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DANCING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS: INSTRUCTION OF SUSTAINABILITY IN SECONDARY EDUCATION THROUGH GREEK DANCES AND RITUALS IN THE SOUTHERN SUBURBS OF ATHENS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a proposal regarding the instruction of traditional dance in secondary education. It focuses on contemporary issues such as the relationship between mankind and the natural environment. This link itself makes part of a doctoral thesis. Drawing on folk dance tradition and specifically on customary dance practices related to water, the main objective of this thesis is to awaken students' interest and concern for a better modern and future environment, fostering respect for the environment, sustainable development as well as the development of ecological awareness.

As part of this reflection, students are taught not only to dance, but also inspired by Greek tradition, indeed. The research objective is therefore to shape their future connection with the natural environment. The implementation of this intervention program has been placed within the framework of educational ethnographic research, and includes projects and modern teaching methodologies and approaches, such as: group-collaboration; experiential; investigative; interdisciplinary; and creative.

KEYWORDS: Greek dance tradition, folk dance practices, environment sustainability, water, education, secondary school.

INTRODUCTION

Water is a precious element of nature and a basic component for the existence of life on the planet, whose utility and necessity are indisputable. This natural element's necessity applies to crops, nutrition, means of transportation as well as human communication.¹ From an anthropological

¹ Barber, M. & Jackson, S. (2014). Autonomy and the intercultural: historical interpretations of Australian Aboriginal water management in the Roper River catchment, Northern Territory. *J. Roy. Anthropol. Inst.* 20, 670–693. Klaver, I. (2012). Placing water and culture. In: Johnston, B., Hiwasaki, L., Klaver, I., Castillo, A.R., Strang, V. (Eds.) *Water, Cultural Diversity, and Global Environmental Change: Emerging Trends, Sustainable Futures?* Springer, Dordrecht,

perspective, water is of utmost importance because it is a prerequisite for life but at the same time it also shapes societies in distinct forms and creates specific values (Hastrup, 2013). Many studies focus on its importance as an integral element of human social and cultural life (Fontein, 2008· Orlove & Caton, 2010· Hastrup, 2013· Strang, 2014· Wagner, 2015· Krause & Strang, 2016), and others focus on the awareness of the 'water crisis' faced by millions of people worldwide (ibid. Hastrup, 2013· Crate, 2011· Crate & Nuttall, 2016· Krause, 2017· Ballestero, 2019).

Orlove & Caton (2010: 402) prompt anthropologists to view water as 'a total social event, inspired by Marcel Mauss' (1990) classical concept, considering that man's relationship with water is expressed through behaviors that occur in all spheres of social life, such as moral, aesthetic, political, economic, creating connections between all forms of life, living and inanimate. The diversity of water is argued by Strang (2005) to be key to its meanings and 'are vital in that they provide the common ground for the construction of meaning' (p. 97). The same researcher, who has worked specifically on the anthropology of water, argues that water 'connects people to places and reflects fundamental human needs for community (communitas)' (Strang, 2011:189).

Human intervention in the environment and the indiscriminate use of water has negative effects on the quality and quantity of water and its use. Droughts are becoming an increasingly severe problem in many parts of the world. In addition, flooding in recent years has been widespread and climate change may play a significant role since 'rising temperatures are destabilizing the climate and disrupting the water cycle as they increase rainfall and accelerate evaporation' (Sideridou, 2000). However, many human interventions into the natural environment, which have altered the natural flow of water, resulting in people being drowned and properties being lost, also share a major share of the blame.

The concerns and agony for the future of our planet and the sustainable management of water ought to shape new data on the relations between man, nature and society to achieve a balance. According to Nitsiakos (1995:716), humans in traditional societies:

'View nature as something sacred, therefore generally deify it and consequently interfere with its functions with a due degree of reverence. This is reflected both in religious and corresponding worship events and in the folk rituals of production and appropriation of space. Sacrifices, libations, superstitious magical acts are how it tries to appease the forces of nature'.

Knowing that the debate in recent years has focused on nature and the environment, especially in the past two years with the coronavirus pandemic, coupled with the global ecological crisis that has led to

The Netherlands, pp. 9–20· Russo, K., Smith, Z. (2013). What Water is Worth: Overlooked Non-Economic Value in Water Resources. Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

finding solutions with specific ways of action, it is estimated that the role of education can and should be decisive in raising awareness and activating students in sustainable water management, in cultivating ecological awareness (Flogaiti, 2011) and a value-oriented behavioral code overall.

