The Distance between a Hobby and a Profession -
The Development of Instructors' Role Perception
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Abstract
The research engages in the development of instructor's role perception. The research accompanies 40 participants in an Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping Instructor's program and investigates the process they undergo during one academic year. The researcher is a coordinator in the instruction program, and expert instructor in the field of Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping.

Research Goals: Developing a model of the proper role perception development; investigating situations in which role perception develops; Assessing participants' level of physical fitness and its development.

Methodology: Mixed-methods Research. The students examined in the beginning of the program, in its midst and in the end. Research tools: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and two physical fitness tests

Main findings: There are five main characteristics which contribute to the development of the instructors' role perception during the program. The level of physical fitness hardly changes after the program. Three main themes were identified.

Conclusions: Include an optimal Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructors' program model that can contribute to the development of teachers and instructors in other fields.

Key words: Aerobic Dance, Body Shaping, Role Perception, Instructors.

Instruction Model

Introduction
Many people enjoy physical exercise in general and Aerobic Dance and body shaping in particular. For some people, physical activity is a passion. There are those who choose to turn this love into a profession and take certification courses. The three main reasons for enrolling in the program are: love of sport, rhythm and dance, an easy way to make some extra income and the wish to add enjoyable fun work to one's routine. Candidates join the program expecting it to be a nice, light fun course and realize it is about a serious profession which requires many skills in addition to instruction/guidance capabilities.
The research engages in the process of students in the "Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping" instructors’ course. The research focuses on the change and development of the student’s role perception as they gradually become instructors. The research also examines the role perceptions of instructors who have already graduated from the course and coordinators training the students.

The theoretical part of the research includes four main theories in addition to other terms related to the topic of this research. The theories are from the field of sociology, psychology, education and Physical education.

This research will engage in the development of role perception hence calls for a definition of the term "role perception". "Role Perception" seems to include one’s beliefs, perceptions and expectations of oneself regarding the "role", and the way in which it influences the individual and others in the environment (Bitman, Marom, Atar and Lahav, 1993; Imanuel, 2005).

Dueck (2008) argued that role perception is the person’s vision of the role; hence each person has to have a role perception. Role perception derives from understanding the role and thinking about it, and it can help a person set priorities and cope with routine dilemmas.

Avneyon (2010) defines role perception as a variety of views, attitudes, insights or expectations about the role which has to do with the person’s status and a specific position in the organization.

The researcher believes role perception is a combination of all of the above, in a nutshell: understanding, perception and vision expressed subjectively towards the role and its application, while considering what is expected by society.

Main Theories

**Role Theory** engaging in the various roles in society, and the way in which roles are created and developed (Moreno, 1946; Blatner, 1997).

**Social Learning approach – imitation** Aerobic dance and Body Shaping rely on imitation as part of the learning process (Bandura, 1977; Cohen & Friedman, 2002).

**Social Cognitive Theory – self-regulation** in learning, according to which a person actively controls learning and reinforces self for behavior (Bandura, 1977; Lichtinger, 2011).

**Constructivism** in learning a process whereby the learner’s knowledge is constructed gradually in the course of active learning (Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1962; Brooks & Brooks, 1999).
Two significant concepts – image and body language – develop during the program and contribute to the development of the students' role perception in the process of becoming an instructor. **Body Image** is a set of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and sensations, which an individual holds in relation to his or her body (Treger 2009). **Body language** non-verbal communication; a set of movements and gestures constituting a behavioral ensemble expressing the individual's internal experiences and occurrences, affecting the atmosphere and the surroundings (Halperin, 2011).

As an academic issue, role perception development of Aerobics & Body Shaping Instruction training has not been sufficiently studied. Most Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping Research engage in the participants and the benefits generated by physical activity. Newly published research examined the influence of Aerobic Dance and body shaping on various populations, and emphasizes Aerobic Dance's contribution to physical, mental and cognitive development. Research conducted in Japan proved improvements in the cognitive performance of adults (ages 65 – 75) who participate in an Aerobic dance exercise program (Hozumi & Kimura, 2012). Research by Bloomer et. al. (2011) found that six weeks of aerobic dance exercise improves blood oxidative stress status and increases interleukin-2 in previously sedentary women (Bloomer et al, 2011). Another research which examined an Aerobic program combined with Body shaping by using weights followed men and women for three months. The results indicated an improvement in both strength and endurance tests, before and after engaging in the activity. Additionally, the psychological questionnaires indicated participants’ well-being improved (Kleinert et al., 2009).

