

FOLK DANCE AS A TOOL OF MUTUAL COMMUNICATION WITH REGARD TO PRIMARY EDUCATION

NARODNI PLES KAO ALAT KOMUNIKACIJE U OSNOVNOM OBRAZOVANJU

Miriam Uhrinová, Mária Kožuchová, Jozef Zentko

Faculty of Pedagogy, Catholic University, Ružomberok, Slovakia

Učiteľski fakultet, Katolícko sveučilište, Ružomberok, Slovačka

Abstract

Dancing is one of the tools of mutual verbal and non-verbal communication between people, in which there is confrontation with the social environment. Nowadays, in high-tech era, when there is often absence of mutual personal meeting, participation in recreational and social events is beneficial. No knowledge of folk dance can be one of the reasons for not participating in such events. The fundamentals of folk dance are needed to be taught in family from the birth, but it is important to motivate the educational reality in school. Education for traditional values of folk culture focusing on folk dance was part of the educational process in primary education in the past and remains as a part of it in the present. The article presents partial results of the research, which focused on the implementation of elements of folk culture in the educational process in primary education in Slovakia and Hungary.

Sažetak

Ples je jedan od alata za verbalnu i neverbalnu komunikaciju među ljudima, te u situacijama sukoba u društvenom okruženju. Danas, u visoko tehnološko doba, kada je čest nedostatak uzajamnog osobnog susreta, sudjelovanje u rekreativnim i društvenim događajima je korisno. Nepoznavanje narodnih plesova može biti jedan od razloga za nesudjelovanje u takvim događajima. Osnove narodnog plesa trebale bi se učiti u obitelji od rođenja, ali je važno i motivirati obrazovnu stvarnost u školi. Obrazovanje za tradicionalne vrijednosti narodne kulture s naglaskom na narodni ples je bio dio obrazovnog procesa u osnovnom obrazovanju u prošlosti i ostaje njegov dio u sadašnjosti. Članak predstavlja parcijalne rezultate istraživanja, koje je bilo usredotočeno na implementaciju elemenata narodne kulture u obrazovnom procesu u osnovnom obrazovanju u Slovačkoj i Mađarskoj.

Introduction

The current era of high-technology is not offering young people enough opportunities for personal interaction. Surveys show /1/, /2/ that young people often grow up in the virtual world and make friends mostly through social networks. One of the possibilities of mutual personal meetings is the participation in social events, parties and balls, where dance dominates within social gatherings. Not

being able to dance may be one of the reasons why young people are not participating at such events and thus they impoverish themselves of such way of communication. Children are needed to be taught the basics of dance in the family, but it is also important to motivate particularly younger school-age children to dance in the educational reality under school conditions.

Folk dance is one of the most important representatives of folklore. It is the inherent part of spiritual folk culture. Folklore dance has been significant cultural expression of the group in the folk scene as well as an important part of social life. Folk dances have been associated most commonly with rural strata of the population - peasants, shepherds, woodcutters, linen producers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, and so on /3/.

Dance as a means of communication

Dance has been and remaining one of the important means of communication between people. Not only verbal but also non-verbal communication comes to the fore. If we focus on the dance itself, we understand it as artistic, physical (expressive and active), social and cultural non-verbal communication as determined in its nature. On the one hand it is nature, universe, myth, and on the other hand, it is civilization, aesthetics, choreography, technique and an art form. Their combination in one unit illustrates dance being on the border of anthropological dichotomy of nature and culture. Dancing man is not only separately a moving physical being, but it is a personality embodying, by dance, the tangle of social and cultural references. Various forms of folk dance, with reference to the development are involved in social dialogue, to reflect customs and traditions, expressing the soul of man living for centuries in the given area. Social dialogue at the level of dance is not only that there is some kind of communication but mainly that the communication is in a way uniform and common for all. Individuals, who participate in dance, move in one dimension. Their participation in the dance event is an expression of what they have in common and not what potentially divides them. The footing for this moment is the display of naturalness and authenticity.

The international folklore festivals are the phenomena of modern times. These symptomatic phenomena of the last fifty years have been demonstrating the enormous need for communication at international level, which sprang from a spontaneous need to get to

know the cultures of other nations and nationalities. It appears to us that it is both an intellectual and emotional needs of a civilized modern man who wants to explore his/her own roots as well as the roots of other cultures. A great interest in folklore festivals and ritual perception of them as special events of the annual cycle is proof of that.

