

The Teaching of Greek Traditional Dance through the Group-Collaborative Method

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Abstract: The aim of this research was to evaluate the effect of an intervention program of Greek traditional dance teaching through the instruction of different dances in primary school students, initially indifferent towards Greek dance. The sample has been constituted of 300 students in total, 129 males and 171 females. Students were attending the 4th, 5th, or 6th grade of primary school. Participants have been split up into two groups upon a lottery procedure. The experimental group attended a traditional Greek dances intervention program for two months (16 sessions, 45 minutes long), aiming to teach three different types of dances through the group-collaborative method. The control group was taught the same dances using the method of command. The Student-Interest-in-the-Dance Questionnaire (Koupani, Rokka, & Bebetos, 2017) has been used for data collection. Data statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), t-test for Independent Samples, and Repeated Measures ANOVA. Upon data analysis, the following conclusions have been reached: a) the intervention program of Greek traditional dances teaching through the instruction of three different types of dances had a positive effect causing students interest, b) the occurred changes in the experimental group were observed in both males and females, c) students' class constituted a differentiation factor, having students of the 6th grade show significant changes. The research results enable the authors to claim that their Greek dance teaching programs, using innovative teaching approaches that promote self-reaction and collaboration, have the potential to provoke and attract the interest of indifferent primary school students.

Keywords: instructional methods, primary school, physical education.

1. Introduction

According to Kardaris (2010) and Sachs (2012), dance is the most widespread form of entertainment among the lower social classes in every society. Besides, dance was also part of Greek citizens' religious and daily life after the independence and the constitution of the first Modern Greek nation. Even nowadays, the dance continues to occupy an important place in every major religious and traditional fest, such as Christmas – dance events of the twelfth day – and Easter – Lazarines, Halloween, and August 15th (Filippou, 2015). Even when Greek society loses the last nuggets of its traditionality and enters a modern/industrial form, the dance continues to be omnipresent, even in different places or forms.

Many countries in Europe and the U.S.A have included traditional dance teaching in their study program as part of physical education or fine arts courses (P9 Eurydice, 2009; Stivactaki, 2011). The better understanding of nations' cultural background and the cultivation and strengthening of the national identity were some of the main reasons encouraging the teaching of traditional dances in students of primary school (Royce, 2015).

Identical reasons can explain the existence of Greek traditional dance in the Physical Education course syllabus. The cultivation of Greek cultural conscience, the creation of a comprehensive and shared national identity (Gartzonika, 2008; Maratou- Alibrandi & Galinou, 1999; Pitsi, 2016; Chilari, 2012) the introduction to its unique features that, for example, it is a three-dimensional concept consisting of movement, melody, and speech which can contribute to the development of a symbolic way of expression and communication are the reasons why Greek traditional dance is taught in both primary and secondary education. Moreover, the involvement with Greek traditional dance contributes to the development of children's cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor fields, the cultivation of creativity, and the perception of space, time, body, or relationship with classmates/co-operators and the group (Pitsi, 2016).

For all the above reasons and each one separately, the Greek traditional dance has appeared in the learning process since the beginning of the 20th century (1914), aiming at the cultivation of national standards, contributing in this way to the achievement of that time's national plan which was proof of the continuity of Greek nation (Gartzonika, 2008; Chilari, 2012). According to Gartzonika (2008), the twenty-year between 1960

and 1980 determined, to a significant extent, the presence of Greek traditional dance in education as well as the reasons for its existence. In 1964, Papandreou’s government passed Law 4379, which stipulated educational issues mirroring the state’s clear opinion regarding the reasons behind establishing Greek traditional dance teaching in education, aiming at the religious, moral, and national education of students. During the same period, the term “panhellenic dances” (Kalamatianos and Tsamikos) is used to justify Greek traditional dances' compulsory teaching in primary and secondary education. Finally, during the dictatorship, traditional dance as a means of national propaganda to fulfill goals aimed at ethnic homogeneity has been intensified (Gartzonika, 2008; Chilari, 2012).

There are plenty of benefits that someone can get out of his participation in dance activities, either inside or outside the school environment. These benefits are related to physical health since, based on researches evidence, it contributes both to the maintenance of individuals' good physical and psychological health, while at the same time it is a means of entertainment and recreation. According to Mountakis (2006), the presence of Greek traditional dance in the curricula of physical education course is in line with the international educational trends, which, through the instruction of the kinetic form of dance, have the ultimate goal of cultivating physical abilities and enhancing student’s health and life skills in order to be prepared for the life that follows their school years.

However, the number of participants in dance activities, organized either during physical education and school events or in the context of courses provided by the various dance and cultural associations, keeps reduced. The course of physical education, especially in primary school, is forming habits for lifelong engagement with physical activity. Research results will enable physical education instructors to apply alternative teaching methods to provoke their students’ interest in a domain that they usually encounter a reduced or even negative willingness to participate.