Moreover, it is relevant to make students aware, as suggested by Strang (2019), that water is not just a natural resource but ‘in every cultural context it is densely encoded with social, spiritual, political and environmental meanings. These have a strong influence on water use patterns and on the relationships between water users and water suppliers. ‘The idea of water is closely linked to the time, space, cultural aspects and customary manifestations of the society in question’ (Anderson & Tabb 2002a: 5-6).

Given that traditional dance is not simply a cultural product independent of the natural and cultural environment of its operation and use, the dance customary- ritual practices of the Greek area constitute a place for tracing the worship relationship of the folk tradition’s agents with nature itself (Zografou, 2003). It is also known globally that dance is used to communicate environmental issues, (Neilson, 2002· Reinsborough, 2008· Stewart, 2010· Stone, 2014), climate change (Unsicker, 2016· Peterson, 2017· Ryan, 2022) and the water crisis (Ompati, 2017· Bradley, K. et al, 2021· Silveira & Fialho, 2023).

Thus, students can experience the special intimacy between the humankind and the environment by focusing on naturalistic dance events and consider two elements: On the one hand, that nature is the outer shell of every traditional culture, and on the other hand, that the people's love for the environment used to be of both biotic and cultic nature at once (Loukatos, 1980). Learning how to deal with it will inspire and reinforce a different attitude towards nature and the environment (Turner, 1969 · Meraklis, 2004), and will lead to other ways of behaving especially as scientists are now warning that our planet is under threat.

Starting from the customary dance practices that take place throughout the calendar year, the purpose of this study has been to showcase the ties between man and nature, including the fact that students living in an urban environment have been cut off from it and have lost contact with nature. In particular, the focus is on customary practices of cultic, magical and divinatory nature associated with water. Throughout the experimental lesson(s) which took place, they came to realize that water, as an essential element of nature with a multifaceted and multidimensional presence for people, holds an important place in Greek tradition.

Water is found in rite-of-passage customs associated with the important stages of the human life cycle, such as birth, baptism (Nitsiakos, 1997· Varvounis & Sergis, 2014), marriage and death. At birth, it is used to facilitate childbirth and as a cleansing symbol. In marriage, it is found as a symbol of happiness and abundance. In death, it is used as a cleansing and deterrent symbol (Psychogiou, 1999). It is also present in prosperity and wellbeing customs related to the New Year (Aikaterinidis, 1999): for instance, the custom of offering goods to the tap on New Year's Day or the ‘silent water’ custom

(Varvounis, 2018), or, in customs related to drought, such as the case of the *Perperouna* custom (Kyriakidis, 1990· Naki, 2004· Megas, 2012· Puchner, 2016).

Moreover, water is mentioned in customs of an oracular nature, such as the *Cledon* festival (Loukatos, 1992· Aikaterinidis, 1999· Varvounis, 2000), and in transitional periods of the cycle of the year, like the spring feasts (Megas, 2012). Besides, many dance songs praise its importance by stressing its special characteristics, such as the songs/ verses: 'Down to Agios Georgios in the cold water' or 'Some water lady Vangelio, some fresh cold water'. All directly or indirectly linked to a multitude of customary practices and beliefs of a devotional, magical and fortune-telling nature. Traditional dance is one of the most vital creations of popular culture as an essential structural component of customary practices.

Although there is a strong concern for environmental issues and sustainable development in the educational community (ibid Fermeli, 1999· Angelidou, 2000· Spiropoulou – Katsani, 2000· Huckle, 2002), no similar studies are tracked in this direction, to link—within school premises— traditional dance with contemporary environmental concerns. This focus lies in the fact that traditional dance is used as a tool to introduce students to the values of popular culture regarding connection between people and nature (Pateraki, 2018), focusing on the importance of water in the context of traditional life, and the cultic practice of its bearers. Students' experiential relationship with dance and through dance with folk culture is achieved through implementing an interventionist program based on contemporary anthropological teaching approaches, where teachers and students are mutually involved. The teacher's role was as a 'creative capacity builder', the 'Meddler-in-the-Middle' concept, coined by McWilliam (2009).

