

Dance Practice as Academic Research*

– A Methodological Framework using Practice as Research(PaR) –

Park, Jindeok**

I. Introduction	IV. Conclusion
II. Practice as research as a methodological concern	References
III. My PaR project ‘Perform/Doc/Dance’	Abstract

I. Introduction

1. Research purpose and questions

This research is undertaken in response to the observation that while practice-based dance research is becoming increasingly prevalent, the methodological approaches have yet to be clearly established (Joun Eun Su, 2021, p. 12). This constitutes the necessity of this research, and this paper is based on the knowledge generated through my ‘practice as research’ doctoral project. Typically, academic research raises issues about phenomena in a particular field, investigates and analyzes that area, and presents new directions.

If so, is there a difference between practice research and academic research? There are practice-based doctoral research cases in Korea, such as 『Exploration of the Applicability of Virtual Reality for Dance Creation』(Shin Chaelong, 2021), 『A Study of Dance Work ‘Liminality’』(Jung Lee-Wha, Kisook Cho, 2022), and 『A Study on the Original Choreography of Frame Based on Erving Goffman’s Framing Theory』(Park Hae Lee, 2021). However, their studies have remained analyzing their own choreographic works while using practice-based as a methodology, as revealed by the research titles. The research topic should have been the new knowledge generated through the practice integrated

* This paper was extracted from my practice as research based Ph.D. dissertation, and it includes the content of presentation from the symposium ‘Thinking through Dance: Dance and Philosophy’ (2023. 12) by the Dance Theory department at Korea National University of Arts.

** Assistant Professor in Hanyang University Erica, jinduks@gmail.com

with theories, rather than the analysis of the choreographic works themselves. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address this gap by distinguishing between artistic research and practice as an academic purpose.

For the practice research, which is grounded in subjective experience, to be discussed as academic research, it should be based on valid theoretical supports and carried by various forms of documentation of practical experiences, including writings and visual materials. This is because through multiple theories, practices, and experiences in rehearsing, self-observing, self-reflecting and performing, the researcher is able to deepen own knowledge. Dance artist and scholar Simon Ellis(2018) states that all practice research projects involve writing, analyzing artistic contexts, creating or making, performing, reflecting, theorizing and other non-textual tools. Writing allows me to analyze my own practices, reflect, and theorize. Thus, a single dissertation that includes first-person practical experience, theoretical basis, and various forms of documentation about practical experience can become an academic study based on practice. The detailed meaning and implications of this will be elaborated in the main body of the text.

I was a practitioner working as a choreographer and dancer before the doctoral program, and during the doctoral program, faced repeated questions about the differences in the research process between practitioners and researchers. The core of these questions was whether one understands the differentiated concepts at the turning point from practitioner to practitioner-researcher. When faced with this question, the first thought that comes to mind is that the process of a choreographer collecting information related to a subject, investigating and analyzing previous works, embodying them in the dance studio, discovering problems, and revising them to complete a work is very similar to the research process of a practitioner-researcher. Then what is the difference? the researcher may understand the difference as theoretical basis, methodology-based research, and finding new knowledge. Through this paper, I will demonstrate that dance practice research can be established as academic research, beyond merely creating one's own choreographic work and analyzing the performed work in writing.

2. Research methods

Before discussing the methods in this research, I would like to explain why 'I' is used in an academic context. This is because practice research involves autobiographical experiences and knowledge gained in the 'doing', thus emphasizing the researcher's subjective experiences. That is why what the researcher has done in the process is also important (Schrag, 2019). For this reason, you may often find sentences starting with 'I' in this article.

