

The effect of an intercultural Physical Education Program in comparison to the typical one on students' social skills learning

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ABSTRACT

Derri, V., Kellis, I., Vernadakis, N., Albanidis, E., & Kioumourtzoglou, E. (2014). The Effect of an Intercultural Physical Education Program in Comparison to the Typical One on Students' Social Skills Learning. *J. Hum. Sport Exerc.*, 9(1), pp.91-102. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of an intercultural physical education program (IPEP), in comparison to the typical physical education program (TPEP), on students' social skills learning. Thirty-two upper elementary students of different origin (Greek and foreign) were equally distributed into an experimental (IPE) and a control (TPE) group. A student behavior observation scale was used to evaluate the social skills 'relationships', 'verbal interaction', 'rewards', 'help', and 'goals' (Kellis et al., 2010). After the initial measurement, each group attended the respective 16-lesson physical education program, and then it was post- and retention tested. Results indicated that students in the IPE group, as opposed to those in the TPE group, learned to interact appropriately, to provide rewards and help, and to have better relations with their peers, independently of their origin. Also, Greek students in the IPE group improved significantly their ability to set and achieve goals while foreign students outperformed their foreign peers in the TPE group both in goal setting and peer relations. It seems that the IPEP can have a significant impact on learning certain social skills by all students involved in it. **Key words:** PHYSICAL EDUCATION, INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION, BEHAVIOR OBSERVATION, STUDENT EVALUATION, ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Greece is a country that has a constantly increasing number of foreign students, the majority of which attend mainstream schools and create a multicultural school population (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2007). Given that school is a socializing institution, it is expected to resolve issues regarding the incorporation of children living in a multicultural society both in its context but also in the actual society (Cordova & Love, 1987; UNESCO, 2004). Researchers supported the notion that a culturally diverse school has the potential to develop students' intercultural competence (Hayden & Wong, 1997) that is their ability to interact effectively and appropriately with students from other cultures (Perry & Southwell, 2011). However, according to another point of view, merely providing students with the opportunity for cultural contact may be not enough to this end (Bennett, 2008). Besides, research evidence indicated that foreign students have language and cultural adaptation problems (Bombas, 2001), and worse interpersonal relationships and self-control than the indigenous (Giavrimis & Papanis, 2007); problems which comprise the main reason for their school problems, and failure (Nikolaou, 2000). Also, as Gotovos & Markou (2003) revealed, a large proportion of foreign students quit school, mostly during their transition from primary to secondary school.

Separate education for each ethnic group, as dictated by the separation in education model which suggested separate schools for each student group either permanently (e.g., schools for Muslims in Thrace) or temporarily (schools for those repatriated), is no longer desirable in contemporary multicultural societies. The challenge is a unified education system for all, in accordance with society's multicultural and multilingual conditions and demands (Gotovos, 1998). In particular, school should create an environment where all children can coexist efficiently, relish their individuality and carry it in the social group, and live in harmony (Cordova & Love, 1987; UNESCO, 2004). Also, through innovative educational approaches, school should nurture all students as a whole, offering them up-to-date and developmentally appropriate academic knowledge and affecting positively their behaviors, attitudes and social actions (UNESCO, 2004).

The intercultural education model provides a more promising solution to the problem of cultural diversity at school. Its advocates set the following goals: a) improvement of school performance and self-awareness of children of ethnic and immigrant groups, b) cultivation of respect, tolerance and positive attitudes towards people with different cultural, racial or religious origin, and c) development of students' ability to examine educational and social phenomena from the point of view of different cultures and not only with the eye of the dominant culture (Nikolaou, 2000). In reference to the selection of the content, methodology, and teaching strategies, intercultural education takes seriously into account the different origins of the students (Forquin, 2004), promotes their critical thinking, and at the same time meets the educational, social, cultural and political expectations of all ethnic groups (Georgogiannis, 1997). In parallel, it focuses on indigenous students of different gender, social origin, financial status, and place of origin (Likiardopoulou, 2003).

However, schools in Greece do not always have the capacity and the skills to incorporate such changes in their curriculum (Parthenis, 2010). Intercultural education is not considered relevant by all involved in the Greek educational system, and its application or integration in the school subject matters relies upon the individual initiative (Triandafyllidou & Gropas, 2007).

