

DANCE IN THE PHYSICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM AS AN INTERMEDIATE TOOL FOR INTERCULTURAL RECOGNITION, RESPECT AND TOLERANCE

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is the current positioning of dances in curricula as pedagogical discourses in all educational levels of N. Macedonia as well as reactions and interest of students during the performing of dances as a intermediate tool for cultural recognition in higher education studies in the country and beyond. *Methods:* The teaching methods of movement: analytical, synthetic and mixed method are used. In a period of 10 years (2011-2021), in collaboration with Faculties of Physical Education in the country and beyond we applied dances of different ethnicities in order to inspect the reactions and interest in foreign cultures through dances. *Results:* The positive feedback and interest by students of university level at home and abroad in knowing of foreign dances and cultures was what we expected for intercultural respect and tolerance. *Conclusion and recommendations:* We can conclude that the existing curricula at all levels of education need changes and modifications according to contemporary needs, as well as that dances in the curriculum of all educational levels to be transferred from the national or monocultural framework to the international or multicultural ones. This is the only way that dances may play the role as an intercultural tool for respect and tolerance between cultures.

Keywords: Folk dances, intercultural respect and tolerance, curricula of primary, secondary, high education

1. Introduction

As in many other countries, also in North Macedonia, dance is part of the curriculum of all educational levels. While in primary and secondary school curricula dance is represented by a few hours (three hours in primary and two in secondary), in the curriculum of higher education specifically in the Faculty of Physical Education (FPE), based on the Bologna system dance is planned within one semester. This is the only place where schoolteachers are trained for the field of Physical Education (PE). Recently the study program has been modified and dance again, is two-semester course with a richer curriculum with dances of local cultures of different ethnicities and dances of other culture from the neighborhood and beyond as well as standard dances. Dance

has been and continues to be a part of PE curricula in several countries. PE has also been described as the gateway to dance education in schools (Sanderson, 1996). Attitudes towards participation in dance practice within the social settings of PE vary between different age groups, between boys and girls as well as within groups of boys and girls (Lundvall and Meckbach, 2008).

Dance as part of the PE studding program is more often treated as a sport or physical exercise, not paying attention to the cultural traditions that this subject carry in the inheritance from generation to generation as well as artistic values. Also, this pedagogical discourse is a bridge for knowing of other cultures and traditions through dancing and can serve as a tool for intercultural respect and tolerance. Torun and Suzanne (2015) have examined the position of dance as a pedagogical discourse in Swedish researching documents over time. Over discourse analysis it has been proved that dance has enjoyed a strong position in the PE curricula, but that its significance is mainly viewed in terms of its investment value: preserving cultural traditions and encouraging physical activity without artistic or aesthetic values.

When it comes to intercultural living, in my opinion, it can be divided into two groups. The first group includes states or societies where there is a large influx of immigrants and in the second group the states characterized as multiethnic states where different ethnicities coexist. The main difference between these two groups is that, in the first group where there are many immigrants, states adapt the school curricula by including the others in the general national curriculum which is in the official language of the state and characterized by joint learning in school. In this case the opportunity for cultural recognition and intercultural respect is high because they are all together in the educational process, also the curricula must be changed and adapted from the national to the international one or in other words from the monocultural to the multicultural character. And in the states where there are no immigrants, but they are characterized as multiethnic states or societies, the educational processes and social life is like a double-edged sword. The advantage of this societies is that all ethnicities study in their mother tongue, but the disadvantage is the separation education which makes intercultural contact and cognition weaker. Not knowing the languages and cultures of other ethnicities with whom they live, and lack of knowledge of the official language of the state, is because of the separate education form as well as media, internet and social networks dominated by youngster population and it enables that everyone has full access to their mother tongue and culture. Therefore, in such multicultural societies dance in the PE curriculum can play an important social role in knowing cultures and be an intermediate tool for intercultural respect and tolerance.

For living together in diversity and for a better understanding of interculturalism, by Giménez Romero (2003), those terms are analyzed along two dimensions: I. Real level or level of the facts, and II. Normative or Axiological level, or level of socio-political and ethnic proposals. The real level describes the facts or the current reality. Within the real dimension, there are differences between multiculturalism, when cultural diversity exists in a territory; and interculturalism, when, besides cultural diversity there are relationships among the different

