

Critical Reflection on Dance Education

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Abstract: Dance education is a universal power that can change the lives of many young people. In an increasingly borderless world, dance is a force that can shape identity and culture, and enables the exploration of heritage. To better comprehend the full extent of this power, this paper aims to review and critically analyse dance practice and dance education in the past year. In addition, I will reflect on the challenges associated with dance education. Greater attention should be paid to the methods used to teach dance, as well as the teachers' role in dance education.

Keywords: Dance Education; Critical Reflection; Dance Teacher

1. Definition

Dance comprises numerous rhythmic body movements, usually performed to music and in a given space. The purpose of dance is to express ideas and convey emotions, release energy, or to feel content with the exercise itself (Nielsen et al., 2015). However, dance is often underappreciated; this is likely due to the origins of industrial mass education, which tends to be more economically focused. Therefore, many utilitarians regard dance as meaningless (Nielsen et al., 2015). On the contrary, dance education not only has a positive impact on self-actualisation, but also promotes widespread social and economic development (Nielsen et al., 2015). Dancing is accessible to everyone, both as spectators and active participants. It can also be viewed as a form of practical and functional change that encourages people to think about their relationship with the world, with themselves, and with the group. Concurrently, dance provides the freedom to express oneself, and many people view it as spiritual liberation. In this sense, infinite possibilities are created for dancers.

2. Challenges faced by dance courses

The curriculum of dance education has been a commonly discussed topic all over the world. Since its emergence, it has faced several challenges in both local and global contexts (Nielsen et al., 2015). Dance is mentioned that dance has gradually started to permeate daily lives. Both professional and non-professional levels of dance provide much admired entertainment for a wide range of audiences. However, it remains unclear how to maximise existing educational resources to establish a superior quality of dance education; this is a problem that dance educators should prioritise imminently.

3. Purpose

As schools continue to focus heavily on subjects such as mathematics, science, and literacy, the position of dance and art education in the curriculum is under constant threat of elimination (Nielsen et al., 2015). Moreover, dance creativity and the use of empowering teaching methods are being used to drive curriculum development worldwide, yet ethnic and cultural mobility continue to present new challenges and possibilities for dance education across multiple contexts (Nielsen et al., 2015). As an advocate of internal promotion, the teacher should prepare to teach dance in the classroom. However, dance teachers often fail to acknowledge that the essence of students is critical to effective lesson preparation (Andrzejewski, 2009). Based on this, it is important to determine how teachers can create classes that students are genuinely interested in. Are the teacher practice and teaching objectives consistent? Regarding traditional dance teaching, the main purpose is to ask students to accept the skills and knowledge that has been imparted to them by their teachers. However, this approach is ineffective as the teachers fail to develop critical thinking and creativity within the cohort of students. Thus, it is worthwhile considering how to convert the existing teaching methods for dance into more suitable strategies to develop dance education. As a result of this, it is expected that superior dancing talents will be cultivated.

4. Development of dance teaching

Dance teaching is an evolving body of knowledge with real-world values and connections that should be translated into skills and competencies suitable for the general workplace. Subject pedagogy uses intrinsically relevant information to logically support and enhance learning in a coherent manner. In regard to dance, teaching is subject based and can be implemented in different environments; furthermore, it can be combined with other disciplines to support dance as an educational subject (Kassing, 2010). Over the last century, most dance teachers relied on the traditional methods of dictation and memorisation that had originally been used to teach them. As a result, dance teachers often lack strategies for writing methods. Instead, dance educators have borrowed strategies from other disciplines, such as physical education, psychology, and aesthetics. Essentially, this integration of multi-disciplinary teaching resources has become the foundation for the development of dance teaching methods (Kassing, 2010). However, there remains a lack of scientific training or a single teaching method, and an inadequacy in dance teachers and teaching standards. In my experience, the traditional dance teaching and training occurred in a fixed environment. Teachers used oral teaching and physical demonstrations with their bodies; it was clear that their teaching style had been heavily influenced by how and what they had initially learned, and their strategy was to impart this same method and knowledge onto the next generation of dance students (Rafferty & Stanton, 2017). However, as social science and technology have advanced in recent years, multimedia technology has modified traditional dance teaching processes. Firstly, the emergence of online teaching has updated, and often overtaken, the traditional in-person teaching method; Technological advances have significantly changed interaction, communication, teaching, and learning within the modern human population. Within this, it has also provided students with access to alternative ways of thinking, learning, expressing ideas, and solving an array of problems (Rafferty & Stanton, 2017).

