

THE ATTITUDE OF SPORTS FACULTY STUDENTS RELATED TO A SKIING INTERNSHIP

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Abstract: *The aim of this study was to identify the perception after the participation to a skiing training course of sports faculty students (76 subjects). Using an online questionnaire, students' present their opinions about this proposed curricular activity. Results suggest that an internship allows students to have a more realistic and practical exposure is a good personal experience with long-term (professional) impact helping them to identify their goals and skills of the future profession.*

University sports programs that facilitate an effective "on-site" practical experience can have multiple results for the students –specialists in training, sports curriculum programs should offer more options, partnerships and similar practical experiences.

Key words: *students, sports curriculum, profession, skiing training.*

1. Introduction

On a field, on an athletics track, in the gymnasium, the physical education teacher, sometimes colloquially referred to as the „*gymnastics teacher*” or “*sports teacher*,” teaches a sports discipline and, through it, the principles of good physical condition, fair play, demonstrates exercises practically, and teaches sports rules and conduct all ages students, in groups or individual. His objective is not only to help the student achieve good physical fitness and health, but also good mental and social health. During classes, the teacher teaches the theory and practice of sports disciplines through a

wide range of activities for which he provides instruction based on the equipment available within the educational or sports facility where he works.

The role of the teacher, above all, is not limited to choosing a sport for students to practice while supervising their activity with a whistle in their mouth. This profession entails the teacher mastering a good portion of sports disciplines from various aspects such as: game rules, knowledge of equipment usage, safe execution, whether we are talking about individual sports or team sports.

A teacher who chooses a career in this environment has the responsibility to

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develop their students' motor skills, as well as their sense of initiative, respect for rules, teamwork, fair play, resilience to effort and game pressure, acceptance and coping with defeat, etc.

It is necessary to take into account the level of each student and their possibilities of progress, always considering their physical and mental health and safety.

In addition to these responsibilities, there are also other missions: developing contacts and communication with families (especially regarding student guidance), organizing extracurricular activities, etc.

In short, a secondary or high school physical education teachers have several missions:

- The didactic mission through the classes they conduct in front of the students;
- The mission related to the teaching service: the time required for preparation and research necessary for conducting teaching hours, monitoring activities, evaluation and guidance of students inherent to the didactic mission, teamwork or multiprofessional educational work, relationships with parents;
- Additional missions fulfilled by certain teachers, through specific responsibilities to carry out educational actions in the interest of students.

The physical education teacher in primary and secondary education imparts to their students' various skills in the three domains of physical education:

- gestural and motor skills such as control and coordination of movements, balance, etc.
- physical condition such as endurance, strength, flexibility, etc., and
- sociomotor cooperation: respect for rules, fair play.

These must be taken into account to allow the child/adolescent to develop and progress.

Skills of a good teacher:

- Possesses scientific knowledge (biology, anatomy, psychology, first aid, assessment techniques, etc.)
- Knowledge of various sports disciplines that can be taught
- Is organized, presents rigor in decisions, method, and structure during activities
- Is himself/herself a good or accomplished athlete, mastering the characteristics of movement and its effects to use them for educational purposes
- Represents a model of a healthy lifestyle and can provide health education, has impeccable physical condition
- Understands the specifics of his/her students (children, adolescents, adults) regarding physiological, motor, and psycho-sociological characteristics
- Can lead and motivate a group of students, has the ability to arouse and encourage the desire to learn, to participate, promotes physical activities, all sports not just one in particular
- Maintains discipline, manages conflicts with authority and firmness
- Has communication skills, characterized by availability, patience, and tolerance, empathy
- Is a dynamic, enthusiastic person who adapts easily, is creative,
- Is characterized by vigilance and resistance to stress, patience.

Jiang [9] considers that a fundamental component for a Physical Education and Sport (PES) teacher is to possess athletic abilities; he even asserts that this is a key

factor that impacts the level of professional competence. Teaching skills are an essential characteristic of the teaching profession. Jiang [9] interviewed 376 students and concluded that his respondents are unaware that these skills encompass many aspects and do not understand how important they are for themselves as professionals. Those who are interested in pursuing this profession must understand that these are essential skills that contribute to success in their careers.