In my entire PaR project, The research method consisted of two main stages. In the first stage, to clarify where my practical work stood in the historical lineage of dance, I investigated various choreographic works and studies by different choreographers, and I defined concepts related to my

key concepts proposed by scholars and artists. In the second stage, I analyzed how the investigated theories were applied, where they failed, and what new knowledge was found along with various practical explorations in the rehearsal studio. During this stage, a substantial archive was collected. The practical attempts and theoretical foundations that were applied will be explained in detail in the next section. Throughout these two stages, I continuously developed a written work continuously. Although I ultimately focused on the final writing revision process, I did not follow a sequence where practical work came first and writing followed afterwards. My research followed a PaR methodology, which is why writing and studio experiments occurred simultaneously, aiming to generate knowledge.

Accordingly, this paper discusses how dance practice can be framed using PaR to complete an academic approach, using my PaR project ‘Perform/Doc/Dance’ as an example (Jindeok Park, 2020). However, instead of investigating the entire research I did, I would like to draw attention specifically to the methodological approach of my doctoral research, in order to demonstrate PaR.

II. Practice as research as a methodological concern

1. Understanding terminologies in practice research

While this research focuses on practice as research(PaR), other terms such as ‘practice-based research’ and ‘practice-led research’ are also in use. A notable previous study by Kisook Cho (2013), titled 『A Study on ‘Practice-based Research’ in Dance - Focusing on Concepts and Processes』, discusses how these terms are distinguished. According to this paper, although these terms are defined differently, it does not place significant emphasis on differences into these three concepts, thus discusses practice research as encompassing all three approaches. Following her argument that the distinctions between these three terms may not be crucial, I have summarized these terms in the table below to facilitate understanding.

According to the Table 1 above, ‘PBR(practice-based research)’ is approached from a first-person perspective and represents qualitative research based on conceptualization, practice, and performance documentation and evaluation in dance creation. ‘PLR(practice-led research)’ introduces new concepts and methodologies in knowledge production, and its discourse can be adequately explained through text format alone without created practices. On the other hand, ‘PaR(practice as research)’, which originated in the UK in the early 1990s, involves creating original work from a first-person perspective, followed by written reflection on one’s creation.

<Table 1> Summary of Kisook Cho's discussion of PBR, PLR, and PaR

PBR	PLR	PaR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-person view • Qualitative research based on documenting and evaluating concepts and practices, and performances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New concepts and methodologies are presented in the knowledge production process • This research can be sufficiently discussed in text form even without a created performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Started in the UK in the early 1990s • to create original works from a first-person perspective, followed by written reflections on one's creations

Based on these definitions, the distinction between PBR and PaR appears particularly unclear. Interestingly, PLR as described in Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt's book 『Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry』(2009), demonstrates substantial similarities with PaR, aligning with Jo's perspective. This explains why defining differences between these various terms is considered less important. Rather than elaborating on the differences here, let us analyze the commonalities among practice research terms, including PBR, PLR, and PaR:

- Research questions must originate from practice
- Issues or questions about practice phenomena must be defined
- Physical experiences must be objectively rationalized through theoretical foundations and presented in academic writing

Through analysis of terms defined by previous researchers, the small differences and numerous similarities between these terms, it can be inferred that have evolved over time into more precise terminology that better represents and defines the concept of practice research.

On the other hand, due to differences in approaches to practice between terms, researchers in doctoral programs sometimes became confused about whether their research was PBR or PaR. Even within the similarities between terms, analyzing the role of practice in as researcher's study would be most important in finding one's methodology. In PBR, practice doesn't necessarily have to be the methodology. For example, if one studies practice using sociology as a methodology, it can be considered PBR. In this case, practice may only serve as a case study and doesn't need to drive the main research discussion. In contrast, PaR requires knowledge production to originate from practice and can only be completed when discussion continues through practice. In other words, practice itself must be the methodology and remain central to the discussion. Discussing the meaning of 'practice

centered research' further, in the following section, I will introduce Nelson's PaR model as utilized in my research to demonstrate how it can be implemented.

