

Teaching Arts Using the Project Method.

Students' Views Towards the Subject of Arts

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Abstract

The paper refers to the use of project method by students who were attending the first, second and third grade of High School in Greece. We designed and realized a research in order to examine the improvement of students' attitudes and views towards the subject of Arts using the project method. The subject of the project in the first grade of High School was "the traditional village of Lindos", the subject of the project in the second grade was "the medieval city of Rhodes" and the subject of the project in the third grade was "the acropolis of Filerimos". All the areas under study were in Rhodes, Greece. Questionnaires were given to the students before and after the teaching interventions which was realized during the first quarter of the school year 2014-2015. The results showed that the use of project method vindicated the goals of the research and improved significantly the students' views and attitudes towards the subject of Arts.

Keywords: teaching arts, project method, students' views and attitudes

1. Introduction

The subject of Arts finds fertile ground in interdisciplinary teaching approach. The interdisciplinary character of project method reduces the emphasis on traditional teaching process and students' attention shifts to concepts encountered in their real lives (Scott, 1990; Kampouroupoulou et al., 2011a). In contrary with the traditional educational models that are based on the cleavage of knowledge, the interdisciplinary model focuses on a holistic view of the didactical experience using multifaceted manners of teaching. Students acquire new knowledge, face critically the different views of an issue under study and live the new experience in a comprehensive manner (Starko, 1995; Kampouroupoulou et al., 2013).

The realization of a school project is an important axis of the cross-thematic teaching practice (Kampouroupoulou et al., 2011b; Johnson & Johnson, 1994). The project method includes a series of initiatives, teaching activities and methodological approaches. In the beginning of the project a group of teachers and students decides to work on a specific issue, they plan

their own program of actions and handle the plan until the end of the project. The result of this process can be an event, a presentation, a report or an exhibition. In the project method all members, teachers and students, need to comment their proposals, agree on the final form of the project and contribute to the implementation of the work. The freedom of the members of a project to suggest a topic, its joint configuration and realization are the main characteristics of a creative school project. In this context, the educational process is a significant source of knowledge, experience and learning (Kampouroupoulou et al., 2012).

2. The Teaching Intervention

The research was realized during the first quarter of the school year 2014-2015 with the participation of 260 students who were attending the first, second and third grade of High School in Rhodes, Greece. The main research question was "Acquiring positive attitudes of students towards the subject of Arts through the use of project method". The subject of the project in the first grade of High School was "the traditional village of Lindos", the subject of the project in the second grade was "the medieval city of Rhodes" and the subject of the project in the third grade was "the acropolis of Filerimos". The projects were realized in an interdisciplinary manner and apart from the subject of Arts were served aims and objectives related to the subjects of Language, History, Computing and Mathematics (Kampouroupoulou & Efstathiou, 2014).

The students during these projects:

- Visited the areas under study.
- Studied topics related to local history and cultural heritage.
- Created their own artistic works related to the subjects of the projects.
- Used new technologies to collect data and present their work.
- Worked with geometrical and mathematical tools.
- Presented their work in exhibitions held in their school, etc. (Scott, 1990).

3. Organizing the Research

The research investigated the change of students' views and attitudes towards the subject of Arts after the use of the project method (Torrance, 1962). The students answered a questionnaire before and after the realization of the school projects. The questionnaires included items (questions) in which students were asked to answer using the five-point scale: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree (Kampouroupoulou et al., 2014a).

The items referred to students' views and attitudes towards the subject of Arts and were the same in both questionnaires. We used the paired samples t-test in order to determine whether there is a significant difference between the students' attitudes and views towards the subject of Arts before and after the teaching intervention with the use of the project method. Results of t-test less than 0.05 show that there is a significant difference between the two

measurements (Oliver, 2000; Stefos et al., 2011). In order to extract the results of the research, we used the statistical software SPSS v.20 offered by the School of Humanities of the University of the Aegean (Kampouroupoulou, 2014b).

