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## PARTICULARITIES OF PRACTICING WATER SPORTS IN THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

**Aim.** In this paper, we intended to present the main activities on and in the water that can be taught in physical and sport academic classes and to present the benefits of practicing this discipline. Using the bibliographic study method, we present the most popular water sports, depending on the geographical area of practice, the necessary equipment, the average learning time, and the capacities developed by students. Based on our knowledge and experience as water sports event organizers and coaches, we want to show some of the possibilities to develop programs and camps with the students, teaching and preparing them to work with kids, young or adults. From our over 14 years of experience in water sport, from studying and sharing knowledge with coaches worldwide, we will also describe in this paper the importance of starting this class with a first aid and drowning rescue course, which can be useful in any situation for the whole life.

**Conclusions.** Following the bibliographic study conducted in this article, we have tried and believe that we have been able to demonstrate the multitude of benefits and strong educational character water sports can play in the students personal development, the opportunities it offers on working and teaching this discipline to others, or just helping them in need, argue with these reasons why do we think it can be useful to have part in the curriculum of physical education and sport.

**Keywords:** water sports, particularities, students, academic environment

### Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the water sports activities that can be taught to the students, especially to those who are studying physical education and sport, the benefits of practicing it, and the problems that can be encountered in this process. At the same time, we will present some employment opportunities with nautical knowledge.

### Opportunities

At present, we are at a point where outdoor sports have taken off. „Statistics show that the pandemic has increased the popularity of outdoor activities in Finland and around the world” (Muittari J., 2021) and this „increased interest in outdoor recreation provides new jobs and opportunities for new outdoor sports services.” (Muittari J., 2021). „When the COVID-19 pandemic upended many people’s work lives and leisure time, participation in outdoor recreation increased. For example, many national parks saw record numbers of visitors in 2020” (Wagner A., 2022) or joined nautical sports, like InterBoot was announcing on their website, „water sports in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland are experiencing an upsurge in popularity like never before. Despite the ongoing coronavirus crisis, the industry is seeing strong growth in areas ranging from SUP boards to sailing and motorized yachts.” (interboot.com, f.a.) Following this trend, we think about the opportunities and jobs that start appearing in this field, and we try to present in the next few pages the water sports and activities that can be studied in the academic environment, creating with this new opportunity for the students to find a job or to develop a business. At the same time, as Lloret J. specifying in his research, „The potential benefits of water sports for health and well-being in marine protected areas: a case study in the Mediterranean”, non-motorized water sports „may be a viable tool for both wellness and health recovery, and could be introduced in the community as a preventative and rehabilitation health strategy” (Lloret J. et al., 2021), representing another opportunity for the students to find jobs.

### Activities

Taking a look at our country, Romania, we have opportunities to study and then teach sports or activities in different types of water: rivers, lakes or sea. In our opinion, after more than 14 years of experience in teaching and organizing events on the water and after the bibliographic study, the first steps in students foray into the secrets of water sports should be represented by a **first aid and rescue course from drowning** which has „the most effective approach to reduce the burden of drowning.” (Szpilman D., 2013) For the second part of this learning journey, because we know that **swimming** is already in the academic curriculum, we propose **aquagym activities**. Through fitness programs, it can be made in pools or natural waters. From „Top

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10 Health Benefits Of Water Aerobics”, we found out that „it’s suitable for all age groups” (Tanya, 2021) and as in the most of articles which we have found, Kristin Jenny defines this activity as a low impact one, because the „buoyancy of water supports the weight of the body, reducing impacts on joints and the intensity of pain” (Kristin J., 2023), is a way to improve socializing, it simulate the brain by „quickly learn the workout steps and then repeat them in the order the instructor presents them in., (Kristin J., 2023), it work the whole body, it built a cardiovascular fitness, which will be helpful in the daily life, it serves as cross-training, it helps you built the core strength and it can be also a recovery workout. Is a way to improve mobility and flexibility, and „the heat helps to loosen the joints and relax the muscles.” (Kristin J., 2023).

In our opinion, different **water games** can be also developed from this point, considering the age of the practitioners and their motor skills. From our research, we discover about the North American group activity, named **Cardboard boat building challenge**, which has the purpose to „design, construct, and test boats made out of nothing but cardboard and tape.” (outbackteambuilding.com, f.a.) After we watch some videos we got that to finish this challenge you must work in a team, fit in a time, respect the rules of the game, use your general knowledge, delegate tasks and race to other teams.