2. Nelson's model of 'Practice as Research'

There may be other models for practice as research. However, in this study, I aim to explain practice as research as a methodology through Robin Nelson's model, which has played a significant role in systematically establishing and implementing practice research.¹⁾ According to Nelson, PaR must include three essential outputs (Nelson, 2013, p. 26):

- A documented research that can be revisited (exhibitions, videos, performances, etc.)
- Documentation of the research process through photos, videos, notes, etc.
- Written work containing investigation and analysis of the researcher's practice field

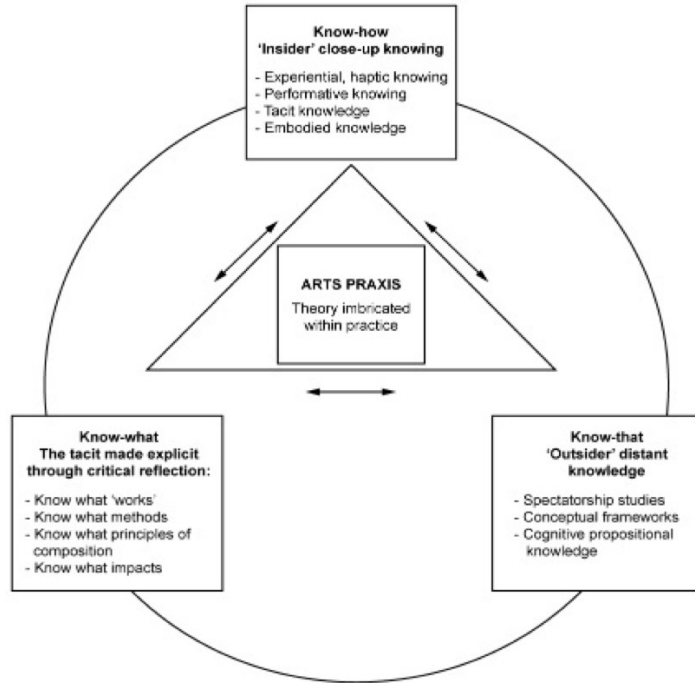
The documentation of the research process is crucial because PaR emphasizes knowledge that emerges through new perspectives and discoveries during the research period. How these discoveries are methodologically developed throughout the research process is significant. Thus, there is a focus on how to record the moments when knowledge is generated.

To elaborate on the writing component among Nelson's three essential outputs for PaR (Nelson, 2013, pp. 34-35): The writing should reveal the historical context of practice in the research, clarification of concepts used, and the research process. Similar to theoretical academic research, the literature review is required in the early stages of research. Although research questions originate from practice, literature and case studies are necessary to understand current discourse and research in the field. This stage is crucial as knowledge of related fields helps determine whether the researcher's work generates new knowledge. Additionally, through reviewing previous research, one can identify problems in the field or suggest alternative approaches. Defining concepts is also essential in practice research, as it involves theoretically defining concepts applied to the research field. Through this process, key concepts to research practice can be organized.

More importantly, the focus on the research process is what most distinguishes it from theory-based research. It describes practical experiences from a first-person perspective, including what practical tools were used and what knowledge was gained. However, writing from a first-person perspective shouldn't merely describe experiences in essay form, as this would remain subjective. The crucial aspect for PaR is how theoretical concepts support subjective experiences to lead to objective argumentation. This is what Nelson calls "praxis(theory imbricated within practice)" (Nelson, 2013,

1) He is currently an emeritus professor at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in the UK and specializes in 'practice as research' and interdisciplinary studies.

p. 40). To clearly understand Nelson’s PaR model, I would draw attention to the visual diagram that demonstrates how PaR generates new knowledge through multiple approaches. Nelson offers a triangle diagram to help visualize multiple modes of knowing: ‘know-that’, ‘know-how’, and ‘know-what’. See Figure 1 below:



<Figure 1> Nelson’s multi-mode of knowing for PaR2)

