

STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN PRACTICAL SKI EDUCATION

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Abstract: *Evaluating the quality of teaching and learning is essential for improving both processes. Students' feedback provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of teachers and the learning experience. Practical ski training is a well-established component of sports and physical education university programs worldwide. It is also a mandatory course in the Physical education and sports bachelor's degree program at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. Every student undergoes a seven-day skiing training course, although most have no previous experience before attending ski education. The purpose of this research is to assess students' opinions on the quality of teaching and learning in practical ski education, focusing on their satisfaction with the educational process, overall organization of the practical training, satisfaction with the skills acquired during the course and perceived additional benefits gained from the program. A structured questionnaire was developed with both open- and closed-ended questions/statements, some using a Likert scale, was used for data collection. The results reveal that students are generally satisfied with the teachers' preparation, both theoretical and practical, and appreciate their role as motivators. All practical sessions are tailored to the students' abilities, while teachers effectively manage any crisis situations that arise. We found that students demonstrate a realistic self-assessment of their abilities at the end of the course where they put different evaluation on the acquired knowledge and skills. Overall, students' satisfaction with the practical ski education is very positive and that feedback is important for the process of teaching in it.*

Key words: *practical ski education, teaching, learning, students, self-evaluation.*

INTRODUCTION

In most educational systems, each academic subject contains learning objectives, which are composed of learning elements. The acquisition of competence refers to the acquisition of the above-mentioned learning elements at the end of the learning process (de la Fuente et al., 2025). An essential element of the comprehensive assessment of competencies is also to determine students' satisfaction with the teaching-learning process (de la Fuente et al., 2014). According to Daumiller et al. (2022) academic satisfaction is defined as a positive emotion related to the well-being of students. Zapata-Sevillano (2013) believes that there is a positive relationship between the level of performance and satisfaction with learning, but not always with the teaching process.

The evaluation of teaching and learning processes is a cornerstone of educational development, providing critical insights into the effectiveness of instructional methods and the overall learning experience. In higher education, students' feedback serves as a valuable tool for assessing the quality of teaching, identifying areas for improvement, and fostering a more engaging and productive learning environment. This is particularly relevant in specialized fields such as sports and physical education, where practical training plays a crucial role in skill acquisition and professional development, but also in satisfaction with achieved goals.

Practical ski education is a fundamental component of sports and physical education programs worldwide, offering students the opportunity to develop both technical and personal skills in a dynamic and challenging environment. At St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria, practical ski training is a mandatory course within the Physical Education and Sports bachelor's degree program. Over the course of seven days, students engage in intensive ski training, most often with no previous experience in skiing. This unique setting provides an ideal context for examining the interplay between teaching quality, student learning, and overall satisfaction. As highlighted by Pighetti et al. (2022), effective snow sports education encompasses multiple dimensions, including technical skill development, risk management, environmental interaction, pedagogical approach, social-emotional learning, and professional development.

In this regard Cigrovski et al. (2020) emphasize that optimal learning for beginners depends on three key factors: adequate ski equipment, appropriate terrain, and an instructor capable of modifying the teaching program to match the students' abilities and motivation. According to Lešnik & Žvan (2010) and Lešnik et al. (2013) for an alpine ski educational program to be efficient, several criteria need to be fulfilled, primarily ski conditions, quality of ski instructors, quality of program - basic ski elements to be arranged gradually in terms of progression and duration, motivation of both ski instructors and participants in alpine ski education and motor abilities to acquire new activity. A study by Maleš et al. (2013) shows that ski instructors need to be physically well-prepared - the agility and explosive power should be at a high level, because they are basis for the quality execution of advanced techniques in alpine skiing. Ruzicka (2017) suggests that incorporating game-based training methods can effectively shift students' focus away from the purely "technical" demands of skiing, thereby reducing anxiety and positively impacting the overall quality and outcomes of the learning process.

Numerous studies underscore the multifaceted benefits of alpine skiing, particularly for beginners. Wojtyczek et al. (2014) demonstrated that recreational alpine skiing leads to significant improvements in balance control, regardless of the skiers' gender or prior experience. Cigrovski et al. (2018a) support the conclusion of previous authors, finding that the level of balance is crucial for learning basics of alpine skiing, but more importantly, a structured alpine ski program leads to improvement of balance in alpine ski beginners. This enhancement of postural stability is a key outcome with positive implications for daily motor activities (Firlus, 2018). According to Staniszewski et al. (2016) skiing had a positive effect on the postural stability only in conditions similar to those in which this stability was practiced.

