

The Value of Dance in Education

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Minton, S. C.(2022). *Rechoreographing Learning: Dance as a Way to Bridge the Body-Mind Divide in Education*. Routledge.

This book addresses the traditional body-mind dichotomy prevalent in educational practices and explores the possibilities of whole-person education through the perspectives of dance teaching and learning. Minton, a distinguished dance educator and scholar, provides a comprehensive and insightful analysis advocating for the incorporation of dance into educational curricula. Her work underscores the potential of a holistic educational approach that acknowledges and leverages the intrinsic interconnectedness of physical movement and cognitive processes.

In Chapter 1 – Historical perspective – Minton begins with a foundational discussion on the body-mind dichotomy from both Western and Eastern viewpoints. She then delves into the importance of developing kinaesthetic awareness for bodily knowing, suggesting that this enhances the learning experiences. Minton argues that the cultivation of bodily sensations and responses into conscious awareness can foster cognitive and emotional development. This chapter provides the necessary context for her book, providing a substantial foundation for exploring the potential of movement—the connection between the body, movement, and human thought—in education.

In Chapter 2 – Sensory systems and body knowledge – Minton elucidates the functioning of three primary sensory systems in producing and regulating human movement, which are: 1) Exteroception, which involves the awareness of external stimuli that can provoke action or movement. 2) Proprioception, which pertains to the awareness of movement and joint positions, and 3) Interoception, which relates

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to the sense of gravity and internal bodily states. The chapter also investigates the interplay of these sensory systems and their pertinence to dance, providing practical application to learning movement and dance. The teaching and learning of space and time in movement education serve as examples of how these sensory systems cultivate body awareness.

In Chapter 3 – Somatic practices – Minton discusses various somatic perspectives—phenomenological, psychological, educational, and neuroscientific—to elucidate how bodily awareness is cultivated. She further explains that somatic practices enhance bodily sensations, which significantly enrich dance education. Minton explores practices such as body awareness and mental imagery, demonstrating their integration into educational environments to promote holistic learning. She emphasises the profound benefits of these practices in fostering a deeper connection between mind and body, thereby promoting a more integrated and comprehensive learning experience.

In Chapter 4 – Empathy – Minton underscores the transformative power of dance in cultivating creative and critical thinking skills, and illustrates how dance fosters empathy and understanding through symbolic movement. She delves into the neurological foundations of empathy, explaining how dance can bridge gaps in understanding and communication. Minton presents a compelling argument for the inclusion of dance in social and emotional learning, demonstrating that the symbolic nature of dance makes movement a powerful tool for emotional and social development.

In Chapter 5 – Learning theories and dance – Minton explores the neurological foundations of how movement enhances learning. She presents contemporary research on brain activity associated with dance and learning, providing a detailed analysis of how dance stimulates and improves cognitive processes. This scientific basis strengthens her argument for integrating dance into educational practices, and highlights the potential to enhance brain function and improve learning outcomes. Minton then presents several case studies that demonstrate successful dance education implementation, offering tangible guidance on integrating dance-based learning into diverse educational settings by illustrating her theories with real-world examples.

In Chapter 6 – Conclusion – In order to support her claims, validate her arguments, and provide insightful information about the benefits and difficulties of integrating dance into educational curricula, Minton concludes by presenting further evidence, future considerations, recommendations, and discussions.

Minton's interdisciplinary approach synthesises perspectives from dance education, psychology, and neuroscience to present a comprehensive view of the educational benefits of dance. Her work serves as a valuable resource for educators, dance practitioners, and researchers interested in the convergence of movement, learning, and brain function. Through her analysis and practical guidance, Minton compellingly argues for the integration of dance into educational practices. Her aim is to bridge the traditional body-mind dichotomy, and advocates for a more holistic approach to learning that recognises the interconnectedness of physical movement, cognitive processes, and emotional development.