Nelson’s term ‘know-that’, which appears on the right-hand side of Figure 1 is described as: “the equivalent of traditional ‘academic knowledge’ articulated in words and numbers (propositional discourse) drawn from reading of all kinds” (Nelson, 2013, p. 45). On the other hand, ‘know-how’, at the top, is explained as procedural and embodied knowledge that is tacit. Nelson describes how the knowledge of ‘know-how’ is gained by ‘doing-knowing’; “the self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge” (Moustakas cited in Nelson 2013, p. 66). While the ‘know-how’ is understood as experiential knowledge, Nelson explains that “the key method used to develop know-what from know-how is that of critical reflection - pausing, standing back and thinking about what you are doing” (Nelson, 2013, p. 44). I found that this last term, ‘know-what’, on the left side of Figure 1, the most complicated to define, but as far as I understand it, this mode of

2) Nelson, R. (2013). *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. Palgrave Macmillan.

knowledge includes the explicit outcomes I reached through critical analysis with knowledge from ‘know-how’ and ‘know-that’. As the figure shows Nelson’s demonstration of interaction among three types of knowing, PaR is how these three modes of knowing continuously interact to create new knowledge during research. In the next section, III, I will explain how my research generated knowledge within this triangular diagram framework, which I believe will help better understand PaR.

III. My PaR project ‘Perform/Doc/Dance’

Before discussing how my research is framed by Nelson’s model, I would like to explain the terminology ‘Perform/Doc/Dance’ I establish. This was inspired by a symposium, entitled ‘DocPerform」 (7 November 2017). The ‘DocPerform」 event³⁾ was focused on “the concepts of documentation and performance, specifically regarding how documentation is understood, introduced, applied, and explored in creating performances or live events in multiple ways” (Jindeok Park, 2022, p. 28). As my practice aimed to generate new ways of thinking about liveness in improvised dance performance through live documentation, I discovered similarities between my own practice and DocPerform’s approach in using technology as a positive method for creating live documentation in performance.

To frame my PaR within Nelson’s multiple modes of knowing, I needed to establish a theoretical framework in order to achieve ‘know-that’. As my research focuses on the areas of performing dance improvisation as a discipline and live documentation as a performance method, my mode of ‘know-that’ includes defining the performance of dance improvisation as experiencing a ‘new’ present, reconstructing a re-enacted past, and transforming archives. The second part of the theoretical frame concerns live documentation. This provides knowledge of the relationships between live performance and documentation, and how these relationships have been developed by theorists. This particular ‘distant knowledge’ contains theoretical discussions and investigates artistic contexts. Specially, it examines the use of live documentation as a performance or choreographic method in dance to specify the lineage of my practical research. In addition, it incorporates documentation methods from live events in fields other than dance, helping to determine which strategies might be useful in creating documentation as performance in dance improvisation.

For examining a new category of performance documentation, I draw upon Alva Noë’s discussion of ‘presence’ and ‘present availability’.⁴⁾ Noë proposes (2012, p. 19) that when an object can be perceived in the present, one has a heightened sense of it. To paraphrase Noë, ‘present availability’ denotes the ability to perceive something in the present. Furthermore, Noë’s discussion of ‘perceptual

3) DocPerform is a multi- and interdisciplinary research project based at City, University of London.

4) Alva Noë is a philosopher who specializes in the theory of perception and consciousness.

presence' explains how 'present availability' activates a performer during performance. He states that "perceptual experience has two dimensions: it registers not only how things are, but also the perceiver's relation to how things are" (Noë, 2012, p. 23). For example, in dance improvisation, a physical action of dance does not consist merely in perceiving stimuli, but also involves their translation into bodily movements. Based on Noë's account, the concept of 'present availability' in improvised dance performance denotes how a dancer not only perceives stimuli in the present improvisation, but also continues to look for ways to transfer those stimuli into improvised dance. Noë is not the only theorist I utilize to discuss my practice. In addition to Noë's concept, I discussed multiple theorists' concepts. This is because PaR incorporates theory to support practice, making it difficult to discuss through a single theorist's perspective. However, in this paper, rather than including all theorists discussed in my PaR project, I focus on discussing the role of theory in PaR to provide evidence for practice outcomes.

