



STUDY ABOUT THE PREFERENCES OF STUDENTS IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS FOR THE DANCE STYLES

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Abstract

Objective. Dance is one of the body activities accompanying the man's life throughout its ontogenetic evolution. As a modality of feeling the emotions and expressing one's personality, it is among the preferences of any person, the different options relying on the multitude of genres and styles, characterized by the specific body language. A legitimate component of the expression disciplines taught within the curricula of the physical education and sports faculties, dance represents an essential motor-artistic activity that contributes equally to the cultural-recreational education and to the specialist training in the human motricity field.

Purpose. Our study aims at investigating the teaching impact of the discipline "Theory and practice of the expression sports" on students from the Physical Education and Sports Faculty, in relation to dancesport, which is currently more and more accepted and favored by the population. By establishing some directions for the preference orientation, we want to raise the students' interest in the dance teaching within the physical education lessons, but also in using it as an educational means in different motor activities.

Method. We used the questionnaire-based survey method, applied to 105 junior students at the Physical Education and Sports Faculty within the National University of Physical Education and Sports (UNEFIS) Bucharest. We analyzed items focused on: their interest in the body expression activities, their information level about these activities, their knowledge of the dance styles and their desire to become dance instructors.

Results. By analyzing the students' responses, we identified a series of preferences for the dance styles, as well as an interest in this discipline and in the professional training, from the perspective of the dance instructor occupation.

Conclusions. By knowing the young people's preferences, we can optimize our didactic approaches, in the sense of adopting the student-focused instruction and of constructing their motivation for the dance teaching and utilization in their future professional carrier.

Key-words: dance styles, physical education, motor activities, dance instructor, professional training

Introduction

Dance has accompanied the human civilization throughout its anthropological evolution, but we cannot precisely say when and how it has become an omnipresent cultural component of man's life. Dance was one of the first forms of human manifestation, it being part of the ceremonies, rituals or recreational activities in all the historical stages (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dance>).

A general phenomenon, characterized by the way of using the body language associated to music, it can be found in all the peoples of the world, who use to dance on happy or sad occasions, in victories or defeats, at the religious, social or cultural ceremonies (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/58257317/Estetica-in-Dans>).

The connection between the body movement and music has determined the conception of new motor-esthetic manifestation forms, within which either the music has created the dance or conversely, the movement has inspired the musical composition achievement.

Nobody can exactly say how many dance genres or styles exist nowadays. The offer is huge, but one thing is certain: dance is a universal art, with a

"human, affective, esthetic, animating, possessive, creative and sometimes nonconformist character" (Epuran, 2013). It was not by chance that the famous Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), the creator of modern dance, thought that it represented the visible manifestation of the soul. In dance, the body is used as a tool and the movement is its means of expression (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isadora_Duncan).

Through the modalities of feeling the emotions and expressing one's personality, dance is among the preferences of any person, the different options relying on the multitude of genres and styles, characterized by the specific body language. The specialty literature presents the dynamics of its different manifestation forms, depending on the styles or the functions it confers, on the composing elements, on the goals etc. Generally, we can enumerate: classical (academic) dance, modern (neoclassical) dance, contemporary dance, character dance, folk dance, dancesport (Vișan, 2005).

Năstase (2011) specifies the following dance forms: historical dances, ballet (with its classical and contemporary forms), modern dance, folk dance, social (popular) dance, street dance and dancesport. The variety of its forms is motivated by the author through

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the multifactorial activity that expresses the human existence as a feeling, an aspiration, an adaptation, an energetic expenditure, a recovery or a therapy, a modality of evaluation and communication with oneself, with the others or with the transcendental world.

The bibliographical references about the dance categories mention that they don't exclude one another, but are interdependent, a certain dance style being possible to exist in many categories. We also notice the dance classification according to criteria related to the number of dancers who interfere (solo dance, partner dance and group dance) and to the dance purpose (ceremonial, competitive, performance, concert, erotic, social dances etc.) (http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/dance#Dance_classification_and_genres).

From the didactic point of view, the dance means provide the performers nonverbal communication competences, equally motor and artistic ones. The body is stimulated "to talk", to express itself through the interaction of some more or less refined gestures, ideas, feelings, emotions (Dragnea, Bota, 1999). As a formative-educative process, dance can be accepted in the physical education and sports field under both of its practice modalities: as a physical-artistic activity or as a cultural-artistic activity.