The need for intercultural directions and orientations in school curriculums and specifically in physical education has been pointed out several years ago by Greendorfer (1983). As an integral part of the curriculum, physical education through its dynamic social nature and its different codes can address the needs of every child and the modern society's as well, reflecting different cultures (Green & Hardman, 2000). This conceptualization is directly linked to the social goals of the integrated physical education

model in Greece which has been adopted recently, in the frame of the lesson's reform and pilot implementation. According to this model, students are expected to learn to move (motor and health-related fitness goals) but also to learn through movement (cognitive and emotional/social goals). Specifically, with regard to the social objectives of this new program, all students, irrespective of their ethnicity and any other differences are expected, among others, to develop and learn social skills such as communication, receiving and providing help, feedback, and rewards to teammates and opponents, goal setting, cooperation, and acceptance of victory and defeat. These social skills constitute primary objectives in the social units of the new integrated physical education curriculum as well as secondary objectives in its motor, health-related fitness or cognitive units (Derri, 2007; Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, 2011a, b).

The aforementioned social skills are also central to intercultural education (e.g., NCCA, 2005). Therefore, a well structured and successfully implemented intercultural physical education program could promote cross-cultural understanding, coexistence, and learning, supporting and respecting diversity, providing equal learning opportunities and enhancing personal and social responsibility for all students through movement (e.g., games and dance). In this frame, an intercultural physical education program would assist on one hand teachers and students in achieving their social goals in a multicultural, natural social setting, and on the other curriculum developers in adapting its content, instruction and assessment strategies to students' needs and interests.

The above approach gains further support nowadays since programs such as Olympic Education (Kioumourtzoglou et al., 2001) and Kallipateira (Ministry of Education, 2008) which were preventive governmental initiatives to enhance students' behavior toward social inclusion and non-discrimination, through movement and sport activities, are no more in effect. Similarly, the number of surveys on the application of some sort of intercultural intervention in physical education courses is very limited.

Nikopoulou (2006), for instance, found that an intervening physical education course based on Hellison's model (2003) increased students' responsible behaviors of 'participation' and 'cooperation', regardless of their ethnicity, in contrast to the typical one. Similar physical education and sport programs in other countries, while focusing on different ethnicity students with problem behavior and poor school adjustment, reported significant improvements in their interpersonal relations (Hastie & Buchanan, 2000; Kallusky, 2000; Lund et al., 2005; Martinek et al., 2001; Murgala, 2002; Wilkinson, 2003). On the contrary, according to Tjeerdsma (1999), competitive sports without organized social instruction can even affect negatively children's social development. In addition, as Mendenhall et al., (2004) suggested, after conducting a review study, the effect of intercultural training on behavior change should be further investigated.

The aforementioned information inspired the authors to conduct the present survey in order to examine the effect of an intercultural physical education program (IPEP) on students' social skills learning in comparison to the typical physical education program (TPEP), in multicultural classes.

The study addressed the following research questions:

- Does the IPEP have a different effect on Greek and foreign students' behaviors enrolled in it, in comparison to the TPEP?
- Do students that participate in this IPEP show a greater improvement and learning of certain behaviors compared to students in the TPEP?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Participants

Seventy nine (N = 79) students of the 5th and 6th grade from two elementary schools in the First District of Athens, originating from 9 different countries (Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Moldova, Pakistan, Rumania, Syria, Lebanon) took part in this study, after obtaining consent from their parents and the administrators in their schools. Students that were recorded as Greek had either both their parents born in Greece or were Greek Roma who had the Greek nationality (38 students). Students recorded as foreigners had both their parents born outside of Greece and foreign nationality (41 students). No mixed origin students were included in the study sample (students with one Greek and one foreign parent). The experimental group was composed of 39 students (18 Greeks, 21 foreigners) and the control group was composed of 40 students (20 Greeks, 20 foreigners).

Of all students, thirty two (n=32) (Mage = 11, SDage = 1.38) were randomly selected for behavior observation during their physical education classes. Sixteen of those (equally distributed by class, ethnicity and gender) formed the experimental group while the rest were placed in the control group. None of the participating students had been previously enrolled in this program. Also, during this study, none of the students participated in any organized social skills program inside or outside of the school context.