Pedagogical aspects of dance

The pedagogical aspect of dance could be viewed in a sense that it educates the human to become more susceptible personality, but also it educates the artistic values and human relations. Thus, it is the way to more cultural society /4/. Moreover, folk dance indicates that in its culture there are values that young person wants to identify with and present them in a specific form.

In the educational area it is also important to understand the social and cultural influences that determine human values and behavior, as well as developing the ability to be sensitive to the natural and cultural heritage /5/.

The education of the traditional values of folk culture focusing on folk dance used to be a part of the educational process in primary education and remains a part of it even nowadays. Enthusiasm of the teachers in this area can be regarded as the basis for the success of the development of traditional culture in schools, as well as their theoretical and practical training. Preservation and revival of folk culture in terms of education is often in the teachers' competencies.

We briefly present, in the historical context, the contribution of Roman Catholic Teaching Institute in Spišská Kapitula in Slovakia, which holds, in the history of the Slovak education system, one of the most important positions. The Institute was established in 1819 on the initiative of the bishop of Spiš J.L. Pyrker. It was the first of its kind in the Kingdom of Hungary. Its task was to celebrate the folk education. Hundreds of teachers who contributed to the spread of education and culture had been trained there. Spišská Kapitula was the place to gather and prepare future

teachers to work with children and youth. Teacher training college prepared teachers of rural schools, where one could find very strong cultural stimuli. Part of their training was the music, which is inextricably bound up with folk dances.

In the folk environment, folk dance was significant cultural expression of the group and also an important part of social life /6/. Slovak folk culture in rural areas covered a broad range of manifestations of material, social and spiritual life of the people: a great variety of crafts for subsistence, unique architectural features, colorful clothing styles, the particularities of gastronomy, individual character of artistic expression, unique kinship and neighborly relations, which were related to the very survival, rich traditions and customary ceremonial culture, distinctive way of cognition and faith and rich literary, musical, dramatic and dance art. Folk dances represent musically linked, solid form of movement, which became stable in different kinds and types of dance, functionally tied to cultural traditions and aesthetic sensibilities of rural environment /7/.

Each region, each location has their typical traditions that were respected in its territory in the past. Some traditions were unique to a region, and thus highlighted its individuality.

We wondered if even today the primary school pupils acquire the elements of folk dance. Therefore, we consider it important to answer the questions: "Are pupils interested nowadays in a folk dance?" "Do teachers implement folk dance in the educational process in primary education at present?"

Research background

The aim of the research was to determine the current status of implementation of elements of folk culture in the educational process in primary education, focusing on folk dance and compare this situation in Slovakia and Hungary. The research was conducted in the years 2011-2014. The main research tools were questionnaires of their own provenance, which were forwarded to teachers and pupils

of selected primary schools in Slovakia and Hungary. By using the questionnaires we were mapping out the state of implementation of regional education in the educational process of primary education, while focusing on detection of special-interest activities of pupils and the learning of dance and dance elements with regard to primary education.

Our research was aimed at comparing the level of implementation of elements of folk culture in the educational process in primary education in terms of comparison of the two neighboring countries - Slovakia and Hungary. Our research problem was to determine if folk dance plays an important part in the system of interest activities of students and if the teachers, with regard to this interest, schedule the folk dance in the educational process of primary education. We set the following hypothesis: *H: We assume that there is no significant difference between primary schools in Slovakia and Hungary concerning the implementation of folk dance in the educational process.*

