

## **The action of implementing creative dance in school education in Taiwan**

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### Abstract

Since the Nine-year Curriculum's launch in 2000, there have been an increasing number of studies on the implementation of creative dance or its related elements in the context of school education in Taiwan. Most of the researchers in creative dance were full-time teachers who, with or without a professional dance background, made efforts to solve practical problems in their work by conducting action research in their classes. This panel discusses this trend of "teachers as researchers" by investigating how teacher-researchers have brought related elements of creative dance into Taiwanese schools. First, Dr. Wu reviewed 30 Master's theses that employed action research as the primary research method to investigate the implementation of creative dance in schools in Taiwan under the construct of the Nine-year Curriculum. She analyzed their rationales and purposes; the spiraling cycles of action research, which are planning, acting, observing, and reflecting; and research findings.

The other two panelists, who are full-time teachers in elementary and junior high schools, respectively, shared their experiences of integrating dance into various learning areas for school children. Min-ping Lin presented her action research, which explored her experience of teaching street dance within the framework of creative dance. Street dance was used as the medium of creative dance teaching to stimulate the students' motivation for learning. Sessions were arranged into a process of action research, through which the progress of students was examined and the teaching experience of the teacher accordingly reflected upon. The findings suggested that using street dance could effectively promote the learning motivation of students. In creative dance, students experienced the process of self-exploration in both body and mind. The teachers inspired students' creativity and imagination by implementing a series of play-like activities. Conducting action research enhanced the teachers' professional development, sharpening their vision of curriculum development of creative dance. The research results could be looked upon as a reference for curriculum design in the performing arts.

Ching-lung Tseng, who is a long-time folk dance practitioner, questioned the "mimicking" teaching method in folk dance teaching. In her study, she tried to stimulate students' creativity by guiding them to change movement elements within the original folk dance styles. In addition to being introduced to dance costumes, music, and culture, her students were taught basic dance steps and how to create a dance out of them. She applied an action research method to 15 folk

dance sessions for a class of 35 elementary students, finding these results:

1. The folk dances that use “props” or have “improvisation elements” were more appropriate as class material.
2. Three creating elements could be introduced in the class: “self-created movement,” “basic dance step combination,” and “floor pattern variation.” The creative exercise should progress gradually, with no more than two elements at the same time.
3. The use of props, game activities, simple movements, and practice could increase students’ learning interests.
4. The use of teaching tools, such as learning sheets, slides, and posters, could assist instructors and students during the creating process.

*Keywords:* action research, creative dance, dance education in Taiwan, integrative curriculum, Nine-year Curriculum

Since 1929, Taiwan’s compulsory education has been implemented, which has reached full literacy rate and has enhanced the quality of education. When facing the challenges of the new millennium and globalization, many educational scholars and organizations began to urge the government to loosen the control over elementary and high school education (Chin & Lai, 2006). After a long-term dialogue between government, society, education experts, and education reform organizations, the school curriculum was revised and renamed the “Nine-year Curriculum,” which refers to a set of educational beliefs, objectives, learning areas, and basic abilities that remain consistent throughout the nine years of compulsory education. The new curriculum was announced in 2000 and implemented in 2001. Since then, dance, under the subject of Performing Arts, has formally become part of the school curriculum. Many school teachers with or without a professional dance background conducted action research on creative dance in their own classrooms. Those studies are valuable and spread the presence and knowledge of creative dance in the classroom. Although each researcher tried to find certain connections between their study and others’, few researchers could articulate the overall picture of how creative dance elements have been brought into school in Taiwan. This situation motivated the head of this panel, Yi-jung Wu, to examine all of them, trying to see the big picture. Therefore, this paper will first present Wu’s review of studies on creative dance, which were conducted in schools in Taiwan. Two curriculum studies, which were conducted by Min-ping Lin and Ching-lung Tseng, respectively, will be presented to exemplify how creative dance and its related elements were brought into school under the construct of the Nine-year Curriculum.