Therefore, the scope of this study was to evaluate the impact of an intervention program of Greek traditional dance teaching, through the instruction of different kinds of traditional dances, in the engagement of primary school student interest in Greek traditional dances.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

300 students in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades of different primary schools all over Greece participated in this research. The students have been selected via completing the Student-Interest-in-the-Dance Questionnaire (Koupani, Rokka, & Bebetos, 2017). Students stated that they have not participated in dance activities both inside or outside the school and that traditional dance was not among their preferences. Via a lottery procedure, students have been divided into two groups. All the demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of sample

Grade	Gender				Total
	Experimental group		Control group		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
4 th	34 11.33%	38 12.67%	14 4.67%	18 6.00%	104 34.67%
5 th	33 11.00%	33 11.00%	15 5.00%	217.00%	102 34.00%
6 th	17 5.67%	37 12.33%	165.33%	248.00%	94 31.33%
Total	84 28.00%	108 36.00%	45 15.00%	63 21.00%	300 100.00%

2.2 Design of the Study/ Intervention program

The intervention program lasted for eight weeks with a frequency of two courses per week. For both the experimental and the control group, 16 courses were carried out in total. All the courses took place during the physical education course hour, and each one of them lasted 45 minutes. The experimental team has been taught traditional dances by teaching different types of dances via the group-collaborative method, while the control group was taught the same dances via the ruling method (Serbezis, 2012), emphasizing the learning of dances’ kinetic form. The dances taught in both groups were Hassapikos, Syrtostratia, Ai-Giorgis, Karagouna, Zonaradikos, and Armenaki. Both the experimental and control group had their course schedules organized based on what Derri (2007) and Theodorakis, Digelidis, Zetouand & Dimas (2011) proposed. All the necessary research data have been collected in the first and sixteenth courses accordingly.

2.3 Measurement

Student-Interest-in-the-Dance Questionnaire by Koupani, Rokka & Bebetos (2017) has been used for data collection. The Greek version is part of the Student-Interest-in-the-Arts Questionnaire by Brandon and Lawton (2013).

The questionnaire consists of seven questions that explore students' interest in dancing. The answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale where 1= I totally agree and 5= I totally disagree. According to Brandon and Lawton (2013), the scale has been created based on four elements examining the following aspects or expressions of interest: a. Knowledge regarding the art of dancing (2 topics), b. Participation in dance activities (3 topics), c. Reaping joy from participation in dance activities (one topic), and d. Discussion on dance (one topic). This final factor in the original questionnaire shows strong internal consistency since Cronbach's α is .93.

2.4 Statistical Analysis

Data statistical analysis included among others:

1. Elements of descriptive statistics
2. Cronbach's α for the control of factors internal consistency
3. t-test for independent sample for discrepancies identification when it comes to the Averages of both the experimental and the control group during the initial measuring.
4. A Repeated Measures ANOVA analysis to check whether there are statistically significant differences within and between the groups (experimental and control) moving from the initial to the final measurement in order to examine eventual differences within and between the two groups regarding the initial and final measurements, as well as for to observe any contrasts between measurement averages of the experimental and the control group.
5. A Repeated Measures ANOVA analysis checks whether there are statistically significant differences within and between the groups (experimental and control) moving from the initial to the final measurement to examine any eventual differences concerning the same gender. In other words, to verify whether there are any notable statistical differences between the boys of the experimental group and those of the control group moving from measurement to measurement. Idem for girls.

3. Results

3.1 Initial measurement

In the beginning, the Independent Sample t-test analysis has been applied to find out whether there were any statistically significant differences in the questionnaire factor between the experiment and control group at the initial measurement. The results did not reveal any statistically significant differences between the two groups in Student Interest-in-the-Dance. Therefore, the two groups' members were considered to be characterized by the same level as the factor which was studied before the intervention program (Table 2).

Table 2. Mean & Standard Deviation of the experiment and control group at the initial measurement

Factor	Experimental group		Control group		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Student Interest-in-the Dance	2.28	.48	2.27	.59	.316	298	>.05

3.2 Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was performed in order to examine the internal consistency, and therefore the reliability of the items constituting the factor under study both in the pre-and post-test measurement. The reliability test was based on the calculation of Cronbach's α . The results revealed that the factor had a satisfactory reliability score (Cronbach's α for pre- test= .89 and for post-test= .91).

3.3. Repeated Measures

The Repeated measures ANOVA analysis was applied for the "satisfaction" factor. The analysis model (2X2) included the variable "measurement" (initial - final) as the repetition variable and the variable "group" (experimental - control) as the independent variable. The results showed that there was a statistically significant interaction between the variable "measurement" and "group" for the "Student interest in the dance" [$F_{(1,298)}=599.683, p<.001$ & $n^2 = .669$]. The interaction analysis, using the multiple comparison test (Post Hoc Bonferroni), showed that the experimental group had a statistically significant improvement in grades after the end of the intervention program (initial $M=2.28$ $SD=.48$, final $M=3.55$ $SD=.69$). In contrast, the control group did not show any statistically significant difference (initial $M=2.27$ $SD=.55$, final $M=2.27$ $SD=.54$).