5. The identity of dance teachers

The teaching and learning methods of dance education are usually subtly embedded into the whole experience of a dance class, yet the absence of an overt explanation for the purpose, origin, or philosophy behind the methods is evident (Dragon, 2015). This is somewhat detrimental as this methodology is a key aspect to understanding the innovation and concept of teaching in the context of dance. In advanced dance education, teaching culture through body education has been deeply integrated into the identity of dance teachers (Dragon, 2015).

6. Teacher-centred

Many dance education students enter higher education dance classes with the belief that there is only one way to teach and learn. This single method usually refers to the privileged hierarchy of the traditional authoritarianism paradigm, or the model of demonstration and action (Dragon, 2015). Previously, my learning experiences often involved students being expected to follow or obey the dance teacher but not to query any of the methods or practices in the class. This expected silence implies to the students that the teacher has the most superior knowledge and comprehension of the best practices (Dragon, 2015). Concurrently, this traditional teacher-centred teaching method hinders the creative development of the students and inhibits their autonomous learning ability. However, an increasing number of studies have found that this hierarchical relationship between teachers and learners in this traditional teaching method hinders the students' understanding and access to feedback (Weidmann, 2018). Consequently, many dance students do not recognise the options available for more suitable teaching and learning methods.

7. Student-centred

The identity of a dance teacher is a flexible and constantly developing contact centre (Dragon, 2015). In terms of the student-centred teaching model, the influence of John Dewey's progressive education can be identified. Holistic learning emphasises the interconnectedness of an individual's body, mind, spirit, and emotions. In this sense, it allows teachers to guide students to achieve their maximum potential throughout the overall learning process. Moreover, personal knowledge centres on the learning experience of the students. Students gain deeper knowledge through self-practice experience, which is seen as a process of personal growth. Overall, the student-centred teaching

method cultivates the autonomy and authority of students, which then enables them to make effective decisions; subsequently, students become more self-oriented and self-motivated learners (Dragon, 2015).

7. Reflection on being a qualified dance teacher

The identity of teachers is defined by the teaching behaviours of a group of teachers and their students, which can also be viewed the performance community of teachers. A dance teacher must initially establish the identity of the dance artist and the dance teacher; this requires emphasis on the dual commitment to dance and teaching practice (Andrzejewski, 2009). Dance teachers should become familiar with learning and child development theories, teaching practices, and classroom management strategies, so that they can be applied to a range of teaching environments. Alongside dance content, teachers should also understand dance techniques, dance graphic principles and processes, body movement practices, and dance history, culture and philosophy. In particular, pre-service dance teachers should focus on developing their professional orientation and intellectual competence so that they can promote students' progress as dancers (Andrzejewski, 2009). In addition, teachers should be able to regularly reflect on their teaching style and performance.

Becoming a qualified dance teacher is an important step in improving the quality of dance education in the future. Regardless of students' motivation, teachers should use class time to help develop the critical thinking skills of the group and to develop a thinking process that encourages students to be innovative, self-motivated, and independent. John Dewey's reflective teaching method can be applied to dance teaching, whilst it would also be beneficial for teachers to guide students to reflect on their own training as a form of student development.

Overall, this paper has discussed dance education from four aspects: the definition, challenges, development, and identity of teachers, whilst also acknowledging the importance of student-centred teaching. In addition, a deeper exploration of teaching and learning models has been completed and ways of overcoming associated challenges in teaching have been considered.

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