All of these attributes that a sports teacher must possess can be learned, but they are most commonly acquired through the direct interaction of the individual, when they were a student, with their teachers who become models of inspiration.

When a student chooses to pursue a degree in Physical Education and Sport, many of these skills and characteristics are taught during specialized courses by their professors. However, an even better teaching method is to offer students practical, interactive learning courses that put them in the position of student-teacher.

For example, it is considering that in order to acquire the desired competencies, a teacher must first be familiar with teaching tasks, then have personal skills that they can implement in the context of their work.

Exposing students to didactic activities in a comprehensive manner: theoretical and practical teaching, intensively, will stimulate their personal and professional skills, such as those acquired during theoretical-practical training internships.

A teaching internship, such as a mountain skiing internship, adds additional value compared to other

courses proposed in the sports faculty curriculum through exposure to a new environment that alters perceptions at a personal level, with key effects on motivation and discipline as highlighted by Leyton-Román et al. [10] The teaching environment is important because it provides opportunities for interaction, allowing students to become aware of how they can develop both personal and social skills within a group [7].

An internship organized in a different environment than that within the university campus requires different teaching strategies. A teacher's skills are developed within a deeper transformation that is stimulated by exposure to an environment that challenges the individual both personally and socially.

Our practical experience, as teachers and athletes, supports the training opportunities proposed for learning that encompass and combine both teaching and learning through execution.

Anacleto et al. [1] argue that future teachers must demonstrate a commitment to their own development and be aware of their professional growth. We believe that this awareness arises through two avenues: involvement in activities proposed by the faculty and, additionally, their engagement in sport as a way of life. Activities organized as an intensive training internship can be beneficial for students and could represent the third key element proposed by Silva et al. [11] namely the gradual transfer of responsibility to students through their involvement in team-based learning activities. What Silva and colleagues [11] underscore is the importance of training opportunities for future educators, and in their first year of college, students of the Faculty of Physical

Education and Sports (FEFS) in Craiova have the opportunity to participate in an intensive skiing internship. Westerlund [13] even sounded an alarm in his article regarding the perceived gap between university courses attended by students and the practical field experience. The imparting and experiential learning of teaching knowledge make more sense.

This internship serves several roles and objectives for future teachers, such as:

- Learning and improving the practical skills of basic alpine skiing techniques
- Increasing awareness regarding practicing skiing safely in unusual environments
- Developing the enjoyment of practicing and experiencing communal living, in a context and environment different from that of the university.

The process of developing a teacher's competencies according to Aparicio-Herguedas et al [3] requires the implementation of reliable tools that allow the student to demonstrate their development even during their training as a teacher, we could even say while they are learning to be placed in the position of experiencing what they learn. However, although the curriculum adopts certain management measures, few of these can prove that they truly improve the level of teaching skills [4]

2. Material and Methods

2.1. The objectives of the study

In general, students' involvement in activities related to their future profession is a key element that should be stimulated and developed by teachers because this field of sports extends beyond the classroom or practice field. This includes being aware of sports events, involvement

in various sports that contribute to maintaining good physical condition, and experiencing firsthand what they will later propose to those they will guide, instruct, and train. This adds value to defining the student as a future successful sports teacher who will be able to motivate and engage people in practicing sports for competition, for a healthy lifestyle, especially in our days when involvement in the sports movement—whether for performance or health—is at such a low level.

Based on this idea, we wanted to determine the situation of first-year students who chose to participate in the skiing internship proposed by our faculty.

2.2. Participants

In this study, a total of 76 first-year students from the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport (FEFS) - Craiova voluntarily and anonymously responded during the period of February 1st-2nd, 2024. The questionnaire, administered in Google Forms format, was easy to complete, requiring approximately 10-15 minutes.