As far as the impact of the program is concerned, someone can underline the following:

- a) the male students of the experimental group had a steady development after every single measurement ($F_{(1,127)}=247.807, p<.001, n^2=.662$, initial measurement $M=2.16$ & $SD=.48$, final measurement $M=3.26$ & $SD=.64$), increasing Student interest in the dance, while the control group did not have any statistically important differentiation ($F_{(1,127)}=.015, p>.05$, initial measurement $M =2.18$ & $SD=.52$, final measurement $M=2.18$ & $SD=.53$),

b) female students of the experimental group presented an important differentiation after every single measurement ($F_{(1,169)}=408.805$, $p<.001$, $n^2=.705$, initial measurement $M=2.36$ & $SD=.44$, final measurement $M=3.77$ & $SD=.61$) increasing Student interest in the dance. The female students of the control group did not present a statistically important difference ($F_{(1, 169)}=.024$, $p>.05$, initial measurement $M=2.35$ & $SD=.57$, final measurement $M=2.36$ & $SD=.56$).

c) When it comes to the experimental group's school grade, this one constitutes a differentiator factor of Student-interest-in-the-dance ($F_{(2,189)}=11.321$, $p<.001$, $n^2=.107$). More precisely, students going in the final grade of primary school, further developed the Student-interest-in-the-dance (initial measurement $M=2.30$ & $SD=.44$, final measurement $M=3.84$ & $SD=.46$) compared to students of the 4th (initial measurement $M=2.29$ & $SD=.45$, final measurement $M=3.43$ & $SD=.46$) and 5th grade (initial measurement $M=2.28$ & $SD=.52$, final measurement $M=3.25$ & $SD=.70$).

4. Discussion – Conclusions

The 1950s was a milestone decade for Greek traditional society, and therefore for Greek dance, which seemed to be cut off from its natural environment and is now presented either as part of the course of physical education in both primary and secondary education or in dance clubs that constitute an emerging component of dance during this day. According to Stivaktaki, Mountakis & Bournelli (2010), dance is a cultural good welcomed wholeheartedly by the Greek society while also an essential educational means for organized education.

During the Physical Education course, participation in dance lessons follows the course's flow. According to surveys, the majority of students are not satisfied with the course of physical education (Nowicki, Duke, Sisney, Stricker & Tyler, 2004; Iconomescu, Mindrescu, & Popovici, 2018), and this situation is getting worse and worse by the years as students getting older (Digelidis, & Papaioannou, 2004b). As students grow up, they put less effort into the physical education course while they are less motivated to participate (Ntoumanis, Barkoukis, & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, 2009). The situation is similar when Greek dance is scheduled during the course. When this is the case, students and especially boys, try to avoid their participation in the course by any means (Matzoukas, 2008). According to the author, physical education teachers are responsible for the situation described above. All physical education teachers are "obliged" to structure and offer a course that will keep students happy and satisfied (Chen & Chen, 2009; Gråstén, Jaakkola, Liukkonen, Watt, & Yli-Piipari, 2012; Scarpa and Nart, 2012) since these two elements are determinant factors for their future participation in physical activities (Gråstén, & Watt, 2017) but also for the development of internal motivation (Barkoukis, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2008; Yli-Piipari, 2011; Yli-Piipari, Barkoukis, Jaakkola, & Liukkonen, 2013).

Consequently, this research aimed to investigate whether the teaching of Greek traditional dances via different dance types such as hip-hop, breakdance, and dance aerobic can provoke students' interest and cause a change in their behavior towards dance.

The initial measurement, which took place before the program's beginning, confirmed that students are not interested in participating in dance activities, especially when Greek traditional dance is among them. Students who believe that dancing is an activity suitable only for girls are seemed more negative towards such activities (Arapitsa, 2014; Papaioannidou, 2016). Physical education instructors are encouraged to apply these teaching methods and strategies, enabling students to collaborate and act appropriately. The collaborative method that enabled students to coexist and cooperate to have the desired results is among them.

This research's results can also prove all the above. Once the students belonging to the experimental group found out that dance moves are similar in all kinds of dance, they changed their view and seemed more interested in Greek traditional dances via the possibilities for self-reaction they had. They were interested in learning about the places and people who danced those specific dances they were taught. Moreover, they asked to learn other dances as well, preferably faster ones.

The number of boys belonging to the experimental group who changed their mind and were more interested in learning Greek traditional dances was impressive. It has been observed that, through the program, the boys were convinced that dance, and in particular Greek traditional dance, is an appropriate activity for both sexes (Sanderson, 2001). They were convinced that only benefits can be gained from their participation in dance activities for their physical and mental health (Department for Education and Skills, 2005a, b).

As far as the school grade is concerned, the results contradict those of other researches (Sanderson, 2001), according to which the attitude towards dance appeared to remain the same for students aged between 11 and 16 years old, indicating that it has been established earlier and has long-lasting effects. The results revealed that properly configured programs could change students' opinions and attitudes towards dance.

The survey's results and the discussion allow the authors to claim that their Greek dance teaching programs, using innovative teaching approaches that promote self-reaction and collaboration, have the potential to provoke and attract the interest of primary school students who have initially been indifferent towards dance.

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