Instrument

For the evaluation of students' behaviors in a multicultural physical education lesson, a student behavior observation scale (SBOS), with the items of a Student's Behaviours' Self-Evaluation Scale (Kellis, 2010) was used. It includes 18 items/behaviors related to five social skills:

Verbal interaction (items 1-3) includes inappropriate verbal interactions (negative comments, swearing, insults, annoying remarks) during practice and games. Reward (items 4-7) includes rewarding of good effort, positive reinforcement and motivation of others, acknowledgement of skill in others, acceptance of victory and defeat and rewarding a fair game. Help (items 8-11) refers to the willingness to offer and accept knowledge and skills for class support and improvement. Acquaintance/Relations (items 12-14) include behaviors such as cooperation and building of friendly relations between students both on and off school. Goals (items 15-18) concern personal and team goal setting and persistence to achieve the desired outcomes.

The scale is completed on a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 'never' to 5 'always'. The best mean score for each skill would be five points. The variables in the scale have a high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from .66 to .85).

Procedure

Raters' training. Four, in-service physical education teachers (2 men and 2 women) with a minimum of five years of teaching experience were selected to observe students' behaviors. They also had experience in developing physical education curriculums centred on social skills development, behavior shaping, and interculturalism, as well as in applying life skills programs through movement such as 'Olympic Education' (Kioumourtzoglou et al., 2001) and 'Kallipateira' (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Prior to the start of data collection, three meetings were held for the raters. In the first meeting, one of the researchers described the process that would be followed as well as the duties of the raters, and presented the SBOS and the behavior categories. Additionally, there was an early discussion regarding the level of

understanding of this information by the raters. After that, an analysis of the dependent variables under observation was performed and raters were given detailed printed description for each behavior they would monitor. They were also handed visual aids (DVDs) with snapshots from physical education classes and possible behavioral scenarios so that they practice on recognizing such behaviors and identifying them with the descriptions they were instructed to use.

In the second meeting the raters observed a physical education lesson and made an attempt to complete the SBOS, observing the same pair of students and identifying the type of behaviors they all recognized. Since there was no variance in their opinions, the raters observed independently a pair of 5th grade students during their lesson (3rd meeting). The data collected were used to check for inter-rater reliability. Additionally, this lesson was videotaped to check for intra-rater reliability, using Cohen Kappa Coefficient.

Inter-rater reliability. Significant agreement was found between the 2nd and 3rd rater, and the 2nd and 4th rater ($\kappa=0.72, 0.75, p < 0.001$, respectively) whereas all other pairs of raters (1st – 2nd, 1st – 3rd, 1st – 4th and 3rd – 4th) had almost complete agreement ($\kappa=0.81, 0.81, 0.94, 0.81, p < 0.001$, respectively), according to estimations by Landis and Koch (1977).

Intra-rater reliability. Results showed an almost absolute agreement between the first and second rating for all four raters ($\kappa=0.97, 0.94, 0.87, 0.91, p < 0.001$, respectively).

Observing Physical Education Classes. Students were observed, according to the SBOS, for two classes prior to applying the physical education programs (initial measurement), for two classes directly after applying them (final measurement) and for two classes after two months (retention measurement). Each rater observed two students (one boy and one girl) from each class. The students' selection for each rater was random but was fixed for all three measurements.

The intercultural physical education program (IPEP). The IPEP's social goals and objectives, described below, stem from the contemporary physical education curriculum (Derri, 2007; Kioumourtzoglou, 2007; Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs, 2011a):

- a) getting a positive experience from physical education and developing self-expression and socialization. For instance, all students are expected to participate successfully in original activities that allow personal and team goal setting and achievement, self-expression and cooperation, and to improve performance.
- b) understanding and respecting diversity and cooperating with everyone. All students are expected, for example, to acknowledge the historical and cultural origin of difference dances, activities and games and their role in understanding cultural values. They are also expected to design, present and participate with all in such activities, accepting and respecting cultural differences, and securing equal participation for all.
- c) exhibiting responsible athletic and social behavior as a result of participating in physical activity. For instance, all students should learn to identify and exhibit responsible, non-aggressive behavior in physical activity (as performers, spectators, referees) but also on and off school. They should also provide and accept help and encouragement by all, and complete tasks on time, through individual or team effort. The above goals and objectives are also central to intercultural education (NCCA, 2005; UNESCO; 2004).