The sample

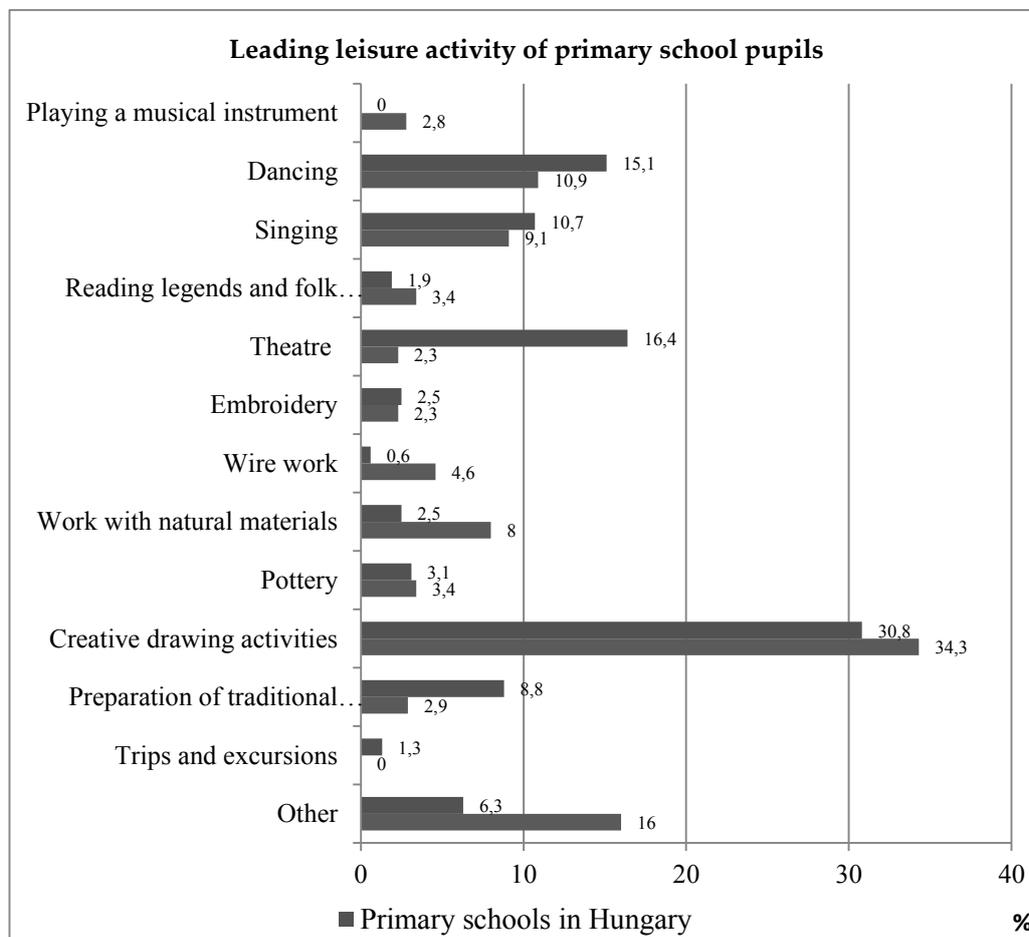
The sample was made up of students of third and fourth grades of primary schools in Slovakia and Hungary. The criterion for selection of populations to the file was the country in which the elementary school is situated. The occasional and quota samplings were used in the research. The research sample consisted of 334 students, including 175 students from elementary schools in Slovakia and 159 elementary school students in Hungary.

Research findings

Due to the limited extent of this contribution we will demonstrate only the selection of acquired data and our basic findings.

We examined which interest activities at schools in Slovakia and Hungary pupils consider as their favorite. In this context, we observed whether dancing is their favorite activity and whether they rank it among their favorite hobbies. Summary of the results is shown in Figure 1, which indicates the relative frequency.

Figure 1 Leading leisure activity of primary school pupils in Slovakia and Hungary in percentage terms



As for the most favorite spare time activities at school, pupils equally from

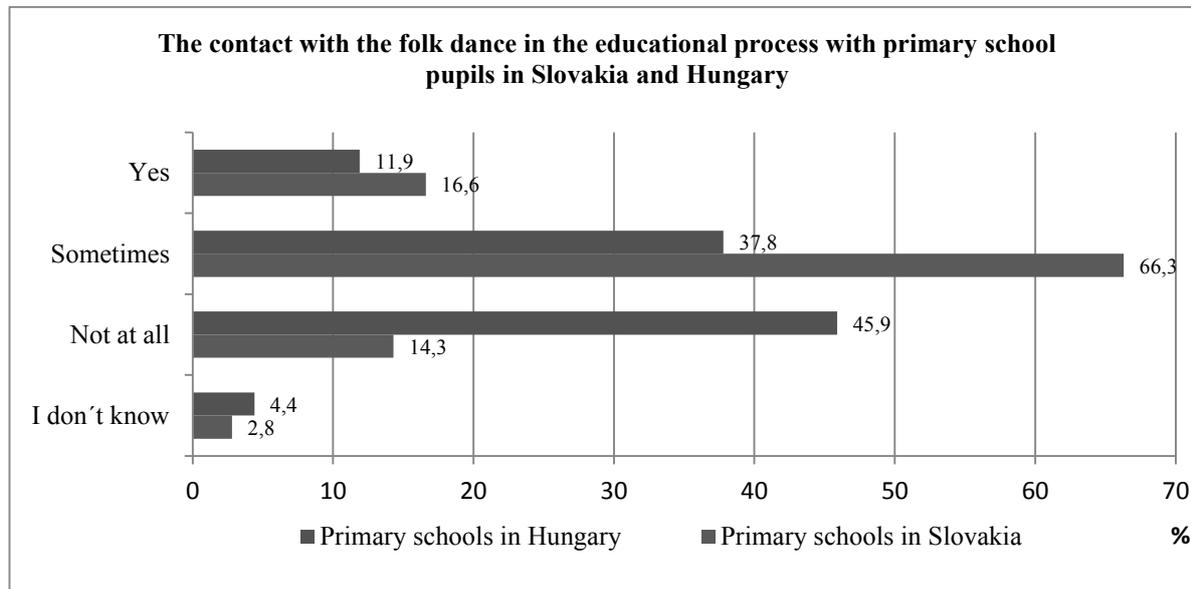
Slovakia and Hungary consider creative art-drawing activities. In either case, it is preferred by more than 30% of students. In Slovak schools dance has a significant representation and is preferred by more than 10% of the students as well as in Hungary, where there has reached more than 15% of popularity. Students reported interest also in other activities that are not of direct concern of folk culture (eg. sports and others). As shown in Figure 1, pupils are involved in a variety of leisure activities that are directly linked to traditional folk culture.