METHODOLOGY

The research – teaching intervention was designed by the instructor of Physical Education in Secondary School in Southern Suburbs of Athens and was implemented in the context of the Physical Education course, in the teaching subject of 'Greek traditional dance' in two classrooms of the 3rd grade of Junior High School. The research tools used in the intervention project for collection of research material were questionnaires, participant observation with the field notes and the researcher's diary, student observations, material from the students' assignments and presentations and group interviews enabled data from numerous and diverse sources.

In this paper, as mentioned earlier, we shall be referring to a specific part of the overall teaching intervention, which concerns the projects that were implemented (Taratori-Tsalkatidou, 2013· Chrysafidis, 2006). In this framework, data analysis was conducted from the researcher's field notes, which came through participatory observation and the journal (diary), to the observers' field notes and the students' evaluations, where qualitative discourse analysis (Foucault) was conducted, as well as the material from the students' assignments and presentations.

Ethnographic research can be complemented by ethnographic audiovisual evidence, such as photographs and videos, which can be used as a valuable methodological tool in the educational process to better understand the multidimensional character of the folk culture (Kakamboura-Tili, 2010· Kakamboura, & co. 2018). Photographs and videos act as ‘a window into the past, sharing relevant technologies of representation and visualising history’ (Willis, 1995:77).

The research was conducted throughout three stages:

a) the preparation process, b) the implementation process and c) the evaluation one. In the preparation process, initially, the school Principal and the teaching staff were informed since as stipulated by Law No. 4823/2021 (Government Gazette 136/AA/3-8-2021, article 2) and received approval from the school Principal. In addition, the parents and guardians of the students received the form for their written consent, which informed them at the same time about the research and how the anonymity and confidentiality of the students would be ensured. In this research, the sample consists of students from two sections of the third grade of the 3rd year of Junior High School, in a High School of the Southern suburbs of Athens, Greece. There, the researcher works as a Physical Education instructor/ professor. A total of 41 students, 17 girls and 24 boys.

In this study, particular focus was placed on participatory observation. The researcher observed the students participating in the program throughout the program and noted her observations at the end of the lesson. Besides, the recording of participant observation data should be done as briefly as possible to describe what exactly happened (Lydaki, 2016:151). Her observations were about actions, behaviors, words, gestures, etc., which were recorded in the fieldnotes. Given that the research was conducted in a school, the use of cameras/CCTV was not allowed. Though, this would have been of great help in the whole process.

In the next phase, the implementation process, the interventional teaching program - project, which had a limited duration of 6 teaching hours, was carried out on school premises, as many as the syllabus - curriculum (A.Π.Σ.) defines for the field of Greek traditional dance in secondary education and specifically in the third grade of high school.

Purpose and set goals of the project

Folk dancing is one of the most vital creations of folklore and is an indispensable structural component of customary practices. However, it has been found that in the curricula of secondary education the focus is mainly on the kinetic part of traditional dance, while the three-dimensional unity of movement - music - song is ignored and, certainly, there is no connection with customary dance practices of every region. It is presented as a form detached from its context, i.e. from the place, time and community of people, i.e. outside its social, historical and cultural context, thus ignoring its dynamics from an anthropological perspective.

The main objective of the program was the dual use of the course, to approach the dance traditions in Greece in their social, cultural and historical contexts and to draw examples for reflection on contemporary environmental issues, namely water. This way, students are taught by approaching not only traditional dance as an independent product, but at the same time are inspired by the Greek dance tradition. Through this research stage or *process*, the possibility of fostering a different attitude towards nature and the environment is given, leading to other ways of behavior, especially nowadays, as most scientists have been warning that our planet is at risk.

Among the cognitive objectives of the project:

To implement a project via which students would be acquainted with the specific hallmarks of traditional dance, such as the unity of movement, melody and speech and its inseparable relationship with customary-ritual practices. Moreover, the objective is to encourage them to understand that dance is not only a '*spectacle*' but also an *experience*, and to learn to express themselves through dance creation. To perceive the various customary events in the time cycle and life in relation to their natural cultural context and to appreciate the folk-dance tradition and, in general, the embedded cultural values it entails. To implement our goal for them to learn different customary practices related to water from different geographical regions and ethno-cultural communities and various peoples, to highlight aspects of these customary rituals and understand their function and to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the significance of water in human societies. An important goal is to enable students to raise awareness, to reflect, to understand environmental problems, to be alert and to take action for environmental protection.