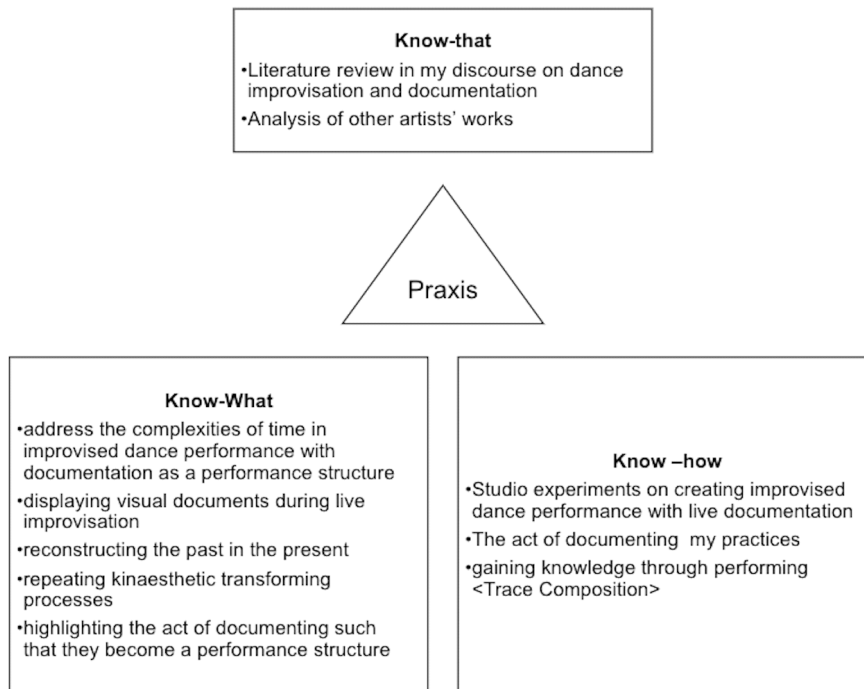
From 'distant knowledge', I would now like to zoom in to 'close-up knowing', which constitutes 'know-how'. This mode of knowledge is created through my own embodied research in studio rehearsals and performances. In the studio, for example, I explored various aspects: the act of documenting movements and memories, improvising with live documentation, and experimenting with a performance structure for documentation as performance. These explorations constitutes this mode of knowing, 'know-how'. Additionally, I achieved 'performative knowing' through improvising and documenting in the presentation of 「Trace Composition」, as a series of different pieces that generate 'Perform/Doc/Dance'.⁵⁾ In order to give direct access to my creative embodied processes, I offered photo and video documents as one way of accessing my practices. Like the majority of PaR projects, which take documentation as a central issue, my PaR project offered documentation of the processes and outcomes of my practices, as a way of making my methods and arguments clearer. I also provided a live performance presentation, as this PaR is particularly concerned with how to encourage instant and emergent improvised dance in performance, where my experience as a performer is significant to the research.

Now that I have discussed both 'close up' knowledge and 'outsider' knowledge, I will now draw attention to 'know-what', which involves 'explicit knowledge'. In order for 'tacit knowledge' to become explicit, 'know-that' and 'know-how' need to be integrated. In my PaR research, Nelson's discussion of praxis, which combines theory and practice, has helped me discover a new way of thinking about the liveness of performed improvised dance. The most important function of praxis is to guide me onto the next exploratory step as my PaR project develops. For instance, sometimes theories

5) For more detailed information about 「Trace Composition」, see 『Dance Improvisation as Intertwining of Present and Past as Endless Kinaesthetic Transformation』 published in the Korean Journal of Dance Studies (Jindeok Park, 2022).

drive me to practical tasks. In other instances, practical experience leads me to search out theories to support it. In the sense that ‘know-how’ and ‘know-that’ are integrated into ‘know-what’, Nelson’s three modes of knowledges exist in constant interchange with one another as a project develops.