The aim was to characterize **the student-future physical education and sports teacher** in relation to two aspects:

1. The relationship with the sporting phenomenon - the individual's mode of engagement in sports activities to define the future teacher's vision regarding what they will teach. Practical connection and personal experience through involvement in sports and physical activities serve multiple purposes for the future teacher. It forms the basis of a discourse based **on personal experience**, bringing authenticity and weight, and it is a

means of understanding the phenomenon from all perspectives (barriers, needs, motivation, outcomes, costs, etc.)

2. The relationship between the student's personal skill development and participation in a skiing internship, stimulating personal skills (motivation) and those related to the profession of instructor (for the sport proposed by this internship).

3. Results and Discussion

The age of the students ranged from 18 to 45 years old (1 case), with the majority of respondents being between 18 and 29 years old (89.4%) (Figure 1), the remaining 10.5% of participants (8 cases) being between 30 and 45 years old.

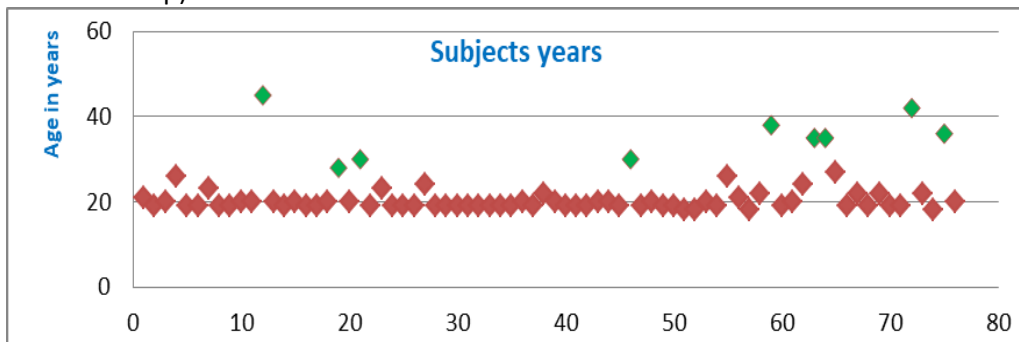


Fig. 1. *The representation of age repartition for the subjects*

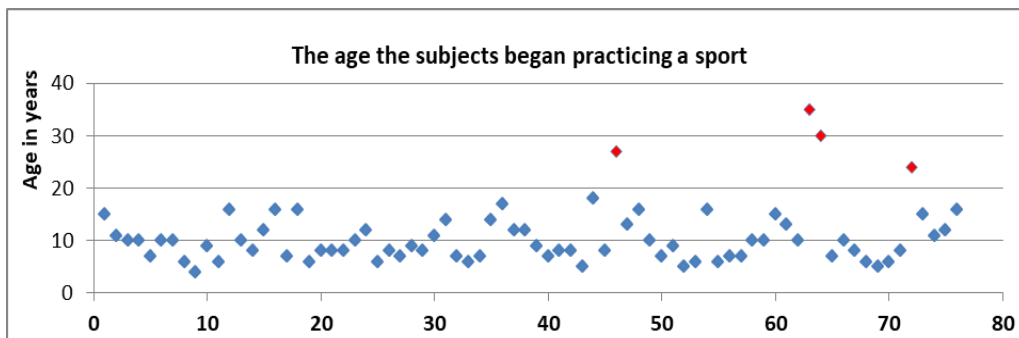


Fig. 2. *The age at which the subjects began practicing a sport*

The learning process is the one that shapes and defines the professional identity of a future teacher and helps them to define themselves in relation to the chosen career. The teacher is the result of an evolutionary process that begins from the moment they choose their profession and commence their training; in the case of vocational

professions, this process is even more profound and extensive.

Regarding the age at which the subjects showed an interest in practicing a sport, it is observed that the majority of respondents were familiar with practicing a sport at a young age (Figure 2).

Most of the responses fell within the age range of 5-10 years and 10-15 years, one respondent even mentioned, "**at 15, I realized how important and how many benefits sports bring to a person's life.**" For 4 subjects over 20 years old, the responses were at ages 24, 27, 30, 35, ages at which motor skills are more difficult to develop, but the health benefits are equally important.