In beginner and intermediate skiers who ski on flat and low-intensity steep slopes, aerobic metabolism predominates for energy provision (Scheiber et al. 2009). Skiing with instructor-paced modes is an adequate strategy to avoid premature fatigue of these skiers (Scheiber et al. 2011). Today, alpine ski schools look beyond the ski technique. Learning a new motor activity like skiing offers health benefits and pleasure to the ones taking part in it (Božić et al., 2019). Lee et al. (2019) found that winter skiing improves psychological well-being, including stress and apprehension, and led to increased enjoyment in collegiate students.

Despite the growing emphasis on practical training in higher education, there remains a need for systematic evaluation of its effectiveness, particularly from the perspective of students. Understanding students' perceptions of teaching and learning in practical ski education can offer valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as inform future improvements.

The purpose of this research is to assess students' opinions on the quality of teaching and learning in practical ski education, focusing on their satisfaction with the educational process, overall organization of the practical training, satisfaction with the skills acquired during the course and perceived additional benefits gained from the program.

METHOD

To collect data, a structured questionnaire was developed with both open- and closed-ended questions some using a Likert scale. This approach facilitated quantitative analysis of students' opinion. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants at the end of the seven-day ski training course, allowing them to reflect on their experiences and provide informed feedback.

The data collected were statistically processed by using one-dimensional frequency distribution and analyzed to identify trends and patterns in students' evaluations, providing valuable insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in the practical ski education program.

Sample of the study

The study included 111 responders. They are all first-year students in bachelor program "Physical education and sports teacher" at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria. The distribution of students by gender is as follows: 24,4% are women and 75,6% are men on average age 23,1 years. 85% of the students had never practiced skiing before the course.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data in Table 1 demonstrate an overwhelmingly positive perception of the instructors' motivational skills. With 77.5% of respondents rating this aspect as "Excellent" and an additional 15.3% as "Very good," the combined positive feedback reaches 92.8%. This indicates that the instructors were highly successful in creating an engaging and stimulating learning environment. This is critical, as a positive pre-course attitude has been shown to correlate with better skill acquisition (Cigrovski et al., 2014). Furthermore, their skill in managing crises (Table 2) directly addresses a key psychological barrier, given that lower fear levels are associated with higher performance success in beginners (Cigrovski et al., 2018b).

Effective motivation is crucial in a physically demanding and potentially intimidating activity like skiing, especially for beginners. These results suggest that the instructors employed strategies that fostered enthusiasm, encouraged participation, and built student confidence, which is a cornerstone of effective practical education.

Table 1 To what extent did the instructors succeed in motivating you to actively participate in the learning process?

Answers	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Unsatisfactory level	0	0%	0%	0%
Satisfactory level	3	2,7%	2,7%	2,7%
Good level	5	4,5%	4,5%	7,2%
Very good level	17	15,3%	15,3%	22,5%
Excellent level	86	77,5%	77,5%	100%

Safety is paramount in alpine sports. The data here is exceptional, showing that 82.9% of students rated the instructors' crisis management skills as "Excellent," with another 14.4% choosing "Very good" (a total of 97.3%). This near-unanimous confidence indicates that the instructors were not only technically proficient but also highly skilled in risk assessment, proactive prevention, and competent handling of any unforeseen situations. This level of trust is essential for allowing students to focus on learning without undue anxiety, directly contributing to the program's positive outcomes and safe execution (Table 2).

Table 2 To what extent do you believe the instructors are effective in preventing and managing crisis situations during the learning process?

Answers	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Unsatisfactory level	0	0%	0%	0%
Satisfactory level	1	0,9%	0,9%	0,9%
Good level	2	1,8%	1,8%	2,7%
Very good level	16	14,4%	14,4%	17,1%
Excellent level	92	82,9%	82,9%	100%

Table 3 presents the data to which students perceived the instructors in the practical ski education course as well-prepared. The results show overwhelmingly positive evaluations: 79.3% of the students rated the instructors' preparation as "excellent", 13.5% as "very good", small proportions gave ratings of "good" or "satisfactory", no responses indicated an "unsatisfactory" level.

These findings clearly demonstrate the high professionalism of the teaching staff, both in theoretical knowledge and practical expertise. The dominant positive evaluation indicates that students regard their instructors as well-prepared to conduct the training in a safe, structured, and motivating manner.