Overall, sixteen 40-minute lesson plans were created, based on those developed by Ikononopoulos et al. (2007) for the achievement of the above objectives by 5th and 6th grade students. In this frame, students were also requested to suggest games they knew and liked to play, either from their country of origin or any other country. Thus, the games "Throw the ball over the lake" suggested by a Romanian student and "Foot

volley" jointly suggested by a Greek and a Bulgarian student were included in the lesson plans. Students were also asked to select a sport they were unfamiliar with (at least in practice). Two sports were suggested (badminton and hockey) but the majority of students chose to become acquainted with and practice hockey. Four units with four lessons each were scheduled. In three of them students practiced sports (basketball and volleyball) while in the fourth unit they participated in educational games. The content was enriched, according to students' suggestions and preferences described above. In parallel, the program provided students many opportunities for cooperating, understanding diversity, and cross-cultural learning. For instance, forming heterogeneous teams, placing emphasis on cooperation rather than on competition, exploring and practicing games of different origin were some of the strategies applied.

The aim was to enable students understand and appreciate diversity, and achieve the objectives of the lesson. Depending on the given class content, various teaching approaches (or combinations of approaches) such as reciprocal, guided discovery, non-exclusion, and cooperative learning were used (Mosston & Ashworth, 2008).

The typical physical education program (TPEP). Student social development is referred as one of the goals of the TPE curriculum and certain social skills are included in its identical lesson plans (Diggelidis et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the main focus of this curriculum is on student motor skills (and corresponding cognitive) development. The aforementioned social objectives are expected to be achieved by participating in team activities without any targeted social instruction that takes into account students' multicultural differences. Following the typical school program, students in this group participated in sport activities (basketball, volleyball) and educational games.

Data analysis

In order to investigate the effect of the IPEP on the variables under observation (verbal interaction, reward, help, goals), multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used, with repeated measurements for the time parameter (2 groups [experimental, control] X 2 nationalities [Greek, foreign] X 3 measurements [initial, final, retention]). Dependent variables were the social skills: 1) relations, 2) verbal interaction, 3) reward, 4) help, and 5) goals. Univariate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted for the variable 'relations' to control for initial differences between the experimental and the control group before comparing their performance in the final and retention measurement. Data analysis was conducted using the SPSS software (version 17.0). The level of significance was fixed to .05.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for both groups (IPE and TPE) and nationalities (Greek and foreign) are shown in Table 1.

Because Mauchly's Sphericity Test was not validated, the Huynh-Feldt epsilon coefficient was used to correct the degrees of freedom. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures showed that the group X nationality X measure interaction was significant, $F(8, 108) = 2.05$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.14$. Following Univariate tests showed that this interaction was significant for the variable 'goals' $F(1.39, 39.18) = 5.75$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.17$. Bonferroni Multiple Comparison tests revealed that Greek students in the IPE group had a significant improvement (from the initial to final measurement), $MD = 0.62$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.86$, whereas foreign students in the same group outperformed their foreign peers in the TPE group in 'goals', $MD = 0.5$, $p = 0.04$, $\eta^2 = 0.15$.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for the social performance of both groups (experimental and control) and nationalities (Greek and foreign) in all three measurements

| Experimental group (n=16; eight Greeks, eight foreigners) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-----|------------|-----|-------------------|-----|------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|------------|-----|
| Variables | Initial measurement | | | | Final measurement | | | | Retention measurement | | | |
| | Greeks | | Foreigners | | Greeks | | Foreigners | | Greeks | | Foreigners | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Relations | 3.75 | .29 | 4.16 | .30 | 4.5 | .30 | 4.7 | .27 | 4.41 | .34 | 4.54 | .35 |
| Verbal interaction | 2.66 | .69 | 2.79 | .94 | 4.7 | .27 | 4.62 | .27 | 4.41 | .29 | 4.25 | .46 |
| Reward | 2.43 | .67 | 2.06 | .59 | 3.06 | .47 | 3.03 | .36 | 2.84 | .29 | 2.84 | .26 |
| Help | 2.75 | .44 | 2.62 | .53 | 3.31 | .41 | 3.43 | .45 | 2.9 | .42 | 3.09 | .35 |
| Goals | 3.93 | .93 | 4.43 | .67 | 4.56 | .54 | 4.62 | .44 | 4.5 | .65 | 4.56 | .49 |

