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The Influence of Traditional Songs and Dances on Children's Motor Development

Extended summary

Dance, as a phenomenon, has been studied from different aspects: philosophical, pedagogical, psychological, ethnological, and anthropological. It plays a vital role in the psychological and physical development of children (Jakovljević, 2009: 31). Dance is the most natural thing for a child. The value of many old, traditional children's dances has ensured their presence among children today. They have proven to be suitable for encouraging children's social development and cultivating their many skills, as well as for encouraging motor development. They are an important part of growing up. Above all else, traditional dances and songs for children enable a developing organism to fulfil one of its basic biological needs – the need for movement. Movement represents one of the basic requirements for correct growth and development. Through traditional dance, children develop their abilities of observation, analysis, drawing conclusions and adapting to given situations. In this paper, the authors present their small-scale research with a suitable sample, with the aim of exploring the effects of programmed physical exercise – traditional songs and dances – on the motor development of preschool children. We started with the following research question: What effect do traditional children's songs and dances have on the development of motor skills? The sample consisted of 43 preschool children, age 6, divided into two groups – experimental and control group. After the initial testing, programmed physical exercises were introduced in the experimental group and conducted over a period of nine weeks, twice a week, 35-40 minutes per class, from the beginning of May 2016 till the end of July 2016. The programmed physical exercises included the

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following traditional song and dances: “Kolariću, paniću”, “Ringe, ringe, raja”, “U šumici zeka spi”, “I okolo se lata”, “Ide majka kolom, dvorom”, “Berem, berem grožđe”, “Prolazite, prolazite”, “Laste prolaste”. The programme was designed in line with the age-specific characteristics of children, the specificities of the group and the technical equipment available in the kindergarten. The programme of practising traditional children’s dances was conducted through three main parts of class activities (introductory-preparatory, main and final part). Based on the test results, we can confirm that the inclusion of traditional children’s songs and dances in programmed physical exercise leads has positive effects on the development of preschool children’s motor skills. The final round of testing shows an advantage for the experimental group of children. They had an advantage at a level of significance .05 in 10m sprint, 4 x 5m sprint, hand tapping and standing on one leg, while their advantage when doing an obstacle course backwards, or when jumping from hoop to hoop with their legs together was noticeable, yet not statistically significant. These results serve as proof that practising traditional children’s songs and dances have a positive effect on the development of basic motor skills and benefit the motor development of preschool children. Due to the nature of our traditional dances, the exercises are focused on agility, skill and body movement, which explains the beneficial effects children practising these dances experienced. Practicing traditional folk songs and dances has a positive effect on children’s motor development. Learning these traditional songs and dances enables children to develop their skills, be more creative and work on their physical and psychological development. Since children themselves accept traditional songs and dances, today there is a healthy incentive for reviving many of them, with kindergarten being the perfect place for it.

Keywords: traditional children’s folk songs and dance, programmed physical exercises, preschool children.

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