48 subjects (63.2%) have practiced, and 24 (31.6%) still practice another performance sport, 71 (93.4%) of the study participants engage in a sport during their leisure time. This high percentage represents a positive aspect of the

vocational relationship and the chosen profession.

As the most practiced sport, the highest number of responses was football, with 40 responses (52.6%), while athletics (5 cases - 6.6%) and fitness (4 cases - 5.3%) were the other sports indicated by the respondents.

Regarding their self-assessed sporting level, 30 respondents (39.5%) identified themselves as amateur, 26 (34.2%) considered themselves professionals, and 20 (26.3%) engaged in sports occasionally at the time of completing this questionnaire.

Table 1

Responses regarding the reason why people do not engage in sports

They are unaware of the benefits of physical activity and sports	12 (15,8%)
They lack time	8 (10.5%)
They lack resources to purchase equipment or gym memberships	2 (2.6%)
There are no sports facilities in their vicinity	0 (0%)
They lack motivation	43 (56.6%)
They were not accustomed to sports activities from an early age	11 (14.5%)

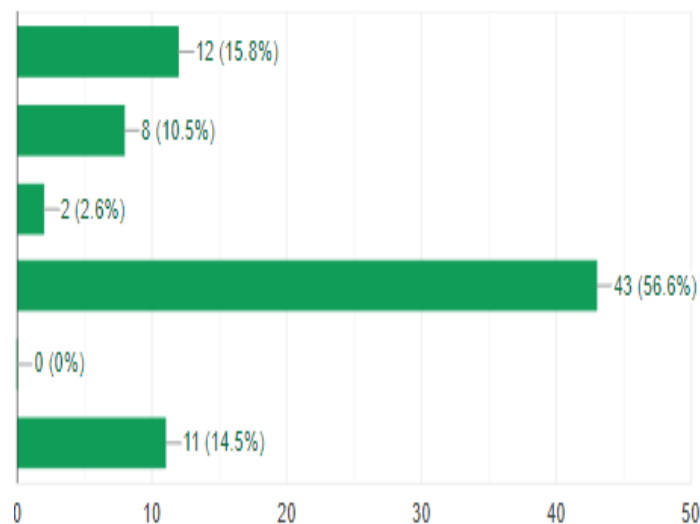


Fig.3. *Responses regarding the reason why people do not engage in sports*

These responses suggest that teachers could be more involved in recommending more intensive sports for their students and that similarly, it is possible that recommendations for engaging in more intensive sports are listened to such a small extent due to barriers (social, educational, financial, etc.) that need to be investigated.

In response to the next question regarding the reasons why people do not engage in sports, the most common answer among students was a lack of motivation (43 responses - 56.6%), and another significant reason is that people are unaware of the benefits of physical activity and sports (12 responses - 15.8%) (see figure 3 and table 1)

This question wanted to find out what are the stereotypes or over-generalized beliefs related to the practice of a sport at the level of the general population among students.

Communication, problem-solving, teamwork, or individual work, and continuous learning are among the most important transversal skills that can be acquired in a more intensive training internship. University professors are trainers of future educators who are tasked with adapting (to the work environment and to the characteristics of those they instruct) and applying teaching approaches that promote learning and professional development, by stimulating and validating sports skills and transversal competencies.

It is important to note that these competencies must be developed in cooperation with colleagues, through actions of active participation using different methods based on an understanding of the problems and requirements of this activity and the needs of student-colleagues.

For the respondent students, the skiing internship represented a means of discovering their own abilities (40 responses - 52.6%) and getting to know their strengths (12 responses - 15.8%). It is worth noting that a proportion of 23.7% (18 respondents) chose to participate in order to socialize and get to know their colleagues better. An aspect that is highly significant among students who experienced isolation and radical changes in their lives due to the intensive use of the internet during the pandemic period is also reflected in their responses.

Participation is greatly influenced by certain fears related to exposure to a new environment, collective dynamics, etc. These are the same fears that a teacher may encounter and that future students also face. Most of the fears expressed by the respondents regarding participation in this skiing internship were presented in table 2. below.