From a scientific perspective, these findings highlight that the quality of instructor preparation is a crucial factor influencing students' satisfaction with the course. It aligns with previous research (Joksimovic et al., 2010), which emphasizes the importance of instructor competence in high-risk sports such as skiing. Instructors are required to enhance their adaptability to modern, student-centred educational methods (Özbal & Tolga, 2019; Martínez et al., 2016).

Table 3 To what extent were the instructors in the practical ski education course well-prepared?

Answers	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Unsatisfactory level	0	0%	0%	0%
Satisfactory level	2	1,8%	1,8%	1,8%
Good level	6	5,4%	5,4%	7,2%
Very good level	15	13,5%	13,5%	20,7%
Excellent level	88	79,3%	79,3%	100%

Table 4 evaluates the curriculum design and its structure. A significant majority of 73% found the planning "Excellent," and 19.8% found it "Very good" (total 92.8%). This indicates that the progression of lessons was logical, well-sequenced, and appropriately scaffolded. For beginners, a methodical sequence - from basic stance and plough turns to more advanced manoeuvres - is vital for building skills safely and confidently. The results confirm that the program's methodology was effectively tailored to facilitate learning, allowing students to develop their abilities in a structured and coherent manner.

Table 4 The learning content and the methodological sequence of instruction are planned in:

Answers	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Unsatisfactory level	0	0%	0%	0%
Satisfactory level	2	1,8%	1,8%	1,8%
Good level	6	5,4%	5,4%	7,2%
Very good level	22	19,8%	19,8%	27%
Excellent level	81	73%	73%	100%

The data of the question in Table 5 assesses the perceived relevance and clarity of the theoretical component. The response is again highly positive, with 73.6% deeming it "Excellent" and 20% "Very good" (total 93.6%). This suggests that the theoretical lectures successfully complemented the practical training by providing necessary context (e.g., skiing theory, biomechanics, safety rules, teaching methodologies) that students recognize as valuable for their future careers as physical education teachers. The high score for understandability also confirms that the material was presented in an accessible and clear way. That is in unison with some older findings from Bridgwater (1982) which research prove that humility and sensitivity of the instructors are significant factors of the effective ski education. As well the community of alpine ski coaches could be beneficial for developing interpersonal and intrapersonal knowledge through enhanced emotional intelligence and gaining an athlete-centred approach (Garner & Hill, 2017).

Table 5 Do you find the lecture content understandable and useful for your future professional career?

Answers	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Unsatisfactory level	0	0%	0%	0%
Satisfactory level	0	0%	0%	0%
Good level	7	6,4%	6,4%	6,4%
Very good level	22	20%	20%	26,4%
Excellent level	81	73,6%	73,6%	100%

Table 6 shows the crucial outcome measure, reflecting the students' self-perceived learning efficacy. The distribution is more varied but still decidedly positive. While only 18.9% felt "Excellently" prepared, a large plurality of 41.4% felt "Very good" and 38.7% felt "Good" (combined positive rating of 99.1%). This spread is highly realistic for a short, intensive course with many beginners. It shows that most students felt they had gained significant competence, acknowledging the challenging nature of the sport. This variation in perceived skill acquisition may also reflect the differing foundational motor abilities of the participants, as research identifies agility, static leg strength, and balance as primary physical factors influencing a beginner's success in alpine skiing (Cigrovski et al., 2012). The absence of "Unsatisfactory"

ratings is particularly telling, indicating that no student felt left behind or fundamentally unprepared by the course's end.

Table 6 To what extent do you feel prepared after the theoretical and practical activities of the course?

Answers	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Unsatisfactory level	0	0%	0%	0%
Satisfactory level	1	1%	1%	1%
Good level	21	18,9%	18,9%	19,9%
Very good level	46	41,4%	41,4%	61,3%
Excellent level	43	38,7%	38,7%	100%

Overall, the positive feedback from students underscores the effectiveness of the practical ski education program and highlights the importance of continuous evaluation to maintain and enhance its quality (Figure 1). These findings provide a strong foundation for future improvements and reinforce the value of student-centered approaches in sports education.

The results, showing high level of satisfaction, can be further contextualized. Research in the tourism sector indicates that the evaluation of services like ski schools consists of two main components: the emotional feeling and the uncertainty in the evaluation (Arboretti et al., 2014). The high scores in our study most likely reflect a strong positive first component, while variations in responses may be attributed to the second. This highlights the usefulness of more detailed statistical analysis to identify specific areas for improvement.