Amongst emotional objectives of the project: to make students happy and understand that in dance we can interact—hence, move together—and be entertained. It was also significant that they learnt how to cooperate to produce group work, and derive pleasure from teamwork, ultimately learn how to communicate. Furthermore, to build self-confidence and self-esteem, but also to foster respect for different opinions and different forms of expression.

Finally, for them to strengthen positive attitudes towards the customary expressions of Greek culture and to develop positive feelings and values regarding culture. Amongst psychomotor objectives of the project, it was attempted for students to familiarize with their bodies through movement and rhythm and develop perceptive and kinesthetic skills through music, dance and complex tasks. Additionally, to cultivate creativity, imagination and aesthetics and to express themselves creatively.

Working in class with students, step by step.

The project was carried out at a public school in the Southern suburbs of Athens between November 2021 and April 2022. The sessions with students took place in the multipurpose room of the school. The means of implementation included a projector, laptop, a microphone system, chairs, a whiteboard and a map.

Step 1

The first teaching hour focused on students' reflection on customary dance practices and the importance of water for human societies. The discussion focused on the significance of water to activate the students' interest and raise their awareness of contemporary water-related concerns². This was followed by a discussion on the topic/ brainstorming session. The general and specific objectives of the project were set. They were informed that they would proceed with a Greek traditional dance-teaching project, which would utilize customary practices related to water. The students were excited about the notion of combining traditional dance with modern elements. Their interest was unwavering all the time and they actively participated by answering the raised questions.

There were two students attending this session and they took notes³. The students' notes included: '(...) The teacher managed to spark the students' interest. They discover...dance and water. How do these two things connect? Dance reminds us of traditions, customs and traditional events. Let's remember the value of water in the past and raise awareness among students through the traditions of rural societies that depended on it.... The teacher explains the project It takes the learning beyond the school setting by having them look for information at home.' (student's notes G.N.)

'Mode of teaching: virtual-visual stimulus. Student-centered teaching. Correlation between water and traditional dance (analysis of water, analysis of traditional dance). Reflections- triggers about dance and its connection with water. Connection of customs- songs with traditional dance. Pictures- songs-discussion- meandering questions motivate students' interest. Giving tasks to the students. (...) Productive lesson of stimulation and reflection. Groundbreaking!' (notes by student B.A.).

Step 2

The second teaching hour included the planning of teaching activities, the organization of teaching and the teaching of dance patterns. The students were informed that they would undertake tasks, which would be carried out outside of teaching hours, either individually or in groups and beyond the school premises, under the guidance of their researcher-teacher, and they would collect information material, which would be drawn from their family environment, libraries and the internet, and present this material to their classmates.

The groups were divided into groups, tasks were divided, and a timetable for their presentation was set up. The topics set for research and presentation by the student groups:

² Digital evidence 1,2,3,4

³ The students who attended the course are at the Athens Faculty of Physical Education (SEFAA) and within the framework of the teaching subject of Pedagogy and Teaching they are required to attend the course of Physical Education in Secondary Education (2 teaching hours) in the third year of their studies. Thereafter, they are expected to do their practical training (20 teaching hours). Their impression of this teaching proposal was because the teaching subject of traditional dance at the University focuses mainly on movement.

- a) events where water had a leading role.
- (b) myths, legends and traditions associated with fountains, wells, and rivers.
- (c) water-themed proverbs, and songs.
- (d) contemporary water-related problems (drought, floods, etc.).

Then there was the set-up of the teaching, i.e. the space where the project would take place and the logistical infrastructure to be needed for the course as well as the educational materials available. The space where the project would be implemented was the school's multipurpose hall, which already had seats all around. The hall has a video projector and audio installation and a laptop. She had an internet connection, so we could see online anytime what the teacher thought would help us, along with the teaching.

This was followed by the teaching of dance patterns with songs from various ethnic groups. The students were excited because they said it was the first time they did similar things in traditional dance classes before and found it interesting. They mostly liked the alternation of melodies. Then they danced the Hasaposervikos⁴ tune, which they had learned from previous years with the songs “*Pira ap'to cheri sou nero/ I took water off your hand*” and “*Eche geia panta geia*”. The teaching session ended with a syrtos - kalamatiano tune⁵, which had been taught in previous years along with the song “*A water lady Vangelio*”, and “*San pas Malamo gia nero/ As you go, Malamo, to bring water*”, which we all sang and danced together.