## **Bringing creative dance elements into school: A review of literature (Yi-jung Wu)**

### **The introduction of the Nine-year Curriculum**

There are four key educational beliefs of the Nine-year Curriculum:

1. Learning should be based on and related to life experiences.
2. School activities should bring integrative learning experiences rather than dissected knowledge to students.
3. The highly standardized, detailed rules of the old curriculum are turned into a more flexible curricular outline that can be further developed, based on the needs of schools. Additionally, the role of teachers turns from that of a curriculum *implementer* to a curriculum *developer*.
4. The goal of learning focuses on obtaining basic abilities rather than increasing knowledge. (Chin & Lai, 2006)

Unlike the old curriculum, which featured a highly centralized, standardized school structure, learning contents, and authoritarian value systems, the Nine-year Curriculum stresses individual needs and flexibility in terms of educational objectives, terminology, school administration, subject integration, school schedule, learning contents, pedagogy, professional teacher autonomy, teaching resources, assessment, and parent participation (Ou & Li, 2003). In other words, the new curriculum emphasizes that learning should be based on and related to life experiences and local culture.

In the new curriculum, numerous subjects from elementary and junior high schools are integrated into seven learning areas, which include Language Arts, Health and Physical Education, Society, Arts and Humanities, Math, Nature, Life Technology, and Integrative Activity (Ministry of Education, 1998). In the first and second grades, Arts and Humanities, Society, and Nature are further integrated into Life Curriculum. In the area of Arts and Humanities are Music, Visual Art, and Performing Arts, which incorporate drama and dance. Although dance has been a part of physical education in the old curriculum for a long time, its health and physicality side has been emphasized more than its culture and arts side. The new curriculum first recognized culture, arts, and humanities as dance components in education; they were thus incorporated into the school curriculum, while the benefits of dance on health and movement education remained in Health and Physical Education.

The area of Arts and Humanities in the Nine-year Curriculum emphasizes humanities that are reflected through the arts. Underlined by multiculturalism and postmodernism, Arts and Humanities encourages the articulation of opinions, exploration of meanings, construction of contents, and understanding of viewpoints, rather than the creation of “perfect” art works during the process of creation (Cheng, 2003). Its educational objectives include:

- 1) exploration and presentation;
- 2) aesthetics and understanding;
- 3) practice and application. (Ministry of Education, 1998)

The set of educational objectives matches the principle of creative dance, which aims to nurture

students' spontaneous, bodily expressions and creativity by movement exploration, observation, and performance (Chang, 2007). Being empowered to develop their own curricula, more school teachers have tried to incorporate creative dance into learning activities.

### **Research scope**

The scope of literature that this study reviewed includes 30 Master's theses that were completed after the implementation of the Nine-year Curriculum in 2001. There have been more than 30 studies that focus on the teaching of creative dance in Taiwan. However, because a Master's thesis can provide more detailed information regarding the process of curricular design and implementation, the scope of this study is limited within Master's theses. Studies on creative dance that were taught outside of schools are not included in this study.

The other feature of these 30 theses is that they all employed action research as the primary research method. Carr and Kemmis (1986) define action research as follows:

A form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (p.162)

Instead of entering as outsiders and leaving the work of changing the status quo for insiders at the conclusion of the research, action researchers are usually insiders/practitioners themselves who take progressive steps to directly change their practices during the research. Although being questioned about the limit of application and generalization of research findings, action research is acknowledged as a valid method to improve teaching strategies, enhance teachers' professional development, and accumulate teaching experience (Chang, Chian, Li, Ding, Li, Kao, et al., 2007). The phrases of action research, which are the "spiral cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162), serve as the framework for reviewing and teaching the process of creative dance in the 30 theses.