To explain how the explicit knowledge process through ‘praxis’ further, I draw Auslander’s “theatrical category” I discussed in other paper (Jindeok Park, 2022, p. 33).⁶⁾ Auslander’s concept of ‘theatrical documentation’ in particular inspired me to explore using a wider range of digitized documentation when creating new ways to documentation in improvised dance performance. However, I questioned whether it was possible to expand Auslander’s performance documentation categories, which use the most common use of documentation during a live event, by adding a third category to describe the use of documentation in live performance. For example, if an image of live recorded documentation (where there are no prior records) is used in a live performance (it takes place in the same space as the audience). Therefore, I suggested that ‘Perform/Doc/Dance’ generates a third category beyond Auslander’s category to examine a new approach to understanding the liveness of improvised dance performance. I hope this explanation offers an understanding of how ‘praxis’ can contribute to explicit knowledge in a PaR project. Lastly, to visually understand how Nelson’s three types of knowing were implemented in my PaR, see Figure 2 below.



<Figure 2> Application of ‘Perform/Doc/Dance’ to Nelson’s triangular model

6) For more detailed discussion, see 『Documentation as a Performance Material: Real-time Documentation in Dance Performance』 published in the Korean Journal of Dance Studies(Jindeok Park, 2023).

IV. Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I employed my doctoral research as a model to address the systematization of dance practice research methodology, which remains less developed in Korea, demonstrating how it can be structured and validated as academic research through the application of Nelson's PaR model. Through the interaction of 'know-that', 'know-how', and 'know-what', I found that the most important aspects are how to expose the knowledge that emerges during the process, what materials serve as documentation, and how to present these findings explicitly in the compulsory written work.

Throughout my doctoral studies, I consistently questioned what constitutes the 'practice' in this research, as the identification of specific 'practice' serves as a research tool. A crucial aspect that needs to be understood in PaR is what constitutes 'practice' in the research. While practice in choreographic work, as an artistic research⁷⁾, is commonly understood as the act of dancing; however, in PaR, 'practice' encompasses more than just the performative act of dancing. The 'practice' involves determining what experiments are necessary for discussion in the research, and emphasizes new knowledge discovered during the research process rather than research aimed at producing a final product. Not every PaR necessarily requires the creation of a performance. Some research might involve practice in developing workshop content. The final outcome does not have to be a performance demonstration; practice will vary according to the characteristics and objectives of the research, and each study should incorporate practice as a means to demonstrate new knowledge unique to that research. To emphasize the distinction between artistic research and practice research regarding 'practice', the following quotation may be useful:

Practice as research ('PaR' for short) has come to be recognised as a mode of research within academic institutions that departs from traditional written methods of investigating, articulating and disseminating original ideas. It occurs predominantly within visual and performing arts and can encompass artefacts, products, events or other outputs that are the result of, but to some extent also demonstrate, a research process and findings. In the field, a performance or event might be presented that shows new ways of working, techniques or concepts of theatre and performance (Allain & Harvie, 2014, pp. 233-234).

I hope that many more studies on PaR or other terms representing practice research will continue to be conducted after this paper. Paradoxically, it was challenging to find cases where PaR was utilized as a methodology in dance practice research within Korea, although many doctoral studies carry out

7) Artistic research (such as performance, theatre, dance, design, or digital media) that involves an element of practice has been defined in various ways(Candy, 2006, pp. 2-6; Nelson, 2013, pp. 8-11; Smith & Dean, 2009, pp. 1-9).

practice within the academic context. I look forward to seeing the development of dance practice research models beyond Nelson's PaR model(2013, 2023), and encountering more case studies from practitioner-researchers.