Step 3

In the third teaching hour, traditional dances were taught, but focused on specific folk-dance practices linked to water, in their special social and cultural context. They watched video excerpts from the ‘Little Festival’/ ‘Panygiraki’ of Arachova⁶ and a reference was made to the three-day festivities and their agenda. Owing to a video⁷ and its key function, students began to understand the different approach to teaching traditional dance, which was combined with a custom of a specific region. The song “*A little festival is going on up high on Ai Yorgis*” was heard, which referred to the dragon of the area, the guardian of the water, and we all sang and danced along.

⁴ Fast *hasapiko*, or *hasaposerviko*: is a fast dance, danced in various regions of Greece under different melodies, different style features and different names.

⁵ The syrtos - kalamatianos is a popular Greek traditional dance that is danced all over Greece in celebrations, weddings, festivals, etc.

⁶ The festival in Arachova is a three-day, mainly religious, celebration in honour of Saint George, which the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates on 23 April. It includes racing, worship and dancing customs. All Arachovites dress in traditional costumes and gather in the courtyard of the holy church of St. George. They dance the 'Panegiraki', unique dance of Arachova with singing: "The feast is held high in St. George...". For the 'Panigiraki' in Arachova see. Louskou V - Nikolidakis E. The festival of Arachova and the Greek tradition. Study of the song and customs. Arachova. 254-255 and vol. XI', 1953, p. 349-350

⁷ Digital evidence: 5

Later, the people's belief in traditional societies that dragons guarded water would become the topic of discussion. We found the verse that says: 'May the water of the dragon drink the feast', and discussed how widespread the belief was that dragons guard the springs as something precious and we also heard the song 'The Glass Well', which refers to the beast, meant to safeguard the well. This refers to the beast who would guard the well. In addition, there was a reference to St. George, the dragon-killing patron saint. On this saint's feast day these happenings take place: there was also reference to the time of the season this day marks about the season that marks as to the farming and livestock farming communities. Similar customs were also mentioned that one could find in the village *Neo Souli* in Serres (Central Macedonia)⁸. A similar practice applies to the tradition in Leonidio in Arcadia ('*Tsakonia*' region)⁹ where local traditions refer to a huge snake-haunting creature guarding the water and preventing strangers from passing through their plain. We've mentioned the *Tsakonikos* dance¹⁰, which is steeped in tradition and within it there is strong symbolism regarding the protection of water as a source of life and survival for the community and the time and place of dancing. They were taught the basic dance patterns of the dance, and their teacher showed them the labyrinthine and ophidian formations.

Then we referred to the *Tsamiko/ Chamiko*¹¹, a popular dance in the historical region of Roumeli as well as to part of the custom featured in the video. The *Tsamiko* was instructed by analysing the unusual dance patterns accompanied by the appropriate tune along with the song 'If I were in Arachova, to be at the festival, where the chupras go to the dance and all the lads...'. This was followed by *Kalamatiano* with songs heard at the 'Panigiraki' (*Little Feast*, in English), such as '*Anastasia*' and '*All the little birds*' songs.

The importance of the song's lyrics and the information gleaned from them were also highlighted. Through the words of the song, the students gathered information on the value and relevance of water to the people of the region. Its significance, its place in traditional society, the public nature of water (fountains, rivers, lakes) and where a village was built e.g. next to a river, a spring, a lake, a sea was discussed.

⁸ For the celebration of St George in Neo Souli in Serres, located in Northern Greece, in the region of Macedonia, see Aikaterinidis, G. (1969). The celebration of Agios Georgios in Neo Souli Serres, *Serraika chronicles*, vol. 129-148. Digital evidence: 6

⁹ Leonidio town is in Eastern Peloponnese, where the ancient Greek language idiom is still used. For the tradition about the snake in Leonidio, see. Lekkos, M. (1920). On Tsakonians and the Tsakonian dialect. Athens: Papapavlou and Sia · Hilari (2009). Local and national identity in motion: The paradigm of Tsaconian dance in Leonidio, Arcadia. Unpublished postgraduate thesis. Unpublished dissertation: Department of Physical Education and Sports. National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; For the integration of this tradition in the Tsaconian dance see Hilari, A. & Zografou, M. (2016). Dance and embodied memory in a small town of Kynouria: St Nikolas' Snake and "Tsakonikos" Dance. In *Papers in Ethnology and Anthropology*, N. 27,16, p.p.7-20.