Although a large number, 52 (68.4%) of the participants do not wish to become ski instructors, the secondary effects of an intensive sports internship among students have certain personal level effects that are not guaranteed by obtaining a diploma and practicing the profession of physical education and sports teacher.

Table 2

The responses regarding the participation to this skiing internship

Question related to fear perception before participation	No of responses - percent's
Fear of being judged by others for my lack of experience in this sport	17 - 27 %
I was afraid that I wouldn't adapt and wouldn't feel comfortable with the other participants	14 - 22.6%
Difficult familiarization with the new specific environment (slope, low temperature), equipment, terminology, and slope conduct norms	23(37.1%)
Do not match our technical level and level of preparation	14 -23%
Loss of lateral balance	21 -33.9%
I was afraid of getting injured	37-55,2%
Lack of knowledge regarding the devices used (skis, poles, boots, etc.)	25% -39,7

Skiing was considered costly due to the equipment used and the environment in which it takes place by 42 (55.3%) of the respondents, 33 (43.4%) considered it dangerous and difficult, only 7 (9.2%) found it unattractive, being demanding on the body in terms of effort (39 respondents, representing 51.3%), recommended from their point of view only for the healthy (18 cases – 23.7%) and for children and young people (12 responses – 15.8%).

But overall, 71 (93.4%) out of the 76 (100%) who completed the questionnaire consider skiing a fun sport.

Recently, Dyson et al. [6] emphasized that the research did not sufficiently address the concept of "*Social and emotional learning*"(SEL). It influences future professionals if implemented through the high school coach-student-athlete relationship as demonstrated by Hebard et al. [8]. They mention that the results after applications and the integration of these concepts in coaching will lead to a "*holistic development throughout life*" [8]. In order to apply it in their career, students who choose an university in the field of sports should continue and master this type of learning

to perfection through training opportunities offered by the university environment.

Social and emotional skills define a quality physical education and must be considered when training future teachers through curricula that integrate these aspects [14], especially in the field of physical education for children or young people whose personality and emotional intelligence are defined and influenced also by their studies [4].

But for this approach, sometimes teachers rely more on their experience in the context of the organization in which they work [15]. Sometimes it is difficult to teach using the concept of SEL in terms of methods or strategies, but sports programs can be used as vectors to implement some interactions with the surrounding social environment or with other individuals to develop multiple skills [2], [4], a good approach would be to make this interaction dynamic [5].

Academic success and especially practicing the future jobs are based on the interaction of these skills [12], especially university professors being responsible to implement such values if the university program is deficient in this regard. An

internship learning a sport can be a good implementation vector.

4. Conclusions

The mission of the physical education and sport teacher is to introduce middle or high school students to the theory and practice of various sports disciplines, thus shaping lucid, autonomous, physically and socially educated citizens, with a concern for coexistence.

The processes and comprehensive learning programs, in different environments, which stimulate all senses and abilities, are the ones that shape the professional identity of a teacher throughout their career, but especially at the stage of their formation in their future career, as a first-year student at a sports faculty.

The purpose of this study was to identify the perception regarding the activities proposed to students after participating in a skiing training course for students of the sports faculty in Craiova.

The feedback obtained from completing a questionnaire suggests that the skiing internship allows students to have a more realistic and practical exposure to the surrounding environment, resulting in personal experiences with long-term (professional) impact, which can help them identify and cultivate their goals and skills regarding their future profession.

Most students appreciated this immersive training experience from a practical perspective. This can assist them as future professionals who will guide others in sports activities.

University sports programs that facilitate efficient practical experience "on-site" can have multiple outcomes for students - training specialists, sports

curriculum programs should offer more options, partnerships, and similar practical experiences.

When a student chooses to pursue a degree in physical education and sports, the knowledge related to their future profession is taught during specialized courses by their professors, but an even better teaching method is to propose practical, interactive learning courses to students, putting them in the **position of student-teacher**. An effective means of learning how to be a teacher is a sports internship, intensive, immersive, which can help the student discover the skills necessary for the profession they are preparing for.

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