

A Study on Reviewing Dance Pedagogy in Creative Dance for Non-professional Students

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I. Introduction

Dance pedagogy, which is comprised of and essentially includes dancers of varying levels of skill including non-professional dancers, should begin to include the newest literature and articles that address these wide range of different skill levels. There are some aspects of dance experience that are written about in literature that can apply greatly to all students, and this applies to students that may join a non-professional dance class as well. It is significant to gather from recent research that there are many methods that dance and ballet pedagogy can utilize to facilitate the dance learning process and to help dancers be more comfortable and open to learning in the pedagogy environment. Facilitating the learning experience can be even more beneficial to the non-professional ballet class environment, where the technical nature of ballet as a form of dance is combined with the fact that non-professionals come to class with different levels of skill, motivation, and resources. The teacher in this pedagogy must deal with a much wider range of issues and individuals in such a situation. This means that the stricter schools of ballet, with their more traditional values and traditional ways of giving discipline to students, need to evolve to match the needs of non-professional dance students who carry a different outlook and goals than professional dancers. There is a danger that instructors and the pedagogy mistake the goals and outlook of their non-professional dancers for being compatible with standards

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and pedagogy that is more designed for professional dancers.

At the same time, non-professional pedagogy shares many of the same issues faced by students and teachers in the professional dance environment. In some cases, mostly in areas of personal development, these issues become more sensitive for students in the non-professional dance pedagogy environment. Instructors should be aware of how their pedagogies can help and harm the often younger students that they instruct. There is also the danger that the traditional and strict history of dance pedagogy discourage new students from continuing with their dance education or becoming more serious about it. In this way, instructors must be at the same time less demanding, more open and helpful, and also more aware of the very different needs that individual students can bring to the non-professional ballet dance classroom.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to look at the issues that apply to the non-professional ballet pedagogy and discover effective ways to resolve these issues. Data for this study was collected from books, academic journals and articles. While most of this literature comes from the view point of the professional teacher and the creating of professional pedagogy, these specific articles and issues were picked because they play a big part in the non-professional pedagogy that targets all levels of dance skills and motivation. This means that non-professional pedagogy does in fact use parts of the professional dance pedagogy literature that focuses on using dance to help individual dancers develop the best dance techniques. The methods of teaching creative dance to such a wide range of people with very diverse backgrounds and values also means that non-professional pedagogy needs to be a little more sensitive to students, where perhaps professional pedagogy is less sensitive to students and more sensitive to tradition and schools of dance technique.¹⁾ At the same time, the non-professional pedagogy needs to maintain a level of standards and discipline so that the curriculum is effective while also balancing the special needs of such a diverse learning community.

While researching for this project and looking at the issues that came up in the literature with regard to creative dance pedagogy for non-professional students, the struggle between traditional values and letting students be creative and innovate in their own self expression through dance surfaced as a larger theme in the literature. When it comes to non-professional dance pedagogy, the instructor has to create a productive balance in their teaching between including students from a diverse background while still motivating them through the traditional forms of technique and discipline that professional and traditional creative dance pedagogy sets a standard for.

1) M. Atencio & J. Wright(2009), 'Ballet it's too whitey': discursive hierarchies of highschool dance spaces and the constitution of embodied feminine subjectivities, *Gender & Education* 21(1), pp.31-46.

II. Tradition and Openness in the Non-professional Setting

Dance pedagogy and especially creative dance pedagogy are sometimes seen to be in conflict between tradition and newer ways of thinking about dance pedagogy. Hagood says this exactly and notes that there is always a constant fight in dance pedagogy between the old and the new ways of directing students toward the usual goals of dance pedagogy.²⁾ There is some experiment in dance that comes into dance pedagogy as well as instructors look to teach the new techniques and schools of dance that come about every now and then. One challenge for instructors in creative dance is to give students a conceptual knowing of the dance material, because it is needed even at the non-professional level for students to properly pick up the aspects of dance technique.³⁾ The conflict between dance as a discipline and some more “relativistic” backgrounds that students come from, especially non-professional students, means that the instructor has to very carefully convince these students that concepts and tradition are just as important as their own self expression and “self absorbed relativism” that some students approach dance curriculum with.⁴⁾

The role of creativity on the part of the student in dance pedagogy is another problem that comes up in the conflict between tradition and openness. As Hagood explained, students need to be well disciplined in traditional values and techniques and then use this as a way to go forward with their own “self experimentation.”⁵⁾ The vocabulary and words used by dance teachers to students of a young age is very important for their ability to learn these traditional concepts and techniques.⁶⁾ But the vocabulary of the instructor is at the same time very important for giving students an expectation for their own creative expression as well.⁷⁾ The word usage of creative dance teachers of young children can be combined with the instructor helping to make their young students aware of the world around them and the creative possibilities that later help with self expression in dance.⁸⁾ This way of teaching dance also helps instructors to make sure that even non-professional students are doing creative dance not for some other benefit, but in order that they can explore the creative chances that dance itself is able to give them.⁹⁾ This means that the non-professional teacher needs to make a good mix of

2) T. K. Hagood(2006), Values and voice in dance education: The merit of fostering tradition, experiment, diversity, and change in our pedagogy, *Arts Education Policy Review* 108(2), pp.33-37.