¹⁰ The *Tsakonikos* dance is danced in the region of Tsakonia in the eastern Peloponnese, where the ancient Greek language idiom is spoken. The dance is distinguished by its serpentine-shaped dance patterns. Digital evidence: 7

¹¹ *Tsamikos* is a traditional '*levantikos*' dance. It is danced mainly in the Peloponnese, Central Greece, Epirus and Thessaly.

At the end of the lesson, they were given some instructions by their teacher for the tasks they had undertaken and were going to carry out such as where they could get information material from and how they could involve their family in their research, etc.

Step 4

In the fourth class hour, the students' work on proverbs and expressions about water was presented and followed by discussion. The work was on power point, it was very thoughtful and explanatory. The students who presented were surprised by the abundance of water-related proverbs and expressions they encountered. Because the other groups had not completed their work, the schedule slightly changed. An ERT TV documentary was shown, dealing with the custom of the Cleidon¹², followed by a discussion on the Cleidon as a divination event, which varies in style depending on the cultural context. It was mentioned that the dance is not isolated but exists in the context of a celebration of a place, a custom in the cycle of time and life and is part of the celebration that includes other things such as food, drink, singing, music, companionship, etc.

The focus was on Kleidonas (*Kleidon/ Cleidon*) custom, in the region of Crete. We watched a video with the custom from the area of the *Kritsa* and *Archanes* areas¹³. Initially students saw the dances that were danced in both areas during feasts and then watched a performance at the *Herodeio* (aka *Odeon of Herodes Atticus*) ancient theatre in Athens, where dancers performed the Pentozali dance¹⁴. After a discussion and comparison of what they saw in the video, they were taught the Pentozali, since it is part of the syllabus in the curriculum/ syllabus of the 3rd Grade. Several song dances were performed. There was obvious excitement with this dance, although some students struggled but continued to perform, nevertheless. Surprisingly, they did not even stop dancing when the bell rang, for recess.

Step 5

The fifth lesson continued with presentations of papers on customs and songs. First, the paper on the topic of customs related to water. It was on power point and detailed many customs of Greece, such as

¹² For more information on *Cleidon*: see Varvounis, M. (2000). "Klidonas", Folklore Essays. Studies on Greek traditional culture, ed. Kastaniotis, Athens and Aikaterinidis, G. (1999). Water in rituals of cultic, magical and fortune-telling content. In the Proceedings of the Scientific Meeting, 'Water is the source of Life, Motion, and Purity'. Athens): Museum of Greek Folk Art, Proceedings of the Scientific Meeting: Water is the source of Life, Motion, Cleansing. Athens): Museum of Greek Folk Art, pp. 42-46 and Pateraki, M. (2018), Dancing to the Cleidon's apples: Cultural artifacts and teaching blueprints on local educational policy. In E. Avdikos, S. Koziou (Eds.) Proceedings of the 6th Panhellenic Conference 'Plant - herbs in folk culture, and in science'. Karditsa. University of Thessaly - Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology, 'Apollo' Centre for Historical and Folklore Research of Karditsa. Digital evidence 8.

¹³ Digital evidence: 9, 10.

¹⁴ Pentozali: it used to be danced only by men in the island of Crete, the largest Greek island. Nowadays, it is a mixed, fast and spectacular dance. It is associated with the Cretan Revolt. Digital evidence 11, 12.

the *Perperouna*¹⁵ one, the *Silent Water*, and *Kleidonas*. Then was presented the paper about songs with reference to water. The students presented several traditional, folk songs. After they presented the identified tunes, we sang and danced to them (as many as they knew). We also referred to other songs to help them understand the importance of water and how it is reflected in different songs, not just folk ones.

Next, there was a discussion on the topic of water in modern times. The students were motivated and keenly interested. The water scarcity that plagues some areas of the world and how this leads to migration flows to other countries was raised. The discussion moved on to suggestions on how we can raise awareness on the importance of water to our lives.

Starting from the songs brought by the students, some of which were ‘folk’, we proceeded with teaching the ‘hasapiko’¹⁶. We watched a video of the dance, we were told facts about its origin, name, songs, history, etc. and then the dance was taught using a partial method and then a total method. After being taught the dance movements we danced to the song ‘Even though my jacket is dripping’ and ‘Don't Drink Water’. They were involved in the song selection; this made them very happy and most of them danced in high spirits.