groups living in that territory. And the axiological level suggests what it should be (depending on the different ideologies). Therefore, it is the axis of the socio-political and ethical proposals. For instance, it could be that we live in a multicultural setting (cultural diversity but no interaction among the groups) but we defend interculturalism as a socio-political and ethical proposal trying to achieve in the future an intercultural territory. If we look at the axiological dimension, important differences are found between multiculturalism and interculturalism with regards to the recommended way of dealing with cultural diversity: Multiculturalism recognizes the differences proposing a coexistence of the different groups. It is based on two main principles: a. The equality's principle, which sustains that everybody is equal, i.e., with the same rights, duties, responsibilities, etc., and b. The difference's principle, which sustains that besides equality, every human being has the right of being different, i.e., with different ideologies, customs, religions, etc. Therefore, the model of interculturalism gradually arose. It maintains the two principles defended by multiculturalism, but it adds a new principle: the positive interaction. It expresses that in order to avoid (as much as possible) the increasing of segregation, it is necessary to promote a positive interaction among the different groups Giménez Romero (2003). As stated, Petra G-S, Maria R.B and Clemens L (2012), for several years, the authors have been carrying out different projects together with their respective local partners in various countries in the areas of intercultural learning and the promotion of peaceful living together, using physical activity and sports as their main tools. These projects focused on evaluation and research to explore and assess the underlying theoretical frameworks of the programs and to identify good practices and challenges for further actions. By sharing the theoretical fundamentals, the processes and the results of those experiences, a common framework emerged together with the attempt of systematizing some of the practices in a joint trans-national project. Malgesini & Giménez Romero (2000) show through history that the encounters with the Other have been dealt with in very different ways, such as: Discrimination (Uncial treatments), Segregation (Isolation to a physical or social area), Elimination (Cultural fundamentalism), Homogenization (Assimilation) or Cultural fusion (Melting), and Cultural pluralism (Multiculturalism and interculturalism) Petra G-S, María R. B., Clemens L. (2012).

Although the dances themselves carry many characteristics such as body exercise, aesthetics, entertainment, emotional expression, etc., but the most important value is the cultural heritage. There is an ideal opportunity for teachers to plan national and international dances during the compilation of school curricula. Undoubtedly, one should first learn traditional national dances with all the characteristics, and then the dances of other nations in the state and beyond. Torun and Suzanne (2015) claim that three different knowledge areas within dance are found in the text material in Swedish curricula of PE over a period of 50 years (1962-2011). Three pedagogical discourses emerge from these knowledge areas: an identity formation discourse, in earlier curricula focuses on the perpetuation of Swedish and Nordic culture tradition, while in later curricula it emphasizes the construction of a border multicultural identity formation related to the understanding of different cultures; The public health discourse which presents dance as physical training related to a healthy lifestyle; and The aesthetic discourse which has the weakest

position over time, represent the valuing of embodied experiences and feelings expressed through movement. This focus appears again in the 1930s (H'Doubler, 1936; Waterman, 1936) and in the 1950s (Sehon & O'Brein, 1951). These educators promoted dance as a means to support children's positive physiological, psychological, and academic growth. "Dance is a way for children to know themselves and to see connection with the rest of the world". The "rest of the world" is pluralistic and diverse with many ethnic, religious, and cultural traditions. It is that tapestry of diversity that we choose to value as we help students recognize and respect people who differ from themselves and/or appreciate their many similarities. Learning about other cultures and ethnicities is one way to combat prejudice. As children learn about new cultures and fit their experiences with their new learning, they can appreciate all people's uniqueness and similarities and not rely on racial and ethnic generalizations (Davidson & Davidson, 1994). Dance is common to all humankind, regardless of the culture. Thus, the marriage of dance and cultural teaching is natural, especially for young children, who learn best through participation, movement, and constructive practices. Dance provides a means for expressing emotions and understanding the feelings of others, particularly as they are expressed in others' body language. When learning occurs through movement, the learning appears to last longer, and dance can be used to assist that learning. When dance is integrated into the curriculum particularly when learning about other cultures, children benefit in many ways: body awareness and control, personal confidence and esteem, and cultural understanding and respect (Tamara L. and Wilma D.K. 2000).

Even earlier in the former Yugoslavian state educational system until the 90s, there was such an idea for recognition of the cultures of all ethnicities living in the state through dances, and such a thing was realized even though it was not ideal. Unfortunately, in recent decades the Balkan states have been known for interethnic conflicts both within and between neighboring states, so you will hear nationalist rhetoric wherever you go as a result of promoting of nationalist values and neglecting international ones. I think that such a thing happens due to the lack of knowledge of cultures and traditions of ethnicities in the countries where they live, neighbors' cultures and beyond. Therefore, in preparing the curriculum of dances at the FPE at the University of Tetovo (UT), where teaching is attending in Albanian language, we have found it necessary to introduce dances of all ethnicities living in the country as well as dances of neighboring countries and beyond, such Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish, Roma, Serbian, Montenegrin etc., as well as other folk dances that are well known in the world. We have also given importance to dances performed in pairs and in groups in a line or in circle, those dances that are richer with different figures such as jumps, crossed steps, rotations, turns, etc., in order to include students of all ages and both genders. Also chosen are dances with pleasant and attractive music for children as well as the most common dances used at weddings. When students learn a dance of another ethnic group or culture, they have opportunities to learn about country from which it originates, the language, the tradition, the national dress, the music of that country, the traditional food etc.