3) Ibid., p.33.

4) Ibid., p.33.

5) Ibid., p.33.

6) P. Schwartz(1993), Creativity and dance: Implications for pedagogy and policy, *Arts Education Policy Review* 95(1), p.8.

7) Ibid., p.8.

8) I. Samuelsson, M. Carlsson, B. Olsson, N. Pramling & C. Wallerstedt(2009), The art of teaching children the arts: music, dance and poetry with children aged 2-8 years old, *International Journal Of Early Years Education* 17(2), p.119.

9) Ibid., p.132.

traditional pedagogy values and techniques so that students know the specific ways that dance lets them to express themselves, and also an openness that allows their students to keep going with their creative feelings within the boundaries of this dance specific discipline so that they are able to have a good creative experience in dance.

More creative dance can also happen when instructors can, while giving dancers technique and discipline from traditional pedagogy and values, make a link between dance and dance instruction and the ways that dance itself is used to tell the stories of people.¹⁰⁾ In this way the creative dance instructor can help their non-professional students get motivated to learn difficult techniques and routines by making a connect with other fields that they are very familiar with, such as writing and storytelling. Perry notes that the ability to improvise while telling a story is common both to dance and also to creative writing, which young students are familiar with.¹¹⁾ Again this idea shows how tradition and an openness to new ideas and making new connections is very useful to the creative dance teacher of non-professional students, in particular. The different levels of skill and motivation of non-professional students can be helped by showing all students together the special value of dance from art forms these diverse group of young students are sure to already know about.

III. Technical Aspects of Dance for the Non-professional Students

The creative dance teacher of non-professional students must find a good mix between the ideas of traditional dance and discipline and openness and accessibility so that they can help students from different backgrounds to stay motivated to learn. Professional ballet shows how working memory can play a big part in the way that professional dancers are able to perform their routines at a very high level.¹²⁾ Dance teachers of non-professional students in the creative setting will not hold their dancers to the expert level of professional dancers, but teachers with non-professional students can use the idea of working memory and spatial ability to help their students take on the difficult task of learning the technical parts of dance. Having non-professional students do drills where they go to a certain part of the floor to perform a certain dance move is one way that non-professional students can think about dance in a same way that professional dancers do.¹³⁾ The way that the working memory of dancers along with the space awareness works together in the performing of dance technique is easy to

10) G. Perry(2007), This story wants to be danced: Creative writing, dance, convergence and confluence, *New Writing, The International Journal For The Practice & Theory Of Creative Writing* 4(2), 135-140.

11) *Ibid.*, pp.135-140.

12) A. Cortese(2010), Working memory for ballet moves and spatial locations in professional ballet dancers, *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 24(2), p.266.

13) *Ibid.*, p.271.

re-create for the non-professional dancer.

Laban movement analysis is another way that technical dance research can be used even in the class for the non-professional student of creative dance. The instructor in the non-professional class environment needs to not confuse their students with the complicated theories and ideas behind Laban movement analysis. But Laban is good for the non-professional students because it takes a basic movement science approach to the more difficult techniques, especially of ballet but also to other forms of creative dance, and breaks them down into easier to understand parts.¹⁴⁾ Laban is well suited for helping non-professional students from diverse backgrounds more easily understand the movements they want to perform in the class from a viewpoint of general physical understanding that does not need special knowledge.

IV. Communication and Identity of the Non-professional Students

Communication and sympathy for the individual student is much more important in the setting of non-professional student of creative dance. BenZion agrees with this view, and the progressive dance pedagogy given here says that parts of classical ballet pedagogy—especially the traditional way that instructors tend to get their message across to students—is harmful both personally to students and also harmful to the goal of teaching the techniques that need to be taught so that students can reach a level of skill.¹⁵⁾ In the non-professional setting where students can have very different needs on an individual level, communication between student and teacher must be sympathetic and supportive to keep motivation and achievement at the right level.¹⁶⁾ Young students can react badly when they think they are being criticized and can blame themselves, which can cause them to lose motivation and interest in creative dance. BenZion says that young students need to have their emotional well-being cared for more than older students.¹⁷⁾ This is even more so, perhaps, in the case of the non-professional young student of creative dance, who as a result of being less motivated and sure about their place in dance, are even more sensitive to criticism and poor communication. Also this high sensitivity can exist in other areas.

One of these other areas of possible sensitivity for the young non-professional creative dance student is in regards to body image. Pickard notes that body image is a very important issue among

14) C. Whittier(2006), Laban movement analysis approach to classical ballet pedagogy, *Journal Of Dance Education* 6(4), pp.124-132.

15) G. BenZion(2012), Supportive communication in classical ballet pedagogy, *JOPERD: The Journal Of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 83(4), pp.5-6.

16) *Ibid.*, p.5.