In contrast, earlier research engaged in damage and injuries cause by Aerobic dance. Researchers discussed the voice strain experienced by aerobics instructors. They examined 54 aerobics instructors, who were found to experience hoarseness and even loss of voice as a consequence of a strenuous use of their voice (Long, Olson, Williford, & Wolfe, 1998). An earlier research examined prevalence and types of injuries among those engaging in Aerobic Dance found that people aged 40 and younger reported a larger number of shin bone injuries, while participants, aged 41 and older, reported a greater number of lower back injuries (Cable, Chang, & Rothernberger, 1988).

It appears that the literature presents no reference to the Aerobic Dance's instructor's role perception, and hence the significance of this research.
Research Aims

1. To develop a model of a proper Aerobic dance and Body Shaping instructors' role perception;
2. To explore the ways in which the instructor's role perception develops;
3. To assess the fitness level and its development during the program.

Research Questions

1. What are the main characteristics acquired in the program which contribute to the Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructor's role perception?
2. How does the Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructor's role perception develop?
3. To what extent does the level of fitness develop during the program?

Methodology

This mixed methods research was conducted in the framework of an Wingate's Institute's Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructor's program, which takes place in Jerusalem, Rishon LeZion and Ashdod, as of October 2010. The research generated from the need to understand the characteristics of the optimal Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructor. The researcher is a coordinator in the instructor's program, and expert in the field of Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping, who has deemed it right to investigate the process which the students undergo and understand it.

The research population included 40 students participating in an annual Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping Instructors' Program, examined in the beginning of the program, in its midst and in the end. Additionally, 10 instructors, program graduates, working for over 6 months and 4 coordinators training instructors on behalf of the Wingate Institute participated in the research.

The research includes an intervention program which is an addition contributed by the researcher and approved by the Sports Administration. The program's curriculum is good, but highly technical. The intervention program seeks to contribute to the program participants and help them pass the program and acquire the role perception required of a professional instructor in a smooth manner. A personal approach, being a role model, creating group interaction, conducting workshops, sharing personal stories
and real life examples creates a supportive, pleasant atmosphere so as to advance the students to the transition to their new role.

**Research Tools**
Quantitative tools: questionnaires and two physical fitness tests; Qualitative tools: semi-structured interviews.
The questionnaires and the interviews were especially devised for this research with the help of a statistics expert while using preliminary interviews with program candidates and a conversation with the program coordinator. The two physical fitness tests rely on familiar tests reported in the literature.

**Research Stages in Chronological Order**
- Stage 1 – Qualitative – interviews with 8 program candidates before the program;
- Stage 2 – Quantitative – questionnaires to 40 students and two physical fitness tests to 14 students in the beginning of the program;
- Stage 3 - Quantitative – questionnaires to 40 students in the mid-program stage;
- Stage 4 – Quantitative and Qualitative – questionnaires to 40 students, two physical fitness tests to 14 students and interviews with 8 students at the end of the program.
- Stage 5 – Qualitative – interviews with 10 instructors and 4 program coordinators after the program.

**Data Analysis**
The quantitative and qualitative data were collected separately by the researcher. Quantitative data were collected via questionnaires, and two physical fitness tests. Their results were written on pages collected by the researcher. Qualitative data were collected via interviews which were recorded by the researcher.
Each type of data was analyzed separately.

The quantitative analysis includes statistical measures such as ANOVA and t-test, and was conducted with the help of a statistics expert. Qualitative data analysis included transcriptions of the interviews and content analysis. The analysis stages which served for eliciting the themes followed the following analysis stages: (1) Holistic reading of the data; (2) Organizing and minimizing the data; (3) "Breaking" the data into smaller units of analysis; (5) Re-constructing the data and conceptualizing; (6)
Holistic re-reading of the data; (7) Verifying the data (8) Writing (Kacen & Krummer-Nevo, 2010). The researcher also integrated the analyses to reach an ultimate model and conclusions.