According to Gollnick and Chinn (2006), diversity issues relate to such factors as class, ethnicity and race, gender, sexual orientation, language, religion, physical and mental abilities, and age. These all relate to the concept of pluralism, with a pluralistic society composed of people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, multicultural education is grounded in a country's vision of democracy within a pluralistic society (Masunah, 2008; Masunah, 2011). A democratic country requires equity, equality, and social justice to fight against discrimination. All of these are reflected in the country's educational system, either in the organization of school systems or in approaches to teaching students. According to Julu (2016), multicultural dance education can be promoted as a concept involving strategies for teaching dance to various social groups. It is also a teaching strategy using various dance forms from different cultures to better understand the people of those cultures. Multicultural education is considered to be an "education that values diversity and includes the perspectives of a variety of cultural groups on a regular basis" (Santrock, 2001, p.171). One of the major goals of multicultural education is to create, within schools and society, the democratic ideals that value justice, equality, and freedom (Banks, 2002). According to Stuart (2004), cultural competency is defined as the ability to understand and relate to the uniqueness of each individual in light of diverse cultures. According to Ladson-Billings, (2001), culturally responsive pedagogy-also known as culturally relevant pedagogy-is a way of teaching that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically through the use of cultural references that impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Race is sometimes socially defined on the basis of physical criteria (i.e., skin color, facial features), while an ethnicity is socially defined on the basis of cultural criteria (i.e., customs, shared history, shared language) (Cushner, et al., 2006). Many authors claim that multicultural education is important in physical education, a limited number of studies have been published. For example, Chepyator-Thomson, et al. (2008) noted the low publication rates (1.39%) on issues related to multiethnic and diversity education in physical education, pointing to the dire need to have teachers prepared with sufficient and relevant knowledge and the experiences that promote appreciation and implementation of multiculturalism in school curriculum and pedagogy. Choi and Chepyator-Thomson (211), despite the limited number of studies and the wide range of examination, the results of these studies reveal that physical education teachers have varying degrees of knowledge and understanding of multicultural education.

"Dancing is every child's cultural birthright...Music, too, is the memory of our people brought to life... [In music and dance] our children can awaken to a knowledge of themselves their community and their country in ways that cannot be duplicated (D'Amboise, 1991, p. 5)." Multicultural music education is both the teaching of music from diverse cultures as well as teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Multicultural music education developed from three distinct, yet interconnected fields, music education, multicultural education, and ethnomusicology (Herbert, 2010, pg. 7). However, we do know that, throughout the world, music and dance are an integral part of the bonding process across generations. Through participation, sharing, and cooperation, music connects children with other members of their culture and the greater society. Music can help familiarize children with the musical heritage of different

cultures, regions, and ethnic groups. When children listen to and respond to music from different cultures, they play a part in preserving and passing on cultural traditions. Children are exposed to languages, customs, and beliefs of varying cultures through music (Isenberg & Jalongo, 2010). With ideas, how can early childhood teachers incorporate multicultural music and dance in the classroom..., MME (2021), claim that preschool and prekindergarten music and general education teachers can utilize multicultural music education in their daily lessons. Children need to experience music in its fullest to fully appreciate and respond to it. When children listen, dance, and sing to music from diverse cultures, they also gain knowledge about diversity, tolerance, and cultural understanding. Not only do children learn valuable lessons, but multicultural music is also fun and engaging. Children love to dance and sing, particularly to things that are new and interesting (Multicultural Music Education, 2021). For the importance of dances, The International Dance Council CID, being the official organization for dance, presents a list of dances recognized by UNESCO as part of the Cultural Heritage of Humanity (President Alkis Raftis 2021).

The role of PE teacher in primary and secondary school in N. Macedonia has a general character, which means the performer of all types of sports, games and other activities included in the PE curriculum. Therefore, we claim that such a teacher with general knowledge cannot be able to compile school curricula without the help of professional teams in each subject. Also, dances should be distributed in the curricula of all educational levels, where special importance should be given to the age and gender of the student, skills, types of dances which should be fun, attractive, rich in elements, dances for wedding, but above all priority should be given to dances of ethnicities that lives together and other cultures. So, dances as a mediating tool between cultures can play in important role in recognizing different cultures, respect and tolerance.