17) *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

ballet dancers in particular.¹⁸⁾ The study shows how body image changes the performance of professional ballet dancers.¹⁹⁾ Although performance is less an issue in the non-professional pedagogy environment, the higher sensitivity of young dancers makes the possible bad effects of a negative body image much worse and could possibly discourage young dancers from continuing to develop their skill and technique. BenZion shows how good communication that gives young dancers support can help their motivation level.²⁰⁾ Instructors and non-professional pedagogy should also encourage supportive communication and should make sure that the teaching culture does not encourage students to pay attention to their body image by accident. The sensitivity to body image is perhaps even higher in the urban non-professional setting, where students come from widely different backgrounds that each can have very different thoughts about the ideal body image. Although an important part of learning dance is the technical part, the best training is able to educate the whole person so that they can develop “creative wisdom” and also the ability for their dance skills in a creative way for a “play of life.”²¹⁾

Body image as such a sensitive topic especially among young dancers and even more so among non-professional young dancers is a big part of how these young people form their identity. The experience of something as intense and needing as much discipline as creative dance at such an early age means that this activity can have a big effect on shaping the self image of young non-professional dancers, and can perhaps also address eating disorders prone to occur in ballet dancers in particular.²²⁾ Taking the mirror out of the non-professional pedagogy environment can, on the evidence of this study, help young students think less about their bodies and more about kinaesthetic sensations that come along with learning these complicated techniques.²³⁾

V. Conclusion

There are many important ideas here in early form in these articles, and they make many good suggestions for the instruction of young non-professionals in creative dance. Although these studies

18) A. Pickard(2013), Ballet body belief: perceptions of an ideal ballet body from young ballet dancers, *Research In Dance Education* 14(1), pp.3-19.

19) Ibid., pp.3-19.

20) G. BenZion(2012), Supportive communication in classical ballet pedagogy, *JOPERD: The Journal Of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance* 83(4), pp.5-6.

21) C. Whittier(2006), Laban movement analysis approach to classical ballet pedagogy, *Journal Of Dance Education* 6(4), p.124.

22) K. J. Penniment(2012), Perfectionism and learning experiences in dance class as risk factors for eating disorders in dancers, *European Eating Disorders Review* 20(1), pp.13-22.

23) S. Radell, M. Keneman, D. D. Adame & S. P. Cole(2014), My body and its reflection: a case study of eight dance students and the mirror in the ballet classroom, *Research In Dance Education* 15(2), p.161.

are not final nor are they the result of conclusive scientific studies, they do point toward a new and more welcoming environment for the non-professional young dancer that may still be able to carry on the good traditions that we get from classical dance pedagogy. Instructors can help create the more welcoming environment in a number of ways. The first as found in this literature review is to be supportive to their students in all communications. It would seem that there is only a small (if any at all) place for harsh personal criticism from the instructor in an environment where students come to pedagogy with different levels of motivation and from many different backgrounds as well.²⁴⁾

This supportive environment can only be helped by the decision, for example, to remove some mirrors from the dance classroom so that students can focus on aspects like muscle memory and kinesthetic sensations during their movements. This not only helps them to develop a more positive and nurturing self view of their body image, it also helps them to focus more on the intuitive aspects of performing difficult and precise dance routines. Using more technology in the classroom also helps in removing students from constant attention to their bodies as well.²⁵⁾

At the same time dance instructors in general should be very careful to not weaken the discipline and technique that is given from classical pedagogy. It is not enough that students come to creative dance with a desire to express themselves, although this is a very important start. Students must be made to see the value in submitting to discipline and technique.

24) R. Lakes(2005), The Messages behind the Methods: The Authoritarian Pedagogical Legacy in Western Concert Dance Technique Training and Rehearsals, *Arts Education Policy Review* 106(5), p.3.

25) Leijen, W. F. Admiraal, L. Wildschut & P. Simons(2008), Pedagogy before technology: what should an ICT intervention facilitate in practical dance classes?, *Teaching In Higher Education* 13(2), pp.219-231.

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논문투고일 2018. 7. 15
심사일 2018. 7. 18
심사완료일 2018. 8. 14

www.kci.go.kr

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This study illuminates how to teach creative dance for non-professional students. According to the findings from this literature and research, an evolution in teaching methods is needed to create a balance between traditional teaching methods and flexible teaching methods in the dance classroom. An instructor must also be able to utilize these teachings realistically in class. Becoming a supportive teacher by using positive language in a creative class is one of the most important ways that a great number of students can be inspired and motivated. A teacher's flexibility in utilizing various teaching methods is also an important quality that the learning environment in a creative dance class should begin to include. This study indicates that teaching creative dance for non-professional students must go beyond traditional and unitary teaching methods and instead an instructor should learn to be geared toward utilizing a number of teaching strategies at each appropriate situation for each student.

Keywords: Creative dance(창작 무용), Teaching method(교수법), Dance pedagogy(무용 교육학), Non-professional students(비전공 학생), Dance Educator(무용교육자)