4. The Results of the Research

260 students, 138 boys (53.08%) and 122 girls (46.92%), participated in the research during the school year 2014-2015. 88 students (33.85%) were attending the first grade of the High School, 82 students (31.54%) were attending the second grade of the High School and 90 students (34.62%) were attending the third grade of the High School. The results below show the change of students' opinions. The results per item are presented in the order they appeared in both questionnaires before and after the project.

When asked "I like the subject of Arts" 1.54% of the students answered "Strongly disagree" before the project while no student answered "Strongly disagree" after the project. 14.62% of the students answered "Disagree" before the project while 0.77% of the students answered "Disagree" after the project. 34.62% of the students answered "Neither agree nor disagree" before the project while 10.77% answered "Neither agree nor disagree" after the project. 24.62% of the students answered "Agree" before the project while 51.54% answered "Agree" after the project. 24.62% of the students answered "Strongly agree" before the project while 36.92% answered "Strongly agree" after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked "I can understand the subject of Arts" 1.54% of the students answered "Strongly disagree" before the project while no student answered "Strongly disagree" after the project. 13.08% of the students answered "Disagree" before the project while 2.31% answered "Disagree" after the project. 35.38% of the students answered "Neither agree nor disagree" before the project while 12.31% answered "Neither agree nor disagree" after the project. 30.00% of the students answered "Agree" before the project while 36.15% answered "Agree" after the project. 20.00% of the students answered "Strongly agree" before the project while 49.23% answered "Strongly agree" after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked "The subject of Arts is significant" 8.46% of the students answered "Strongly disagree" before the project while 2.31% of the students answered "Strongly disagree" after the project. 34.62% of the students answered "Disagree" before the project while 5.38% answered "Disagree" after the project. 38.46% of the students answered "Neither agree nor disagree" before the project while 26.15% answered "Neither agree nor disagree" after the project. 11.54% of the students answered "Agree" before the project while 40.77% answered "Agree" after the project. 6.92% of the students answered "Strongly agree" before the project while 25.38% of the students answered "Strongly agree" after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I like the combination of the Arts with the cultural heritage” 5.38% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while no student answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 23.08% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 4.62% answered “Disagree” after the project. 37.69% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 26.15% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 27.69% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 35.38% answered “Agree” after the project. 6.15% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 33.85% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I can learn Arts” 0.77% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 2.31% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 10.00% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 4.62% answered “Disagree” after the project. 22.31% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 20.77% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 35.38% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 25.38% answered “Agree” after the project. 31.54% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 46.92% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “My skills in Arts will help me get a job” 35.38% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 9.23% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 36.15% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 25.38% answered “Disagree” after the project. 14.62% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 30.77% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 10.00% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 23.08% answered “Agree” after the project. 3.85% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 11.54% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I am interested in talking about Art” 21.54% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 3.85% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 35.38% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 31.54% answered “Disagree” after the project. 26.15% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 29.23% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 8.46% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 20.77% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 8.46% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 14.62% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I work hard in the subject of Arts” 14.62% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 4.62% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 23.08% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 17.69% answered “Disagree” after the project. 33.08% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 23.85% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 18.46% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 31.54% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 10.77% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 22.31% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I feel comfortable when I am doing Arts homework” 5.38% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 0.77% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 20.00% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 8.46% answered “Disagree” after the project. 27.69% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 10.00% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 29.23% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 30.77% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 17.69% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 50.00% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I can do Arts homework” no student answered “Strongly disagree” before and after the project. 12.31% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 0.77% of the students answered “Disagree” after the project. 29.23% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 6.92% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 33.08% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 40.77% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 25.38% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 51.54% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “Arts is useful for every person” 3.85% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before and after the project. 40.77% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 10.77% answered “Disagree” after the project. 36.92% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 27.69% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 10.77% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 36.92% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 7.69% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 20.77% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I make many mistakes in the subject of Arts” 25.38% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 52.31% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 43.08% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 34.62% answered “Disagree” after the project. 18.46% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 10.77% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 8.46% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 2.31% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 4.62% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while no student answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “The subject of Arts is useful because it helps me understand other subjects” 46.15% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 7.69% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 28.46% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 23.85% answered “Disagree” after the project. 13.85% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 26.15% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 6.92% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 24.62% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 4.62% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 17.69% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “It is difficult for me to connect the subjects of Arts with other subjects” 6.92% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 30.00% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 26.92% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 42.31% answered “Disagree” after the project. 36.92% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 23.85% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 22.31% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 2.31% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 6.92% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 1.54% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I am interested in the subject of Arts” 6.92% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 3.08% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 24.62% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 9.23% answered “Disagree” after the project. 27.69% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 13.08% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 15.38% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 20.00% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 25.38% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 54.62% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method