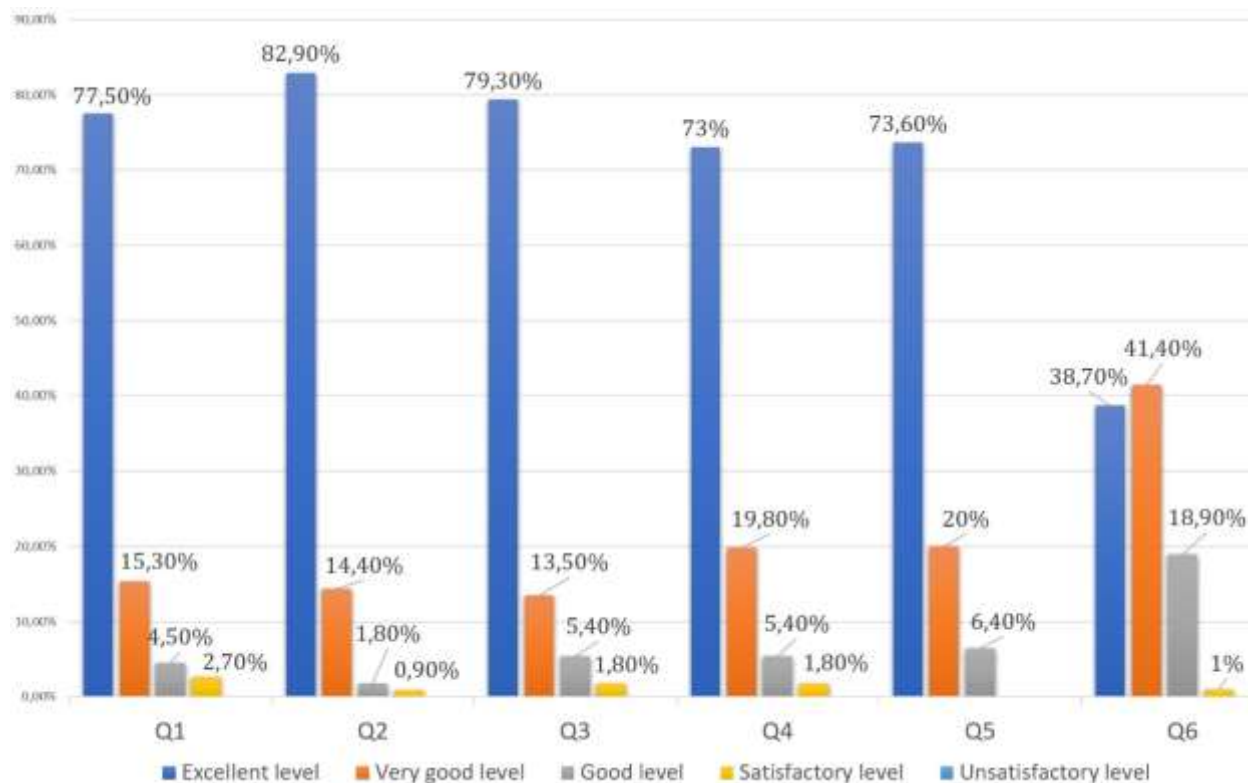


Fig. 1 Overall results with the answers of the first six questions

Table 7 directly addresses the principle of differentiated instruction and is one of the most significant findings. An overwhelming 85.5% of respondents answered "Yes," with an additional 13.6% leaning towards "Rather Yes" (total 99.1%). This near-unanimous agreement (with no "No" responses) strongly supports the authors' conclusion that the practical sessions were expertly adapted to the students'

varying skill levels. This is a critical success factor for a cohort where 85% had no prior experience. It indicates that the instructors effectively individualized tasks, provided appropriate challenges, and ensured that all students, regardless of their starting point, could learn and progress at their own pace.

The findings of this study highlight the overall positive perception of students regarding the practical ski education program at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo. Students expressed high satisfaction with the theoretical and practical preparation of their instructors, emphasizing their role as effective motivators throughout the training.

Table 7 Do you consider the educational content to be appropriately tailored to the students' abilities?

Answers	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
No	0	0%	0%	0%
Rather no	1	0,9%	0,9%	0,9%
Rather Yes	15	13,6%	13,6%	14,5%
Yes	94	85,5%	85,5%	100%

A key strength of the program lies in its adaptability, with practical sessions tailored to the varying skill levels of students. This individualized approach not only fosters skill development but also ensures inclusivity, particularly for beginners with limited prior experience in skiing. Additionally, the instructors' ability to manage crisis situations effectively further contributed to a positive and safe learning environment, which is critical in high-risk activities such as skiing. These findings are in line with previous ones made by Plastoi (2017) who think that learning and practicing alpine skiing is efficient only through a theoretical and practical information approach of the specialist, which generate specific educational benefits for the trained individual. Specific information transmitted in a professional way creates a correct assimilation of the sense of skiing, and will increase self-confidence and the desire to skiing in the future.