■ References

- Allain, P. & Harvie, J.(2014). *The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Performance*. (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Barrett, E. & Bolt, B. (2009). *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*. I.B. Tauris.
- Nelson, R.(2023). *Practice as Research in the Arts and Beyond: Principles, Processes, Contexts, Achievements*. (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nelson, R. (2013). *Practice as Research in the Arts: Principles, Protocols, Pedagogies, Resistances*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Noë, A. (2012). *Varieties of Presence*. Harvard University Press.
- Smith, H. & Dean, R., T.(2009). *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts*. (Ed.). Edinburgh University Press Ltd.
- Park, J.(2020). **A practice as research project on the interplay between live documentation and dance improvisation** [Doctoral Dissertation, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama].
- Park, J.(2022). Documentation as a Performance Material-‘Real-time Documentation’ in Dance Performance. *The Korean Journal of Dance Studies*, 88(4), 27-42.
- Park, J.(2022). Dance Improvisation as Intertwining of Present and Past as Endless Kinaesthetic Transformation. *The Korean Journal of Dance Studies*, 85(1), 81-96.
- Park, H.(2021). A Study on the Original Choreography of Frame Based on Erving Goffman’s Framing Theory. *Asian Dance Journal*, 61, 43-65.
- Shin, C.(2021). Exploration of the Applicability of Virtual Reality for Dance Creation. *Official Journal of the Koeran Society of Dance Science*, 38(2), 81-99.
- Joun, E.(2021). **Logical Study on Dance Paradigm: Academic Writing on Practice-based Dance** [Doctoral Dissertation, The Graduate School of Sangmyung University]
- Jung, L. & Cho. K.(2022). A Study of Dance Work 「Liminality」. *Journal of Acting & Arts*, 25(1), 55-74.
- Cho. K.(2013). A Study of ‘Practice Based Research’ in Dance - Focusing on the Concepts and Process. *Asian Dance Journal*, 31, 229-255.
- Candy, L.(2006). Practice based research: A guide. *CCS report*, 1(2), 1-19.
- Ellis, S. (2018. 01.04). “Presentation on Documentation in PaR”. *Practice as Research Blog: Developing and Questioning Practice-Research*. <<https://practiceasresearchblog.wordpress.com/2018/01/04/presentation-on-documentation-in-par/>, 2025.03.24.>.
- Schrag, A.(2019. 10. 16). “What is Practice Research and why is it important to anyone other than artists?”. **Queen Margaret University**. <<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/campus-life/blogs/staff-dr-anthony-schrag/what-is-practice-research-and-why-is-it-important-to-anyone-other-than-artists>, 2025.03.08.>.

논문투고일 2025. 02. 15.

심사일 2025. 02. 19.

심사완료일 2025. 03. 03.

www.kci.go.k

무용 실천의 학술적 연구

- 연구로서의 실기(Practice as Research)를 활용한 방법론적 체계화 -

박진덕

한양대학교 에리카 무용예술학과 조교수

무용 실기를 기반으로 하는 연구들이 증가하고 있음에도 불구하고, 아직 무용 실천의 학술적 연구를 위한 방법론적 체계가 명확하지 않은 실정을 지적하며, 본 연구는 무용 실천의 학술적 연구의 선례가 되길 희망한다. 본 논문에서는 실기 기반의 연구의 다양한 용어들을 정의하고, 특히 ‘연구로서의 실기’를 중점적으로 고찰한다. 방법론적 활용의 구체적인 사례를 제시하고자 본 연구자의 박사학위 연구인 ‘공연/기록/춤’을 통해 얻은 발견점인 실기와 이론이 어떻게 새로운 지식을 창출하는지 입증하고자 하였다. 영국의 넬슨이 정립한 ‘연구로서의 실기’ 모델을 기반으로 사실이나 정보에 대한 이론적 지식, 실천을 통해 얻은 지식, 그리고 무엇에 대한 본질이나 정체성을 아는 지식을 통한 연구과정을 논의한다. 또한 예술가로서의 연구와 실기자-연구가로서의 연구에서 사용되는 ‘프랙티스(practice)’ 개념의 차이를 강조하고자 하였다.

Keywords: 공연/기록/춤(Perform/Doc/Dance), 로빈 넬슨(Robin Nelson), 무용 실기 연구(Dance Practice Research), 방법론(Methodology), 연구로서의 실기(Practice as Research)