graduate is competent and capable in delivering the promised services to customers of health fitness job market". (Ref 7)

Yet, the traditional curriculum of colleges of physical education is heavily geared and organized towards teaching sport skills and stunts as a leisure or athletic activities in schools and athletic sport clubs more than teaching the academic knowledge and skills required in the health fitness and weight management clubs and centers. Thus, academic matching between job market criteria for competence in the health fitness industry and the curriculum taught to P.E majors will have a strong impact upon the academic reputation of PE graduates in the job market. (Ref 7,9)

Competency standards in the health fitness job market

Health fitness job market is a domain of sports medicine, thus, the ACSM is the highest academic authority in sports medicine and its position stand regarding competence criteria of health fitness clubs staff is the golden criteria to work (employment standards) in the health fitness job market (Ref 10).

In this regard, the ACSM offer certifications in two sport medicine tracks as follows: (Ref 4)

1. The ACSM health and fitness track.
2. The ACSM clinical track.

The health fitness track is geared to work with people classified as being apparently healthy which means in short that they have no risk factors associated with any particular major chronic disease such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and hypertension.

In this track, the ACSM offers three levels of certifications as follows arranged from the lowest level to highest level. (Ref 1,2,3,4)

1. Personal trainer certificate (PTC).
2. Health fitness instructor certificate.
3. Health fitness director certificate.

The PTC certificate is the 1997 modified version of the exercise leader certificate of 1970's. In the other hand, the ACSM clinical track is more involved in working with patients who already have major risk factors contributing to chronic diseases and /or actually suffered a heart attack or stroke and survived and need physical rehabilitation as part of the total medical rehabilitation program.

In this regarded, the three levels of certificates in this track are as follows from the lowest to the highest level of certification.

1. ACSM exercise test technologist.
2. ACSM exercise specialist.
3. ACSM program director.

The ACSM certification standards are promoted through ACSM'S publications and newsletters as the most rigorous in either track (Ref 5).

Indeed, reputable Exercise physiologists consider the ACSM as the preeminent organization to offer certification programs and workshops for health fitness professionals (Ref 10).

For the purpose of this study, a detailed description of ACSM personal trainer certificate will be provided.

ACSM certified personal trainer certificate

The ACSM certified personal trainer certificate is given to individuals who demonstrate competence in developing and implementing an individualized approach in exercise prescription for healthy populations and / or people with medical clearance to exercise.

Using a variety of teaching techniques, the ACSM certified personal trainer is proficient in leading and demonstrating safe and effective methods of exercise by applying the fundamental principles of exercise science which demands academic knowledge relevant to writing and implementing appropriate exercise recommendations and demonstrate leadership in constructing safe and

effective exercise methods and motivation strategies to increase awareness and interest in perusing and adhering to Exercise programs and life style behavioral changes that increase the effectiveness of exercise for health purposes.

Minimum requirements

Minimum prerequisites for admission to the ACSM personal trainer certificate are as follows:

1. A high school diploma or equivalent and
2. Current adult CPR certification that has a practical skills examination component such as the American heart association (AHA) or the American Red Cross (ARC). Certificates.

Recommended Competencies

The ACSM standards of competence as personal trainer includes the following (Ref 5,9)

Demonstrate competence in KSA'S required of the ACSM personal trainer as listed in the ACSM guide lines for exercise testing and prescription (5th edition -2001)

- Adequate knowledge of and skill in risk factor and health status identification, fitness appraisal, and exercise prescription.
- Demonstrate ability to incorporate suitable and innovative activities

that will improve clients work and exercise capacity.

- Demonstrate the ability to effectively educate and / or communicate with individual's regarding life style behavioral modification.

Relevant studies

Health fitness job market is rather new in Jordan and the Arab world. In fact, the Hashemite University is the only university so far which introduced a special P.E curriculum that complies with the ACSM standards required to be eligible for personal trainer certificate of the ACSM (PTCsm).

Thus, similar studies are lacking and the only study relevant to this study was a study that investigated the effect of curriculum promotion in P.E colleges upon employment history of P.E major graduates in Jordan and the results of the study carried out by the same authors of this study indicated that quality P.E curriculum is decisive factor in increasing job opportunities of graduates to 87% (rang84-93) compared to 10% (range 7-17.9) for graduates of traditional P.E curriculum as described in this study. (Ref 6)

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The hypothesis of this study is as follows: matching between academic curriculum in physical education colleges with the knowledge and skills required in health fitness job market is an

independent and strongly instrumental in gaining academic reputation of higher education institutions in Jordan.

SAMPLE AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY

The sample of this study was 14 private "first class" health fitness owners and managers in Amman the Capital of Jordan.

The sample investigated represents the elite of health fitness and weight management centers in Jordan.

STUDY DESIGN

This study is a post facto study in which the independent variables of the study (novel curriculum) are introduced to one sample and the academic reputation of this sample is compared to academic reputation of similar groups who did not study the same curriculum (treatment). The novel curriculum was prepared according to ACSM'S competence criteria for personal trainer certificate.

The curriculum was approved and implemented at the Hashemite University in the sport rehabilitation department of the college of physical education and movement sciences in the school year 1999-2000. Under the name of "sports rehabilitation" the curriculum, included courses covers basic athletic training concepts and applied skills in sports injuries prevention and treatment domain.