A legitimate component of the expression disciplines taught within the curricula of the physical education and sports faculties, dance represents an essential motor-artistic activity that contributes equally to the cultural-recreational education and to the specialist training in the human motricity field.

Practical experience attests, on the one hand, the greater and greater desire expressed by the pupils to learn what they call "to dance" and, on the other hand, the specialists' interest in progressively implementing dance in the content of the physical education lessons and of the extracurricular activities (Marinău, 2012, Kassing, Jay, 2003). This perspective for the dance utilization illustrates the multicultural perspective for the physical education teaching (Rovegno, Gregg, 2007).

Moreover, we can notice that dance is also used as an educational means in other forms of the physical exercise practice, such as the compensatory-type activities. The conducted studies showed the dance benefits in the treatment of the elderly people, of those with Parkinson's disease (Hackney, Kantorovich, Earhart, 2007; Hackney, Earhart, 2010), of those suffering from psychic diseases (anxiety, depression) (Leste, Rust, 1984; Haboush, Floyd, Caron, LaSota, Alvarez, 2006), of children aged 5 to 7 years old diagnosed with ADHD (Gronlund, Renck, Weilbull, 2005). At the same time, evidence has proved the beneficial effects of dance, as a complementary sport, on the cross-country skiing, where it contributes to the development of speed, agility, joint mobility and spine flexibility (Alricsson, Hamrs-Ringdahl, Ericksson,

Werner, 2003), but also as a means for maintaining an optimum health condition in the sedentary population (Kjolberg, 2004, Wallman, Gillis, Alpert, Miller, 2009; Malkogeorgos, Zaggelidou, Georgescu, 2011).

The study of the specialty literature allows us to assert that dance represents an educational resource with strong formative effects on its practitioners and that, in the field of the motor activities in Romania, the dance potential valorization is still reduced.

Purpose

Throughout the years, the study program contents for the physical education and sports faculties have stipulated the dance teaching under different forms or names. In the current curriculum of the UNEFS Bucharest, dance can be found in the content of the discipline "Theory and practice of the expression sports".

In order to get an objective picture of the teaching impact of this discipline on our students, we aimed at investigating their opinions about the preferred dance styles, with special references to dancesport, which is nowadays more and more accepted and favored by the population. By establishing some directions for the preference orientation, we want to raise the students' interest in the dance teaching within the physical education lessons, but also in using it as an educational means in different motor activities. By knowing the students' preferences for certain dance styles, we can optimize our didactic approaches, in the sense of adopting the student-focused instruction and of constructing their motivation for the dance teaching and utilization in their future professional carrier. We have in view that, in the practice of motor activities, each specialist has the opportunity to choose those means for which he has certain competences, but also preferences.

Method

This exploratory-type research used the survey method and was conducted in the month of October 2013, in the beginning of the period when the students started the courses of the discipline "Theory and practice of the expression sports" and when they were asked to fill in a questionnaire including 6 open-ended questions (Chelcea, 2010). The opinion poll aimed at identifying the common trends, but also the variations related to the students' knowledge and preferences for certain dance styles, their interest in the body expression activities, their information level about these activities and their desire to become dance instructors.

The asked questions, which will be analyzed in this paper, are the following: How do you rate, on a scale from 1 to 5, the pleasure to dance? What musical genre do you prefer? What are the dance styles known by you? What dance style do you like to perform? Give the reasons for which you consider that it is important for you to know to dance. Do you want to become a dance instructor?

The questionnaire was filled in by 105 junior students at the Physical Education and Sports Faculty within the UNEFS Bucharest, who attended the course “Theory and practice of the expression sports”.

The data analysis was made relying on the frequency of the responses and on the percentage of responses out of their total number. For a more

suggestive illustration of the results, we used the graphical method.

Results

At the question concerning the pleasure to dance, the responses presented in figure 1 reveal that, for 75% of the subjects, dance represents a very agreeable activity.