| Control group (n=16; eight Greeks, eight foreigners) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|-----|------------|-----|-------------------|-----|------------|-----|-----------------------|-----|------------|-----|
| Variables | Initial measurement | | | | Final measurement | | | | Retention measurement | | | |
| | Greeks | | Foreigners | | Greeks | | Foreigners | | Greeks | | Foreigners | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD |
| Relations | 3.54 | .30 | 3.58 | .61 | 4 | .43 | 3.87 | .39 | 3.91 | .49 | 3.87 | .35 |
| Verbal interaction | 2.91 | .55 | 2.7 | .74 | 3.16 | .47 | 3.66 | .30 | 3.08 | .34 | 3.54 | .35 |
| Reward | 2.12 | .58 | 2.21 | .36 | 2 | .40 | 2.15 | .37 | 1.93 | .25 | 2.06 | .34 |
| Help | 2.65 | .26 | 2.93 | .25 | 2.5 | .29 | 2.59 | .22 | 2.56 | .29 | 2.59 | .26 |
| Goals | 4.53 | .50 | 3.87 | .69 | 4.31 | .45 | 4.12 | .35 | 4.09 | .42 | 4.25 | .35 |

The group X measure interaction, $F(8, 108) = 7.5, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.36$, was also significant. Following Univariate tests also showed that this interaction was significant for the variables ‘verbal interaction’, $F(1.3, 36.44) = 12.86, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.31$, ‘reward’, $F(1.55, 43.54) = 17.46, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.38$, and ‘help’, $F(1.42, 39.94) = 28.2, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.5$. Bonferroni Multiple Comparison tests revealed that the IPE group had a significant improvement in the final measurement for the variables ‘verbal interaction’, $MD = 1.938, p = .000$, ‘reward’, $MD = .797, p = .000$, and “help”, $MD = .688, p = .000$. Between the final and retention measurement though (2 months apart), a statistically significant reduction was observed for the variables ‘verbal interaction’, $MD = .333, p = .000$, ‘reward’, $MD = .203, p = .01$, and ‘help’, $MD = .375, p = .000$. However, between the first and third measurement (two months apart), a statistically significant improvement of the observed behavior was found for the variables ‘verbal interaction’, $MD = 1.604, p = .000$, ‘reward’, $MD = .594, p = .000$, and ‘help’, $MD = .313, p = .021$. With regard to the TPE group, it presented only a significant increase in ‘verbal interaction’, $MD = .604, p = .036$, between the initial and final measurement.

Bonferroni multiple comparison tests also revealed that although there were no initial differences between the IPE and the TPE group in the above three skills, the former displayed higher performance than the latter in the final measurement (‘verbal interaction’, $MD = 1.25, p = .000$, ‘reward’, $MD = .969, p = .000$, ‘help’, $MD = .828, p = .000$), and in the retention measurement in all three variables (‘verbal interaction’, $MD = 1.021, p = .000$, ‘reward’, $MD = .844, p = .000$, ‘help’, $MD = .422, p = .001$).

Concerning 'relations', ANCOVA analysis revealed a significant 'group' effect, $F(2,26) = 7.32, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.36$. A statistically significant difference was found between the IPE and the TPE groups both in the final, $F(1,31) = 14.89, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.35$, and in the retention measurement, $F(1,31) = 10.93, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.28$, in favor of the IPE group. Also, foreign students in the IPE group demonstrated better peer relations than their foreign peers in the TPE group both in the final, $F(1,15) = 11.86, p < .01, \eta^2 = 0.47$, and in the retention measurement, $F(1,15) = 7.23, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.35$. The above significant effects are considered small when $\eta^2 = .01$, moderate when $\eta^2 = .06$ and high when $\eta^2 = .14$ (Cohen, 1988).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Reflecting the Greek society, school is not anymore characterized by a cultural homogeneity. Therefore, its environment and curriculum should encourage all students to develop their social skills so that they can coexist effectively in several contexts. The aim of this study was to examine the effect of an IPEP, in comparison to the TPEP, on students' social skills learning, in multicultural classes.

With regard to the first question of the study which concerns the effect of the interventions on performance of different ethnicity students, the IPEP assisted Greek students in improving significantly their ability to set personal and team goals and to persist in achieving them ('goals'). However, their performance in the final measurement was not significantly better than that of their foreign peers in the same group. Moreover, the IPEP assisted the latter group, in comparison to the foreign TPE group, in displaying significantly better performance in 'goals' and also learning outcomes in 'relations' namely better friendly relations and cooperation with peers. Therefore, the viewpoint that the intercultural model is able to affect positively the social development of both indigenous and foreign students (Georgogiannis, 1997; Nikolaou, 2000) seems to be supported. Nevertheless, a longer program duration might be necessary to produce learning outcomes in 'goals' for both Greek and foreign students in the IPE group as it is considered an advanced social skill (Dowd & Tierney, 2006) which may need more time to develop. Especially for team goal setting and achievement, students need to acquire and perform skills such as positive verbal interaction, reward, help, and good relations with each other. In contrast, the TPEP which lacks social structure prevented the Greek or foreign students enrolled in it to present significant changes in their social skills.