Part of graduation requirements was to spend one full semester as internship in health fitness clubs and

this part of graduation requirements was the first awareness by health fitness owners and managers with sports rehabilitation specialization as a new area of study in physical education colleges in Jordan.

ACADEMIC REPUTATION EVALUATION PROCEDURES

In the academic year 2003-2004 the first graduate class completed graduation requirements and received a bachelor degree in sports rehabilitation. This study was undertaken in the academic year 2004-2005 after one year following graduation in which the job market of health fitness clubs received job applications from PE majors in the 4 colleges of physical education including the sports rehabilitation graduates

Academic reputation of the PE major applicants in health fitness job market was investigated using a questionnaire method in which owners and managers of 14 first class health fitness clubs in Amman were requested to evaluate the best source of PE graduates who demonstrate on-the-floor competence in delivering health fitness job market service among PE major graduates in Jordan.

The questionnaire included data regarding the number and source of current staff employed in their private commercial fitness clubs and centers. (Appendix B shows the questionnaire format)

Table-1
Ranking of Jordanian universities from the best to the poorest source of graduates competent to work in the health fitness job market in Jordan from the stand point of the clubs managers

No	University name	Number of votes	Percentage
1	Hashemite university	12	72%
2	University of Jordan	2	28%
3	Yarmouk university	-	-
4	Mou"tah university	-	-

Table (1) shows that the Hashemite university was ranked as the best source of P.E graduates competent in their on- the- job performance in health fitness job market with (72%) consensus (12 out of 14)of health fitness clubs while the university of Jordan came second with the remaining (28%) consensus.

Table-2
Ranking of the best P.E specialization in Jordan universities that teach a curriculum compatible with knowledge and skills needed in the health fitness job market ordered from the best to the poorest curriculum

No	Name of specialization	University name	Number of votes	percentage
1	Sport rehabilitation	Hashemite university	12	72%
2	Coaching and administration	-	-	-
3	P.E teacher	University of Jordan	2	28%

Table (2) shows that regarding the best P.E specialization that qualifies students to work in the health fitness job market, the sports rehabilitation department at the Hashemite university was voted as the best P.E specialization fit to work in the health fitness job market according to 12 out of 14 respondent which makes (72%) of the total sample of health fitness clubs owners and managers who answered the questionnaire.

Table-3
Employ and Staff sources number in the (14) health fitness job market sample of the study

No	Academic source	Staff number			percentage
		Males	Females	Total	
1	Hashemite university	29	27	56	66%
2	University of Jordan	12	11	23	23%
3	Yarmouk university	4	1	5	5%
4	Mu'tah university	-	1	1	1%
	Total	45	30	85	

Table (3) describes the data regarding the number of currently employed staff in the (14) health and fitness clubs job market.

As the table indicates, the sport rehabilitation department graduates of the Hashemite university constitute (66%) percent of health fitness staff employed in the (14) sample of fitness clubs investigated. 56 employees out of total of 85 are sports rehabilitation graduates (29 males and 27 females). The university of Jordan came second with a total of (23) employees (12 males and 11 females) and Yarmouk university came in third place with (5) employees (4 males and 1 females) and finally came Mu'tah university with only one females employee.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study is in favor of accepting the major hypothesis on the basis of the data presented in tables 1,2,3 which clearly indicate superiority of sports rehabilitation graduates in the health fitness job market compared to graduates of traditional graduates of P.E colleges in Jordan despite the fact that the Hashemite University is the newest university in Jordan and the smallest student enrollment wise.

DISCUSSION

The result of this study is in favor of the hypothesis that emphasize the importance of the curriculum in physical education colleges and department as a major attribute that confer academic reputation to the universities and colleges in the health fitness job

market aside from other aspects and attributes of academic reputation of higher education institutions.

The logical explanation for the results of this study is in the fact that private business is more concerned with academic knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) of their staff that will enhance the delivery of high – quality programs that satisfy its clients. After all, clients' satisfaction is the essence of business market including health fitness job market.

One distinguished innovation in the staff employment in the College of Physical Education at the Hashemite University is the recruitment of two graduates of medical colleges to teach the medical content of sports rehabilitation curriculum. One MD was a family physician with a master degree in medicine; the other MD was an orthopedic (master degree).

Thus, the faculties in charge of implementing the sport rehabilitation curriculum were a perfect blend of exercise science experts, and medical experts. Consequently, the concept of exercise–health connection was translated to reality faculty wise in sports rehabilitation department which in turn contributed to the results of this study. After all, the concept of exercise – health connection is the academic background for the emergence of health fitness job market in the united state and the rest of health conscious societies of the world. (Ref1,2,3,4)

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of the study the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Higher education institutions must keep abreast with changing job market demands regarding the KSA of graduates irrespective of academic specialization. KSA of graduates in their particular academic domain is what counts in the job market when it comes to academic reputation of higher education institutions as this study concluded.
2. Colleges of physical education are invited to follow the model of the Hashemite University in developing a curriculum compatible with job market demands to increase employment opportunities of its graduates.
3. Medical doctors should be encouraged to join teaching faculty in colleges of physical education to add medical knowledge relevant to exercise prescription and precautions in the health fitness job market to prevent any liability cases in this blooming job market.
4. Feed back seminars with graduates, manager, and owners of the health clubs to modify the present curriculum in the Physical Education College and departments, is highly needed.

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