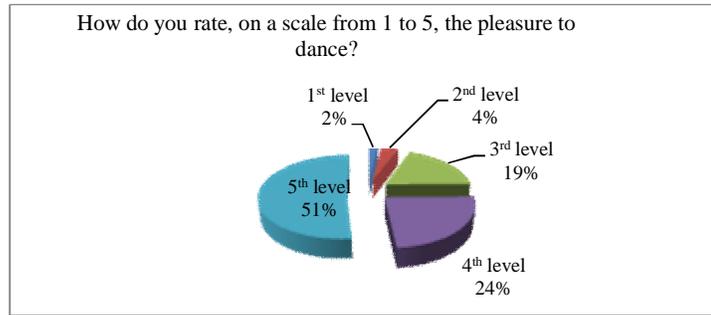


Figure 1. Graphical representation of the responses at question no. 1

For the musical genres (figure 2), the subjects marked many variants of responses, by nominating, on the first places, hip-hop music, dance music and Latin

music. We consider as normal this trend toward the styles “in fashion”, which have a considerable impact on the youth.

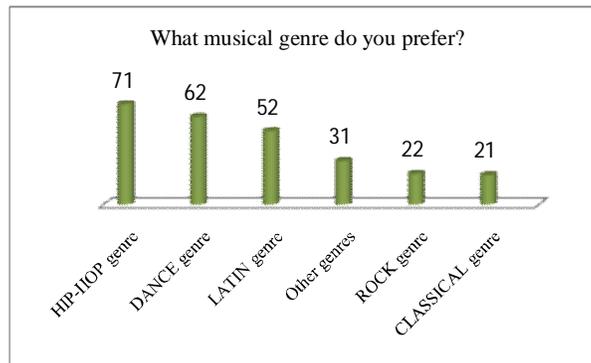


Figure 2. Graphical representation of the subjects' preferences for the musical genres

At the question “What are the dance styles known by you?”, we provided the subjects a general orientation toward the dance styles which are the most frequently used in different classifications presented in the specialty literature (Năstase, 2011, http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/List%C4%83_de_stiluri_d_e_dans). For the nominated styles - classical, modern,

folk, Latin, standard, Spanish urban and other ones - the students marked many preferences, the general analysis emphasizing the same trend toward the modern aspects (figure 3). Folk dance obtained a positive score, which ranked it on the first place in their nominations.

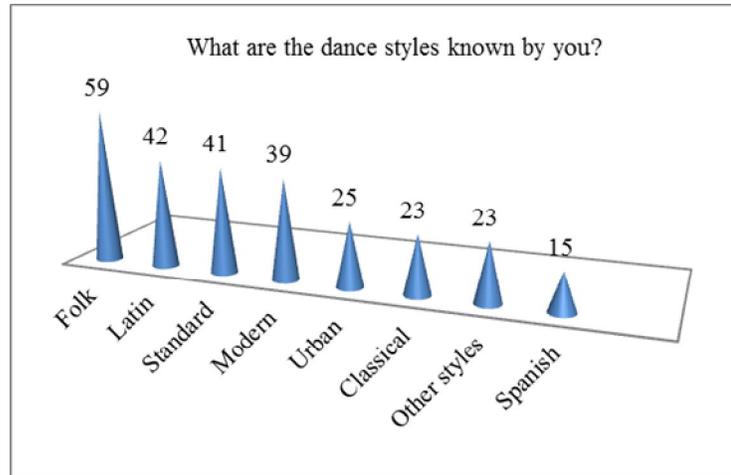


Figure 3. Dance styles known by the subjects

At question no. 4, “What dance style do you like to perform?”, the responses were free, each subject having the possibility to nominate different dance styles, depending on to his preferences and knowledge. The diversity of the responses determined us to group

the dances on categories and to hierarchize them according to the number of nominations (figure 4). We notice, in the given responses, the trend to group their favorite styles toward the society dance, respectively the dancesport, Latin and Standard categories.

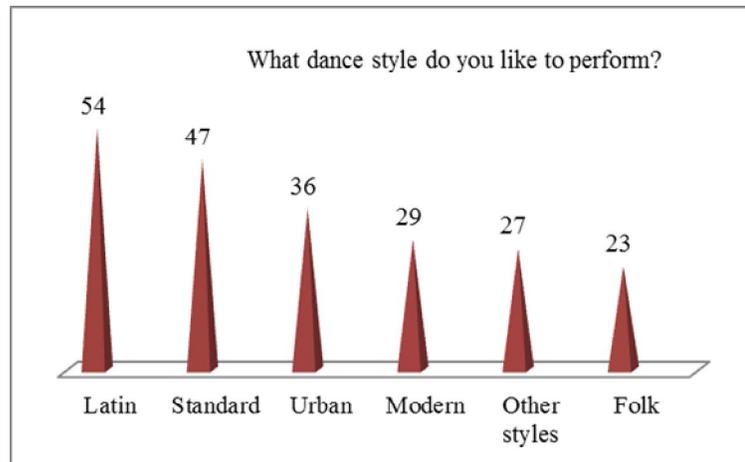


Figure 4. Dance categories preferred by the subjects

Table 1 illustrates, for each category, the styles nominated by the subjects.