Step 6

The sixth lesson was a repetition of the dances we learned during the project. We sang songs related to water and danced, such as in a syrto dance the songs ‘A water, lady Vangelio’ and ‘As you go, Malamo, for water’, ‘My gleaming fountain’. We danced and sang ‘Panigiraki’ and ‘Down to St. George in the cold water’, danced ‘tsamiko’ with the song ‘Up goes the water’ and pentozali to the song ‘Throughout the scents of May’. Then we danced a *hasaposerviko* to the song ‘I took water off your hand’ and a *hasapiko* to the song ‘Bring me water to quench my thirst’, to ‘Even though my jacket's dripping’, and, finally, one student wanted to dance a *zeibekiko*¹⁷. His classmates came in a circle around him, cheering him on and clapping their hands. All students were delighted and joined in, singing and dancing.

Evaluation of the work plan

We then discussed whether the initial objectives set at the beginning of the project were achieved and evaluated the value of the project outcomes. A critical evaluation was made of the whole design, implementation and results. The students were very pleased by the outcome. A student who was often negative and did not stand up to dance mentioned ‘it was a more interesting lesson’, another said ‘I learned to appreciate water better’. Other students said: ‘we liked the manner more because it made us like dancing more because we generally learned more about it...’ and ‘it made us appreciate water

¹⁵ Digital Evidence: 13, 14.

¹⁶ Hasapiko: slow, popular folk dance, danced to a variety of folk-dance songs. Digital evidence: 15

¹⁷ Zeibekikos: A popular folk (‘*laikós*’) slow dance danced mainly by men

better and not to waste it'. A student reported that 'we learned about our tradition, and I liked that we looked for it ourselves which made the lesson more interesting', 'we learned about customs that we didn't know existed and I liked that we worked with other classmates'. They commented: 'it made me aware of water issues' and 'I gained nice experiences and new knowledge' and 'I enjoy because the lesson wasn't drab'.

The students searched, mainly online but also through family members, and found customs, songs, proverbs, legends and traditions, as well as general information on water. All students were impressed by the number of proverbs and expressions about it, and the abundance of songs (rain, lake, river, etc.). The children themselves, initially unaware of customs and traditions, at the end of the project were able to mention several songs about water, many proverbs and expressions, and customs from various Greek regions. Finally, they became aware of the scale of the climate change problem and the irrational use of water.

CONCLUSIONS

The interest for the present research proposal arose from the contemporary concerns regarding the research and study of traditional dance, combined with the intense concern of the educational community regarding contemporary environmental issues. Starting from customary dance practices related to water, it primarily aimed at awakening the students' interest and reflection for a better modern and future environment, fostering respect for the environment and sustainable development, as reflected by UNESCO and the curriculum for the 'New School of the 21st Century'.

During the entire process, it was found that students were initially unaware of the relationship between the actors of traditional life and nature, while after the project they became aware of the important interrelation between humans and nature. Examples drawn from traditional societies reveal not only the seamless unity between humans and the environment but also people's need to seek help in nature through beliefs, rituals, eulogies, etc (Lydaki, 2016: 506). Through the dance songs, which referred to water and are indelibly linked to specific customary dance practices, they understood the close and harmonious connection of people with their natural environment, since their survival and reproduction depended upon this link indeed.

Given that traditional societies can and should be 'role models for a different relationship between society and nature', we managed to highlight a distinctive 'environmental ethics. Through the project we highlighted the fact that a school can and should teach, among other things, principles, attitudes and qualities of life. Furthermore, that school can and should create responsible people who 'life-long' care and concern for a better environment. By focusing on water, the curriculum led the students not only to become aware of its importance and to cultivate attitudes towards saving and proper usage of water, but also to raise their awareness and activate them in actions for sustainable water management, thus making them active as citizens.

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Tekmiria-Digital Evidence

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Digital Evidence 5: The festivities of Saint George, in Arachova / The well-known festival of Arachova has been set up. Star of Central Greece <https://www.panigiraki.gr/>

Digital Evidence 6: All-Holy Feast of Saint George, Neo Suli Serres, "Dragocide" 23 April 2023, Commune of Emmanouil Pappas (from Youtube) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgyVI-3bSB8>

Digital Evidence 7: Tsakonikos Dance Easter in Leonidio, in Arkadia (YouTube: *g Latsis*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hngwBI2sB3M>

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Digital Evidence 15: Chasapico (dance of Ambatzoglou Dimos & Giorgos Provias & Thodoros Kalpaxidis) video Dia Logou, ET1 TV <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vWMAcK8lvGA>