Music and physical education are the particular subjects offering the place for folk dance in the educational process in primary

education, as well as optional subjects in the school curriculum. In this context, we consider it necessary to ascertain if teachers of primary education implement folk dance in the educational process and whether the pupils of the elementary schools in Slovakia are getting into contact with folk dance in the educational process more often than pupils from primary schools in Hungary.

In the hypothesis, we assumed *that there was no significant difference between primary schools in Slovakia and Hungary concerning the implementation of folk dance in the educational process*. For the statistical test of this hypothesis, we used Pearson's chi-squared test. Results are presented in the Figure 2.

Figure 2 Implementation of folk dance in the educational process in the Slovak and Hungarian elementary schools



$\chi^2 = 43,077$

$p = ,000$

The value of Pearson Chi-square test with 3 degrees of freedom is equal to $\chi^2 = 43.077$ and reached Significance $p = ,000$

$\chi^2 = 43,077; p < 0.05 (p = 0.000)$

The significant difference was observed among pupils from Hungary and Slovakia in the implementation of dance and dance elements into education. Research demonstrates that dance is more often used during lessons in primary schools in Slovakia at a significance level of $p = ,000$. Our hypothesis was not confirmed.

We realize that folk dance is an opportunity for students to combine movement with joy, which can lead to the dedicated folk dance not only in the educational process, but also in their free time. National awareness through folk dance and dance expressions could be also developed among students, but also it could shape a positive attitude towards physical activities. It is appealed to especially nowadays, when the physical activity of children and youth is decreasing.

Discussion

The research shows that pupils in primary schools are interested in folk culture and devote their spare time activities to it

even though it should be added that folk culture has been getting into innovative and to its unknown discourse. In this atmosphere, the principles of tradition are being emphasized and maintained in addition to folklorism, led by local folklore groups. It turns out that folklorism despite its pitfalls is a phenomenon of folk dance and its important factor, as in every age it opens new possibilities for returning to the roots of folk culture. Folk dance is at the forefront of students (see Figure 1), but it does not have a single cause. Motif that brings students to dance outside the classroom is being affected by family tradition, for others it is buddies; the other students indicated as a reason for engaging in folk dance a need to stay active and get to know the other cultures as well. This observation of pupils is consistent with the findings of Rhodes /8/ who also views the dance as unique opportunity to learn not only about dancing but also through the dance. Similarly Craighead /9/ denotes a folk dance as an element of interdisciplinary education, by which social class affiliation

may be analyzed as well as an ethnic or age group affiliation. Strong motivating factor of it is the social aspect of dance, membership of the dance group. For pupils who are dedicated to dancing in their free time, it is beneficial to meet with other dancers and to feel the sense of fellowship. They see a strong cohesion of the group whose members are very close friends to them. More advanced dancers perceive dance as one of their major leisure activities, which enriches them and becoming an integral part of their lives. Because of the dance they are willing to some extent giving up other activities and their personal comfort.

The aim of this work was to analyze and characterize the dance as a full part of the education process. In the hypothesis, we assumed that there is no significant difference between primary schools in Slovakia and Hungary in the implementation of folk dance in the educational process. Significant difference was observed in the implementation of folk dance in the educational process in primary education in primary schools in Slovakia and Hungary. Our research did not confirm this hypothesis (Figure 2).