In reference to the second question of the study, the IPEP enabled students learn and display supportive ('verbal interaction', 'rewards') and cooperative communications ('help', 'goals'), and better peer relations ('relations'), independently of their origin. Through these behaviors, students fulfill the expectations of their peers (Keane & Cogner, 1981) and increase the possibility to gain their acceptance (Goldstein & Gallagher, 1992). Considering that peer acceptance is an important element in children's friendships, these findings are encouraging. The fact that the positive results that the IPEP brought from its beginning to its end seemed to shrink two months later in the retention measurement may be due to the fact that following the intervention, the curriculum included activities that reinforced competition (formation of teams which would play in the in-school basketball championship). Students knew that, according to school tradition, the winning team would play in the final, in front of an audience (parents and other invited guests) at the end of the school year. Therefore, it is likely, that the students' desire to be part of the class team and then represent their school led to an increase in their competitive behaviors, which brought on the observed results. However, the significant performance difference between the initial and retention measurement clearly shows that students' learning gains were retained.

In short, based on the social goals and intercultural cooperative approaches of the contemporary physical education curriculum (Derri, 2007; Kioumourtzoglou, 2007; Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and

Religious Affairs, 2011a), the IPEP assisted students in learning and demonstrating appropriate peer interactions and relations during the physical education lesson. The learning outcomes of the IPEP both for all students and its foreigners support Slavin's (1999) view that by actively participating in teams, students of different ethnic backgrounds reduce racial discriminations and stereotypes, construct positive relations, cooperate more efficiently, and ultimately achieve the course goals (Menchaca & Ruiz-Escalante, 1995). The study findings are in line with those reported by Nikopoulou (2006) and Wilkinson (2003) regarding the effects of physical education programs with intercultural structure on decreasing irresponsible behaviors and increasing responsible ones. Students at risk in similar studies also displayed greater ability to set a long-term goal and persist in achieving it (Lifka, 1990), higher tendency to cooperate, greater need to show and gain respect, and higher willingness to treat others as equals (Kallusky, 1991).

In contrast, the TPEP which was suggested by the Greek Ministry of Education (Digelidis et al., 2006) assisted students in reducing undesirable and offensive behaviors in their verbal interaction. However, this positive effect was not retained. In the other variables under study a significant change, improvement or learning, was not observed either for the whole TPE group or for its different ethnicity subgroups. These findings along with the previously reported significantly lower performance of foreign students in the TPE group in 'goals' and 'relations', seem to suggest that competitive games without social instruction on one hand and cultural contact on the other are not enough for the development of social competence and the reduction of stereotypes (Bennett, 2008) either for Greek or for foreign students. Therefore, the TPE curriculum appears to remain nationally orientated and to adopt an assimilative approach in the education of foreign students.

The study findings, in conjunction with the policy on the issue of the constantly increasing number of immigrants in Greece, not only highlight the need for including intercultural education elements in physical education curriculums but also dictate an immediate and substantial change in the standard curriculum on a permanent and constant basis. Such curricular changes could eliminate students' stereotypes and prejudicial views which often give rise to feelings that negatively affect their attitudes towards 'others' in a multicultural social setting (Winkler 2007). Nevertheless, policies and behaviors are further needed in schools to promote acceptance of 'diversity' and respect of 'others' (Athanasouli-Reppa et al., 2005).

Although the IPEP seems to have great potential for students' social skills learning in a multicultural physical education context, the following limitations can be identified for the present study: a) the number of students participating was small and those evaluated were even fewer, because videotaping of classes was not allowed, and b) the curriculum had a relatively short duration. Therefore, the authors believe that further research is required 1) to evaluate a larger number of students, using videotaped lessons, and to examine at the same time possible gender differences, 2) to apply the new physical education model throughout the school year, having social skill learning as a main goal in some units and as a sub-goal in others, and 3) to examine both in-school environment and out-of-school factors (parents, other friends, educators, social entourage, local society, etc.) that may affect students' intercultural education.

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