2. Purpose and methods of work

The purpose of this research is the current positioning of dances as pedagogical discourses in all educational levels of N. Macedonia. It is also important to examine the educational areas involved in dance discourses. N. Macedonia as a multiethnic state has such an opportunity through learning folk dances to recognize cultures and traditions of other ethnicities living in the state. Therefore, how is the state of dances in the curricula whether is it dominated by monocultural or multicultural character or is it national or international, is another issue that needs to be examined in this research. Reactions and interest of students in higher education studies at home and abroad when learning the dances of other ethnicities during the teaching process in the subject of dance as an intermediate tool for intercultural recognition, respect and tolerance, is also a very important issue.

The method of inspecting curricula of all levels of education for the subject of dances has been used, as well as the step-by-step method of teaching has been used to learn the basic steps and sequences of dances of different cultures in some faculties at home and abroad.

To be verified the current positioning of dances as a pedagogical discourse in all educational levels in N. Macedonia, from the websites of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development of Education, the curricula of all years of primary and secondary schools were examined. Also, where inspected the education areas of folk dances in the programs and how the dance flows within the years from the beginning of primary school to the end of secondary school over a thirteen-year period.

It is known that in N. Macedonia as a multiethnic state all nationalities attended education in their mother tongue, therefore, it is expected that the curricula will include dances of one national and not multinational character. Also, what character is given to dance, does it play a mediating role for the recognition of cultures through dances, or as it is claimed that the curricula are divided on ethnic grounds, will be seen with the analysis of the programs.

Students' reactions while learning the dances as an intermediate tool for intercultural recognition and what will be their interest, will they participate voluntary and willingly or will there be negative reactions or refusals to learn other cultures through dances, is one of the most important goals during this teaching process.

In a period of 10 years (2011-2021), in collaboration with faculties of PE in the country and beyond, with projects such as Tempus, Erasmus+ and Mevlana in the context of the exchange of experiences, we applied folk dances of different ethnicities in order to inspect the reactions and interest in foreign cultures through dances¹. The teaching unites were sent to the institutions that have previously signed agreements between faculties, the same ones reviewed by the host institutions teachers of dance, in order to implement the program as successfully as possible. We also had an exchange of experiences with some institutions during the lectures at the level of visiting teachers. In a short period of one to two weeks as far as cooperation agreements were concerned between faculties of PE, we spent several hours with the students in collaboration with the host colleagues. The educational method step-by-step learning of basic steps of different folk dances of different cultures for the purpose of intercultural knowledge, respect and tolerance is used. It was not our intention for the students to be graded, but only to see the interest in other cultures through folk dances as a mediating tool, this enabled the students to be relaxed and free.

3. Results and discussion

After inspection of the curricula, it was proved that, in primary and secondary school curricula, dance exist in each school year with a fund of three hours per week in primary and two hours per week for secondary school.

¹ Faculties of Physical Education of the University of Tetova, N. Macedonia; University of St. Cyril and Methodius, Skopje, N. Macedonia; University of Sport, Tirana, Albania; University of Pristina, Kosovo; Universi College, Pristina, Kosovo; AAB College, Pristina, Kosovo; RICH center at Sydansk University, Odense, Denmark; Trakya University, Edirne, Turkey; Alaaddin Keykubat University, Alanya, Turkey; Uludag University, Bursa, Turkey; and Pamukkale University, Denizli, Turkey.

Although the dances take place in the curricula in each year of primary and secondary schooling, but unfortunately no importance is given to the dances of the ethnicities living in N. Macedonia and beyond. Folk dances dedicated to learning are left to be chosen by students and teachers and are not named, so we suppose that dances are ethnic in nature and not multiethnic. Therefore, we can conclude that its role as a tool for intercultural knowledge, respect, and tolerance in this case is not in the function of multicultural state such as N. Macedonia.

The educational areas involved in dance discourses are more oriented towards body development and aesthetic posture of the body but not for cultural recognition.

It should be noted that it was not the intention to learn more dances from different cultures, but to learn the basic steps and sequences of some folk dances through which students will recognize and will become familiar with other cultures. The positive feedback and interest by students in knowing of foreign dances and cultures was what we expected from this idea of intercultural recognition, respect and tolerance. We can freely say that there was no negative reaction or refusal to learn dances of other cultures. For this reason, in the dance curricula of the FPE of Tetova are foreseen the dances of all ethnicities in the country and beyond. In the teaching process the basic steps of folk dances are used, also special importance is given to dances with happy and fun music, dances which have different steps and figures, those that are performed in pairs and groups, in a line or in a circle as well as dances for children and wedding slow dances. We used step by step learning process of basic dance steps as the most successful method for teaching dance sequences of different cultures.