One of the reasons may be the fact that in primary schools in Slovakia the optional subject aimed at exploring the region is more frequently included in the school curriculum, which has been shown by the research results. Primary schools in Slovakia implemented the elements of folk culture of the local region in the educational process more often.

In addition, we believe that the personality of the teacher has a significant impact on the implementation of dance in the educational process. It is the teacher who should primarily have a positive attitude to folk traditions, being able to build this relationship with the pupils. It is assumed that the teacher has the motor skills, sense of rhythm, knowledge of folklore, knowledge of dance steps and step variations. The teacher should realize a connection of music, song and movement, and thus manage to create musically active ensemble. For this reason, within teacher training, the inclusion of the issue of regional education into the educational pro-

cess on the theoretical and practical level is justified. According to the research of Palovičová /10/, teachers in primary and secondary schools do not teach folk dance, as prescribed by standards. One of the basic problems, why they do not apply dance during PE classes is that they were not sufficiently prepared for this discipline during their university studies and the lack of available tools.

Given the limits of this work we will conclude and summarize the main points of the discussion. The work aimed at putting forward the issue of folk dance as a means of nonverbal communication. Another objective was to determine whether folk dance has a significant place in the system of interest activities of students and teachers and whether, with regard to this interest, teachers include folk dance in the educational process of primary education. Our findings have been presented and compared with the findings of other authors. On the basis of the information obtained, we propose the following topics for further research in the field of folk dance, for example the problem of "deserters":

Why trainees leave the dance school? What are the reasons for leaving the dance group? Is it because of the financial, time, technical, physical demands of the course? Is it unsatisfactory or insufficient expertise of team trainer?

The theme for further research is the perception of dance from the perspective of "non-dancers": Why is it that for someone is watching a dance performance a strong emotional experience and for someone it is just mockery and contempt?

Moreover, there is also the unexplored link between "multimedia and dance." What impact the multimedia have on folk dance? Do they develop the interest in dance, or conversely discourage it? Some authors point out the positive impact of multimedia on folk culture, but also folk dance /11/. According to Dugonik and Plenkovič, technology in the will take place in the future in both leisure activities, and education with dance as no exception. They talk about hybrid education /12/.

The link between "dance and health" remains an open question. What effect has a dance on health? When is it the best to start dancing with regard to the optimal psychosomatic development? Some research shows that physical activity of children is declining, which causes the reduction of incentives for optimal psychosomatic development, resulting in a gradual deterioration in population health /13/.

Conclusion

Small countries like Slovakia or Hungary with a strong language barrier should primarily develop nonverbal genres in its communication with the world and dancing is one of them. With physical activity and music communication acquires a new dimension. People are becoming more social, more responsive and more open to its surroundings while developing their national consciousness.

In addition to the family environment, the educational potential of the school plays also the important role. The content reform in the current education system requires creative teachers pursuing the dimension of national culture. Education and training in the field of traditional folk culture in regard to folk dance should not be infrequent but thoughtfully implemented in the educational process. It is our duty and honor to protect the heritage of our ancestors and for this, we should lead the future generations as well.

The article was published with the support of a grant KEGA 017K-4 / 2014

Notes

- /1/ Šupšáková, B. 2000. Detský výtvarný prejav. Svätý Jur: Digit, 2000. ISBN 80-968441-0-1.
- /2/ Kožuchová, M. 2010. Elementárna technická výchova detí predškolského a mladšieho školského veku. In: Kolláriková, Z. – Pupala, B.