**Main Findings**

The research yielded three major findings corresponding to the research questions:

1. In the quantitative part, five main characteristics were found to contribute to instructors' role perception: high instruction level, pedagogical capabilities, good musical hearing, acquaintance with anatomy and the physiology of the body and technical acquaintance with body shaping equipment. The level of physical fitness hardly changes after the program. It appears that these characteristics are those which develop the most in the course of the instruction program.

The following are two figures depicting the five characteristics and the major variables testifying to the development of the students' role perception during the program.

**Figure 1: Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping Instructors' main characteristics**
Figure 2: Change in attitude following the program regarding the significance of the characteristics to an Aerobic Dance instructor

2. In the qualitative part of the research, three main themes were identified from the three sources of information: students, instructors and coordinators.
   - Development in the instructor's characteristics and skills – combination of charisma and energy with high technical skills, the ability to educate for physical activity in a variety of perspectives, knowledgeable, sense of rhythm and listening to music.
   - Development regarding the profession – seriousness, professionalism and commitment to hard work, ongoing learning and professional development.
   - Development regarding the exercising audience – attention and communication with people, influencing their lives, personal attitude and being a role model.

3. The findings of physical fitness tests show that the level of physical fitness has hardly changed, meaning, the improvement in physical fitness level is not significant.

Conclusions

If we begin with the third research question which examined the level physical fitness improvement, we can see that this research question was not confirmed as the program is an instruction program emphasizing the development of instruction competence and specific skills rather than improving physical fitness. The program is conducted once a week, and even if it includes physical activity, it is not enough for improving physical fitness.
The first research question seeking to find the main characteristics acquired in the program and contributing to the role perception of Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructors found five main characteristics, as can be seen in the findings and the figures. The second research question seeking to find how the instructors' role perception develops yielded three main themes.

The first and second research questions yielded an array of characteristics and variables, which together influence and create the ultimate role perception of Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructor.

The literature presents an educational model by Altman and Katz (2001). The model includes five factors comprising the teacher's role perception: personality traits, teacher's past experience, formal role definition, school's organizational culture and the environment's expectations. According to that model, the role perception depends on the five factors, and hence, it changes if one factor or more change.

Deep thinking and organization of the data while relating to the research data, theories and concepts underpinning this research yielded a model which consists of four major links, the components of the optimal instruction model, contributing to the desired Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructors' role perception: characteristics and general instruction skills, characteristics and specific instruction skills, attitude to the profession and attitude to the exercising audience. Each of the four parts is detailed. Contrary to Altman and Katz's model, the four aspects here interconnect. In the newly formed instruction model all factors pertain to what the instructor ought to do in order to be the best, whether they are skills or characteristics, or in the attitude to the profession or to the exercising audience. In Altman and Katz's model (2001) reference is also external and includes the school and the environment's expectations.
Figure 3: The Optimal Model of the Desired Role Perception of Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping Instructors

This model constitutes the components of the "basket" which an ideal Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructor has to carry. The four links are significant and if one of them does not exist, the instructor will not be "optimal" as she ought to be. "Damage" to one of the links will result in a less worthy instructor. Can each Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping instructor be the best in all four components? Reality shows each instructor has her strengths and weaknesses, but the desired situation calls for each instructor to make an effort in all four domains and aspire for the optimal performance.

This research is innovative and unique as this is a pioneer model in the domain of role perception in the instruction of Aerobic Dance and Body Shaping. If we attempt to contribute to the various instructors' programs, we might be able to change the component of specific instruction skills components pertaining to another specific program we can modify the model and adjust it to other fields, leaving the rest of the model as it is. Thus it can be used in other instruction fields. The research may enable instructors and coordinators in other programs understand the major instruction characteristics and components to reach a state of optimal instruction. Instructors may learn and self-develop in the model's domains and coordinators will be able to better lead their students through training and into their new role.
References
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