„**Stand-up paddle boarding (SUP)** is a rapidly growing global aquatic sport, with increasing popularity among participants within recreation, competition and rehabilitation” (Schram B. et al., 2019) and can be practiced on sea, lakes, or rivers. This activity, is „engaging your core muscles to sustain an upright position on the board simultaneously improves your overall body strength and stability ” (glidesup.com, 2023), it can represent an intense workout by paddling or making yoga on, improving your balance at the same time and on the waves it can also represent an alternative for surfing. (Barrows S., f.a.)

**Kayaking** is an old and fun way to explore the world, in any season and any type of water, making exercise at the same time by „moving through water in a small water vessel with the aid of a double-bladed paddle.” (Lyle A. 2018) Depending on your goals and desires, there are different types of kaiaks, and navigation on them, according to „A world to travel” magazine, it helps you on acheiving a healthy weight, increases the upper body stenght, strengthens the core muscles, develops toned legs, increases stamina and endurance levels, improves heart conditions, reduces stress, increase happiness, helps to increase and activate vitamin D, and improves sleep. (aworldtravel.com, 2021). Another disciplines that involves the technique of rowing, but is only practiced on rivers, is **rafting** and **white water rafting**, „recreational outdoor activities which use an inflatable raft to navigate a river or other body of water. This is often done on whitewater or different degrees of rough water. Dealing with risk and the need for teamwork is often a part of the experience.” (raftingnewzealand.com, f.a.) Those are catalogated as a „therapeutic recreation with several benefits” (advantagegrandcanyon.com, f.a.), such as „reducing stress, strenghtening muscles, excellent cardio workout, building teamwork, boosting self- esteem and producing adrenaline rush.” (healthfitnessrevolution.com, 2015). Born as a necessity, for fishing, hunting and then as a transport means, according to Mpóra magazine, **sailing** is now mostly a recreational activity, which can be practiced on any water course, and also an olympic sport. „There are two types of sailing – racing and cruising. Racing is the branch of yachting you will recognize from the Olympics, however cruising is probably what most people would enjoy on their holidays or on the weekends.” (Zietman N., 2016) The benefits resulting from practicing sailing, are: „muscle strength and endurance, cardiovascular fitness, mental wellness, lowers stress levels, increases agility, improves concentration, improves communication skills, spatial awareness, organizational skills, science, math and engineering information.” (britlingseasailingclub.com, f.a.)

„**Windsurfing** is a water sport that combines characteristics of both sailing and surfing. The windsurfer uses the wind to propel a board forward under his feet and skim across the water. Windsurfing is an excitingly accessible boardsport. Boys and girls, men and women of all ages, can start from scratch, by themselves, or by attending a windsurfing school.” (surfertoday.com, f.a.) „Cardiovascular fitness, strength and endurance, balance and coordination, stress relief ”(Tangella K., 2023) are just some of the health benefits of windsurfing.

„**Hydrobikes** have been synonymous with fun & fitness on the water in 74 countries now since our founder invented our pedal powered water bike over 25 years ago. Non polluting, easy to ride, lightweight, safe and stable with 400 lbs flotation, hydrobikes are enjoyed by everyone from 8-80. They are the choice of US State Parks, Resorts, YMCA, Rental Outlets and more along with thousands worldwide. Proven reliability, low maintenance, and trouble free operation makes Hydrobike Explorer a superior value for your family's enjoyment.”(hydrobikes.com, f.a.) From the motor sports category, we will highlight **water skiing**, **wakeboarding**, and **wake surfing**, all of them individual disciplines, with many similarities, like the needed strength in the same areas: core, legs, and arms.(MonsterTower, 2020) Practicing one of these it can help you improve the muscle tone and the core strength, develop the resistance training and burning callories, and it can also have a calming effect on the mind and body. (leisureboatingonline.com, f.a.). After presenting all these water sports and their benefits, we want to emphasize, the importance of respecting some rules for enjoring your water experience safe. Using all the time lifejacket and proper equipment for the season and always check your boat or equipment before going out. Do not go alone on the water and announce to everyone where you are going, as well as when you’ll be back, check the weather forecast before you set out and make sure you are prepared for whatever weather conditions you may encounter, ensure that you have a means



of communication with shore, safety equipment including a fire extinguisher, a first aid kit, and distress signals. (realbuzz.com, f.a.)

## Conclusion

With the bibliographic study conducted in this article, we believe that we have been able to demonstrate that the particularities of practicing water sports can help students improve their health, skills and standard of living, find a job, or save lives. At the same time, the increase in the number of water sports practitioners can represent a development possibility in the area of entrepreneurship for those who have studied this discipline. Nautical research and leisure centers, camps for children and adults, sports clubs, integration centers for people with disabilities, are part of the possibilities of developing a business in this field.

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