The study also revealed that students demonstrated realistic self-assessment of their abilities at the end of the course, indicating a clear understanding of their progress and areas for improvement. This self-awareness is a valuable outcome of the program, as it reflects the development of both technical skills and metacognitive competencies.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into students' perceptions of the practical ski education program at St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo. The findings indicate a high level of satisfaction among students, particularly regarding the theoretical and practical preparation of instructors, the adaptability of training sessions to individual level, and the effective management of crisis situations. These results underscore the importance of well-prepared and motivating instructors in creating a positive and productive learning environment. The present findings align with the results reported in the authors' earlier study (Belomazheva-Dimitrova et al., 2025).

Students' realistic self-assessment of their abilities at the end of the course further highlights the program's success in fostering both technical skills and self-awareness. This aligns with the broader goals of sports education, which aim to develop not only physical competencies but also critical thinking and self-evaluation skills.

The positive feedback from students reinforces the effectiveness of the current program while also emphasizing the value of continuous evaluation and improvement. Importantly, the benefits extend beyond immediate skill acquisition. Similar structured ski programs have been shown to significantly improve participants' overall attitude towards alpine skiing and the mountain environment, promoting it as a desirable leisure-time activity (Cigrovski et al., 2013). Future research could explore the long-term impact of practical ski education on students' professional development and examine the perspectives of instructors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the program's strengths and challenges.

This positive outcome aligns with findings in elite sport settings, where a supportive instructional environment has been linked to lower stress and higher vigor in student-athletes, as demonstrated in a

study of Swedish alpine skiers who reported low training distress and high energy levels (Davis et al., 2019).

The findings from this study not only highlight the positive aspects of the current approach but also underscore the importance of student feedback in refining teaching methodologies and enhancing the overall learning experience. Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discourse on effective teaching practices in sports education and emphasizes the value of student-centered evaluation in achieving educational excellence.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that student evaluations are a powerful tool for assessing and enhancing the quality of practical ski education. By incorporating student feedback into ongoing program development, educational institutions can ensure that their training programs remain relevant, effective, and aligned with the needs of their students.

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EVALUACIJA STUDENATA O NASTAVI I UČENJU U PRAKTIČNOJ SKI NASTAVI

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Sažetak: Evaluacija kvaliteta nastave i učenja je ključna za unapređenje oba procesa. Povratne informacije studenata pružaju dragocene uvide u efikasnost nastavnika i iskustvo učenja. Praktična ski obuka je dobro uspostavljen sastavni deo sportskih i fizičkog obrazovanja na univerzitetskim programima širom sveta. Takođe, to je obavezan kurs na programu osnovnih studija iz fizičkog vaspitanja i sporta na Univerzitetu Sv. Ćirila i Metodija u Velikom Trnovu, Bugarska. Svaki polaznik prolazi sedmodnevni kurs skijaške obuke, iako većina nema prethodnog iskustva pre pohađanja časova skijanja.

Cilj ovog istraživanja je da se proceni mišljenje studenata o kvalitetu nastave i učenja u praktičnom obrazovanju u skijanju, fokusirajući se na njihovo zadovoljstvo obrazovnim procesom, ukupnom organizacijom praktične obuke, zadovoljstvo veštinama stečenim tokom kursa, kao i percipirane dodatne koristi od programa. Za prikupljanje podataka korišćen je strukturirani upitnik sa pitanjima/izjavama otvorenog i zatvorenog tipa, a neki su koristili

Likertovu skalu. Rezultati pokazuju da su studenti generalno zadovoljni pripremom nastavnika, kako teorijskom, tako i praktičnom, i cenili su njihovu ulogu kao motivatore. Svi praktični časovi su prilagođeni sposobnostima studenata, dok nastavnici efikasno upravljaju kriznim situacijama koje se javljaju. Utvrđeno je da studenti pokazuju realnu samoprocenu svojih sposobnosti na kraju kursa, gde daju različite ocene na osnovu stečenog znanja i veština. Ukupno gledano, zadovoljstvo studenata praktičnom ski obukom je vrlo pozitivno, a povratne informacije su važne za proces nastave u ovom području.

Ključne reči: *praktična ski obuka, nastava, učenje, studenti, samoprocena.*