Table 1. Dance styles preferred by the subjects

Categories	Latin	Standard	Urban	Folk	Other styles
	Latin, in general	Standard, in general	Urban, in general	Folk	Classical
Dance styles in the order of preferences	Cha-Cha	Slow waltz	Hip-Hop		Reggaeton
	Samba	Viennese waltz	Street dance		Belly dance
	Jive	Quick step	Breakdance		Pop dance
	Salsa	Tango	Popping dance		Contemporary
	Bachata		Locking dance		Other general styles

In parallel with our interest in knowing the subjects' preferences, we wanted to identify their information level about the dance classification and we

hierarchized the nominations per subject, according to table 2.

Table 2. Nomination of the dance styles / subject

Nominated dance styles	Number of subjects
1 style	38
2 styles	21
3 styles	21
4 styles	11
5 styles	7
6 styles	4
7 styles	3
8 styles	0

We can see that most of the students nominated one single dance style, which proves the necessity to highlight the formative value of the discipline and which also indicates that, besides the dance-specific motor skills, the subjects must also accumulate theoretical information.

The responses at item nr. 5, "Give the reasons for which you consider that it is important for you to know to dance", were grouped on categories of reasons: socialization, fun - recreation, physical and motor development, increase in self-confidence, others (table 3) - because the various expression modalities had almost similar significances.

Table 3. Reasons for which it is important to know to dance

Reasons				
Fun - recreation	Socialization	Physical and motor development	Increase in self-confidence	Others
Participation in events, parties	Interaction with different people	Harmonious physical development	One's own security	Development of the sensitivity to general culture
Increase in good mood	Opening of new ways and opportunities	Physical fitness maintaining	Possibility to express one's feelings	
Pleasure	Expression modality	Development of motor capacities:		
Recreation	Popularity	mobility, coordination, balance		
Relaxation		Movement accuracy and refinement		
Stress release		Harmonization between body and soul		
		Knowledge of one's own body		
		Attitude and elegance while moving		
		Rhythmicity and musicality		

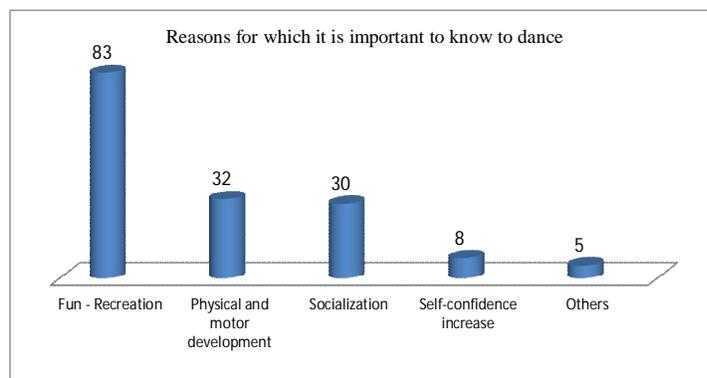


Figure 5. Subjects' reasons for which it is important to know to dance

Although in our country dance is not fully valorized in other kinds of activities than the sports ones and, in some isolated cases, in school physical education, we can notice that the students are aware of the instructive-educative value of this sports branch. Consequently, we consider that, within the course, dance should also be promoted as a didactic means to be implemented in other motor activities, apart from the previously mentioned ones. This would give the students the chance to know the multiple available

possibilities to use their dance-related knowledge and, at the same time, this would provide new opportunities to their professional development.

At the last question, "Do you want to become a dance instructor? If so, in what dance style do you think you could become an instructor?", the responses were the following: 72 subjects responded that they didn't want to become dance instructors, 28 responded in the affirmative and 5 responded that they were not decided yet.

