"IT'S SO COOL TO DANCE HIP HOP!" CASE STUDY ON HIP HOP DANCE AS PART OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN HIGH SCHOOL.

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The culture scene has rapidly become more visualised. Pictures have an important role in teenagers’ lives: tv, videogames, posters, videos, adds and photos fill the surroundings of today’s youth. Young people are using this visualisation to adapt styles and it also has its place in socialisation and in learning. School as an institution of discipline and authority is losing the battle to youth culture which has an increasingly powerful position in young peoples’ lives. (Laine 2000, 99-102.) Teachers’ work has also changed due to this revolution in society. Teaching today is more demanding, and means more differentiation and more attention to students’ diverse needs. (Kiviniemi 2000, 180.) Hip hop culture, which rose out of the gang-dominated street culture in the 1970s, offered a sense of community but also individuality, pride and dissimilarity in relation to other people (Fricke&Ahearn 2002, 3-15). In this study hip hop dance offered a scene which was able to meet the needs of some young high school students. The aim of the study was to support students’ growth in independence, participation and creativity through a hip hop club set up in school.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the learning of hip hop dance as part of physical education in high school. The study tells a story of the hip hop club action of 22 students, aged 16-20 years, in 2004-2005. Student diaries, interviews, the teacher’s diary and videos form the research material. The crucial questions were how the students experienced dancing and the learning of hip hop culture.

Hip hop – a part of youth culture – was brought to the PE class, and both as a culture and as a dance form this was new for every student. Based on the analysis of the research material students reported feelings of competence and experiences of success from learning the elements of hip hop: dance skills, relaxed style and cool appearance. Hip hop, thus, gave the students a scene that they needed, and they were able to express themselves through something that they could identify with and made them feel confident. In this way hip hop also made them feel proud of themselves as individuals and as a group. “It’s the best feeling when you learn something new and cool!”