project.

When asked “I will try to use what I learn in the subject of Arts in my life outside of school” 15.38% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 6.92% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 35.38% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 12.31% answered “Disagree” after the project. 20.77% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 27.69% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 16.15 of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 24.62% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 12.31% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 28.46% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I like to deal with issues related to Art” 15.38% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 5.38% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 30.00% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 11.54% answered “Disagree” after the project. 24.62% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 17.69% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 15.38% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 26.92% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 14.62 of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 38.46% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I want to learn to create artistic works” 22.31% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 3.85% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 23.85% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 16.92% answered “Disagree” after the project. 14.62% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 17.69% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 18.46% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 24.62% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 20.77% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 36.92% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “Arts will be useful in my profession” 46.15% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 9.23% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 30.77% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 19.23% answered “Disagree” after the project. 11.54% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 34.62% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 6.15% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 26.15% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 5.38% of the students answered

“Strongly agree” before the project while 10.77% of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project.

When asked “I want to participate in artistic activities” 21.54% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” before the project while 6.15% of the students answered “Strongly disagree” after the project. 26.92% of the students answered “Disagree” before the project while 14.62% answered “Disagree” after the project. 19.23% of the students answered “Neither agree nor disagree” before the project while 20.00% answered “Neither agree nor disagree” after the project. 13.85% of the students answered “Agree” before the project while 31.54% of the students answered “Agree” after the project. 18.46% of the students answered “Strongly agree” before the project while 27.69 of the students answered “Strongly agree” after the project. The result of t-test is 0.000 which shows that there is a significant difference between the beginning and the end of the teaching intervention with the use of the method project (Kampouropoulou et al., 2014c).

5. Discussion

During the school year 2014-2015 we designed and realized a research in order to examine the improvement of students’ attitudes and views towards the subject of Arts using the project method. The teaching interventions were realized in Rhodes, Greece. The subject of the project in the first grade of High School was “the traditional village of Lindos”, the subject of the project in the second grade was “the medieval city of Rhodes” and the subject of the project in the third grade was "the acropolis of Filerimos" (Kampouropoulou et al., 2014b).

The students worked on didactical activities and followed processes that go beyond the typical classroom practice. The children dealt with new knowledge in an interdisciplinary environment, they came out of their school, moved to the areas under study, visited sites of cultural heritage, researched, designed, wrote reports, worked with new technologies, etc. (Gallagher, 1964; Guilford, 1952).

A questionnaire was given to the students before and after the teaching interventions and the results fully justified the research question posed initially: "Acquiring positive attitudes of students towards the subject of Arts through the use of project method" (Osborn, 1953; Perkins, 1993). The questions were closed-ended and they were the same in both questionnaires in the beginning and the end of the project. The questionnaires were designed by the author and they were tested in a group of 25 students in the beginning of the research.

The projects that were realized in the frame of this research satisfied the aims of the study. The results showed that the students’ views and attitudes towards the Arts improved significantly after the use of the project method (Murno, 1957; Nielsen, 1999). The acceptance of the combination of Arts with activities related to cultural heritage was significant as well as the recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of Arts and its connection with other subjects during the didactical intervention (Schroeder, 1993).

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