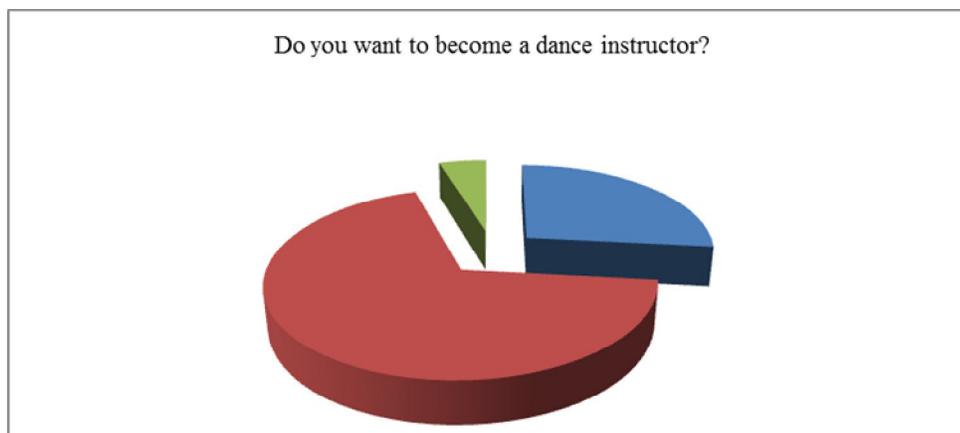


Figure 6. Graphical representation of the subjects' intention to become dance instructors

From the responses at the last question, we can notice that most of the students are not interested in becoming dance instructors (68%). The relatively low percentage of those who have this intention (27%) allows us however to assert that there is an interest in this occupation, which determines us, as trainers, to implement differentiated instruction strategies that can fulfill the desire to know expressed by some categories of students.

Discussions

We consider that the orientation of the musical preferences expressed by our subjects toward the styles "in fashion", which have a considerable impact on the youth, is normal, it being reflected in their responses at the other questions.

At the same time, we think that the students hierarchized the dance styles known and preferred by them in a normal way, by having in view the large popularization of these styles in the latest years. By anticipating this finding and due to our previous experiences in the "Dance" discipline teaching (at UNEFS Bucharest), within the topic of the discipline "Theory and practice of the expression sports", we considered them a priority. These categories were also found in the students' options for completing their final evaluation projects. Besides these findings, we should also mention that, among the 105 junior students, 66 filled in the questionnaire at the first edition of the dance contest organized on 02.17.2014, in the UNEFS sports games hall.

The responses at the questionnaire show that a relatively great number of subjects know and prefer many dance styles. This trend could orient the discipline content structuring, which may have a positive influence on the students' interest and involvement.

The analysis of the reasons "to dance" shows their correspondence with the data provided by the literature, which asserts the dance determinism in the expression of the biological, spiritual, social and / or cultural aspects (Năstase, 2011). Dancing supposes a complex engagement of the human body, as a "system of signs" capable of self-control and self-adjustment (Epuran, 2011); it creates pleasure, joy, satisfaction, eroticism, trance or exhaustion (Epuran, 2013). Concomitantly, dancing acts over a wide educational register that leads to the construction of a correct body posture, of an artistic attitude, of the corporal scheme and of the artistic sense through the rhythmicity and the motor musicality development (Dobrescu, 2006). We notice the predominant orientation of the reasons toward the physical and motor development sphere, an aspect directly linked to the formative-educative valences of the dance, as a form of activity integrated into the physical education content.

The fact that, in the beginning of the activity, only one third out of the total number of investigated students wanted to become dance instructors, determines us to consider that we should differentiate the instruction strategies, so that their interest in this occupation increases. At the same time, this allows us to identify new directions in the research of the human



source, from which we can select the future specialists willing to implement dance in their instruction contents.

Conclusions

- By knowing the students' preferences for different dance styles, we can collect data that enable us to lead the didactic process and to orient the teaching contents, so that we combine work and fun.
- The students' positive attitude toward the course attendance and the obtaining of some competences in the dance field, together with a well-structured teaching method that takes into account the young people's preferences, will help us orient their motivation for the dance teaching in the physical education activity.
- We should use some differentiated instruction strategies, depending on the students' concerns, so that their interest in the discipline and in the dance-related professional training increases.

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