Also, it is important to emphasize that throughout the period of exchange of experience between universities, teachers and students regarding dance and its mediating role between cultures enabled by projects and collaborations with institutions, student interest was at a high level. This proves that there are no students who expressed revolt or refusal for knowledge about dances of other cultures. In the Balkan countries there is almost no country where riots have not occurred and as result the hatred is on a high scale. The availability, emotions, joy, expression of satisfaction as well as the interest of the students for knowledge of the cultures and ethnicities that were presented through the dances was obvious. It should be noted that this way of recognition of cultures through dances was performed with adult students of university age, therefore the positive reactions obtained may be as a result of maturity. This applies to students who participated in the educational process of dance, while for those who did not participate, we cannot judge.

It was proved that reactions and interest of students when learning the dances of other ethnicities during the teaching process as in the FPE in Tetova N. Macedonia, as well as in other faculties in the country and abroad were very positive and with high interest. It is to be appreciated that, during learning of the dances of different ethnicities in each educational center, they were confronted with the similarities between the folk dances, this made the situation even more interesting and fascinating. Such a thing happened because the cultures within the country and in the neighborhood, in addition to differences, also have similarities.

Hoping that this idea as with high education will continue with primary school and secondary school students with whom in PE program, they attend dances as a compulsory or elective subject, because this age is even more ideal for knowledge of different cultures to raise awareness of intercultural respect and tolerance.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the examination and analysis of dances in the current primary and secondary school curricula, we can conclude that the existing curricula need changes and modifications according to contemporary needs. Curricula have a global character of learning units and not concrete in terms of learning units as well as logical and functional flow. No importance is given to the recognition of the dances of the ethnicities living in N. Macedonia, dances are not named so it cannot be said whether they are mono ethnic in nature or multiethnic folk dances. The multiethnic character of dances is also lacking, which is one of the most important issues in any society, especially in multiethnic countries as N. Macedonia, or those where there are many immigrants. Therefore, we recommended that dances curriculum in the framework of PE to be enriched in addition to national folk dances, also with dances of other cultures ethnicities living in the country, in the neighborhood and beyond for the purpose of intercultural recognition, respect and tolerance. The dances curricula could include both national and international basic and simple dances steps, and dances that are rich in different elements such as: jumps, rotations, cross steps etc., that have fun and attractive music, that are applied in pairs and groups of both genders, that are danced in line or in the circle as well as dances for children and weddings. It is a very good opportunity for students, simultaneously while learning to dances, they can also learn cultural values of other ethnicities such as: the place of origin, traditional dresses, languages, religions, music's, natural resources etc., therefore this subject of great importance in society should have a special treatment in school curricula of primary and secondary school.

Unfortunately, there is no connection or continuity as well as co-operation at the three levels of education such as primary, secondary, and high education. The freedom given to teachers for everyone to work as they wish and the lack of follow-up by the competent bodies, makes it lack professionalism and successful implementation of curricula. Even in the design of curricula in higher education or university studies, there is no principle that curricula are made based on the requirements and needs of primary and secondary schools, which means that higher education teachers also have freedom of action, which is why the curricula of the three educational levels should not be interrelated. This is based evidenced by the fact that during a survey of students of first year at the UT within the years 2011-2014, all students stated that they have no knowledge of primary and secondary school about the subject of dance (Fadil, 2014). Unfortunately, the situation is the same in recent years as evidenced by the latest survey conducted with students in 2019-2020. Based on the above facts, we recommend that the design of curricula and teacher training be in harmony and cooperation between the three educational levels Primary school, Secondary school and High education where FPE should play a key role, as well as the Bureau for Development of Education and Ministry of Education and Science in N. Macedonia.

N. Macedonia as a multiethnic country has an ideal opportunity to learn the cultures and traditions of other ethnicities living in the same country, and to promote coexistence, respect, and tolerance through dances of all educational levels. Therefore, we recommend that in the curricula within the dances, folk dances dominate as the most important mediating tool for the knowledge of cultures, compared to standard, modern, or other dances.

And finally, we recommend dances to be transferred from the national or monocultural framework, to the international or multicultural one. Only in this way folk dances will play the role as an intermediate tool for intercultural recognition, respect, and tolerance in the state and beyond.

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