- (eds.) Predškolská a elementárna pedagogika. Praha : Portál, 2001. - 455 s. - ISBN 80-7178-585-7.
- /3/ Mázorová, M. – Ondrejka, K. a kol. 1991. *Slovenské ľudové tance*. Bratislava : SPN, 1991. ISBN 80-08-00322-7.
- /4/ Blažičková kol. 2006. *Vize tance*. Základní pojmy a okruhy problémů. [online] [cit. 2013-07-13] Dostupné na: http://www.mistnikultura.cz/files/vize_tance_0.pdf
- /5/ Macko, J. - Bláhutová, D. - Stollárova, N. 2013. Space for the environmental education in the system of secondary education in Slovakia. In: *Informatologia*. ISSN 1330-0067, Vol. 46, Issue 3 (2013), p. 256-260.
- /6/ Zentko, J. – Chanasová, Z. 2011. *Dramatizačné techniky v materskej škole*. Ružomberok : Verbum, 2011. 82 s. ISBN 978-80-8084-809-5.
- /7/ Elscheková, A. – Elschek, O. 1980. *Slovenské ľudové piesne*. Bratislava: Osvetový ústav, 1980.
- /8/ Rhodes, A. M. 2006. Dance in interdisciplinary teaching and learning. *Journal of Dance Education*, 6(2), 48-56.
- /9/ Craighead , C. 2006. "Blackdance": Navigation-the politics of "black" in relation to "the dance object" and the body as discourse. *CriticalArts: A South – North Journal of Cultural&Media Studies*, 20(2),16-33.
- /10/ Palovičová , J.: *Rozvoj hudobno-pohybových schopností prostredníctvom rytmickej gymnastiky a ľudových tancov*. Banská Bystrica : Univerzita Mateja Bela, 2006. 138 s. ISBN 80-8083-294-3.
- /11/ Bláhutová, D.- Macko, J. - Stollárova, N. 2011. *Multimedia Elements in Biology and Chemistry Education*. In: *Informatologia*. - ISSN 1330-0067, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2011), p. 353-354.
- /12/ Dugonik, B. - Plenkovič, M. 2012. The Role of Future Generation Hybrid TV Technologies in Education. In *Informatologia*. 45, 2012., 2, 103 - 114.
- /13/ Stollárova, N. – Uhrinová, M.: *Bewegungsaktivität bei Kindern des jüngeren Schulalters unter dem Gesundheitsaspekt*. In Akimjak, A. a kol.: *Global education up to the future*. Warszawa-Marshall-Ružomberok : 2007/2008, s. 255-262. ISBN 978-83-920432-8-6.

Literature

1. / Bláhutová , D.- Macko, J. - Stollárova, N. 2011. *Multimedia Elements in Biology and Chemistry Education*. In: *Informatologia*. ISSN 1330-0067, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2011), p. 353-354.

2. Blažíčková kol. 2006. *Vize tance*. Základní pojmy a okruhy problémů. [online] [cit. 2013-07-13] Dostupné na: http://www.mistnikultura.cz/files/vize_tance_0.pdf
3. Craighead, C. 2006. "Blackdance": Navigation-the politics of "black" in relation to "thedanceobject" and the body as discourse. *CriticalArts: A South – North Journal of Cultural&Media Studies*, 20(2),16-33.
4. Dugonik, B. - Plenković, M. 2012. The Role of Future Generation Hybrid TV Technologies in Education. In *Informatologia*. 45, 2012., 2, 103 - 114.
5. Elscheková, A. – Elschek, O. 1980. *Slovenské ľudové piesne*. Bratislava: Osvetový ústav, 1980.
6. Kožuchová, M. 2010. Elementárna technická výchova detí predškolského a mladšieho školského veku. In: Kolláriková, Z. – Pupala, B. (eds.) *Predškolská a elementárna pedagogika*. Praha : Portál, 2001. - 455 s. - ISBN 80-7178-585-7.
7. Macko, J. - Blahútová, D. - Stollárová, N. 2013. Space for the environmental education in the system of secondary education in Slovakia. In: *Informatologia*. ISSN 1330-0067, Vol. 46, Issue 3 (2013), p. 256-260.
8. Mázorová, M. – Ondrejka, K. a kol. 1991. *Slovenské ľudové tance*. Bratislava : SPN, 1991. ISBN 80-08-00322-7.
9. Palovičová, J.: *Rozvoj hudobno-pohybových schopností prostredníctvom rytmickej gymnastiky a ľudových tancov*. Banská Bystrica : Univerzita Mateja Bela, 2006. 138 s. ISBN 80-8083-294-3.
10. Rhodes, A. M. 2006. Dance in interdisciplinary teaching and learning. *Journal of Dance Education*, 6(2), 48-56.
11. Stollárová, N. – Uhrinová, M.: Bewegungsaktivität bei Kindern des jüngeren Schulalters unter dem Gesundheitsaspekt. In Akimjak, A. a kol.: *Global education up to the future*. Warszawa-Marshall-Ružomberok : 2007/2008, s. 255-262. ISBN 978-83-920432-8-6.
12. Šupšáková, B. 2000. *Detský výtvarný prejav*. Svätý Jur: Digit, 2000. ISBN 80-968441-0-1.
13. Zentko, J. - Chanasová, Z. 2011. *Dramatizačné techniky v materskej škole*. Ružomberok : Verbum, 2011. 82 s. ISBN 978-80-8084-809-5.