### **Research participants and settings**

The research participants in the theses are 1<sup>st</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grade students aged 6-14. Only Ya-Yun Chen's (2009) study had a group of adult learners (junior high school teachers without a dance background) who were asked to be research participants for a study on the application of Motif Writing to an in-service teacher education program. No matter their age, most of the research participants in the reviewed studies were non-dance majors. Only three studies were about students of a so-called "Dance Class" (Hsiao, 2011; Chu, 2010; Wen, 2010), which is the program for talented dance students accommodated in Taiwan's public education system. There were also three studies on creative dance programs for children with special needs (Shih, 2011; Peng, 2010; Liu, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

The length of the curriculum in the 30 theses ranged from 6 to 22 sessions. All but one of the researchers completed their teaching within a semester. Only Tzu-Chien Chiu (2010) did a long-term study by analyzing her teaching of the same curriculum in four semesters.

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<sup>1</sup> Because there are common first names in Chinese, the theses' authors with the same last names will appear with the initials of the first name for differentiation.

### **Practitioners' difficulties reflected in research rationales**

The main reason that these 30 researchers conducted action research in their own teaching was that they had encountered problems with either students, schools, society, or even an entire educational policy. Of these challenges, students' needs concerned them most. Researchers who were junior high school teachers, such as Mei-Hung Lin (2009), Shang Chiang (2009), Pei-ying Nien (2009), Tzu-Chien Chiu (2010), Wan-chun Chang (2011), and Min-ping Lin (2012), in particular, launched their inquiries for the purpose of making their reluctant adolescent students move. Going through adolescence, their students often had issues of self-identity (Lai, 2011), self-confidence (Chiang, 2009), interpersonal relationships (Chang, W.-C., 2011), peer pressure (Lin, M.-P., 2012), and group dynamics (Nien, 2009). On the other hand, teachers of younger children observed their students' full engagement in rhythmic activities and creative dance (Tsao, 2009; Liu, S.-M., 2008; Chu, P.-S., 2007; Ko, 2003). Following young students' nature, these teachers tried to enhance students' learning experience, achievement, and holistic development by incorporating components of creative dance in various school activities. Generally speaking, studies on creative dance for elementary students appeared earlier than those for junior high school students, which were not seen until 2009. To meet students' needs, the purposes of incorporating creative dance in the school curriculum included enhancing five areas:

1. Body awareness and physical exploration;
2. Learning motivation and achievement in other learning areas or subjects;
3. Multiple intelligences, creativity, self-esteem, self-identity, and interpersonal skills;
4. Understanding and appreciation of culture and community; and
5. Basic skills for children with special needs.

In terms of problems from school and society, dance and performing arts have not been considered important by either school authorities or the public, as it is not a subject to be tested in the Basic Competence Test (BCT), the score of which is an important reference for high school entrance admission in Taiwan. In order for students to have full commitment in BCT, many schools stop Performing Arts classes in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Chang, W.-C., 2011). Even in schools that tried to maintain Performing Arts in the curriculum, parents often request that their children not have any homework or pressure from Performing Arts teachers (Chiu, T.-C., 2010; Lin, M.-H., 2009). In school, physical development is often limited to sports skills, and many students have come to believe that dancing is "very difficult" (Lee, 2008). Generally speaking, most rhythmic activities that are seen in schools request students to mimic teachers' movements (Yang, 2004). Lacking sufficient activities that encourage physical engagement and creativity, Huang (2007) discovered that even young children lost the ability to move freely. The mis-concept about Performing Arts from school, parents, and students is another reason that urged the teacher-researchers in this study to conduct action research to argue for the importance of creative dance for students.

When the new curriculum was first launched, one problem was the absence of sophisticated pre-service or in-service teacher education programs to equip teachers for the new curriculum (Chen, Y.-Y. 2009). Many teacher-researchers admitted that certain schools without Performing Arts teachers assigned teachers of other subjects to teach Performing Arts (Chang, Y.-I., 2010; Chiu, T.-C., 2010; Chang, W.-C., 2011; Chen, Y.-Y., 2009; Lin, M.-H., 2009; Wang, 2011), which

resulted in students' lack of a quality learning experience and understanding in Performing Arts. For most teachers, teaching dance is considered more difficult than teaching drama, and Performing Arts classes are usually drama-oriented (Chen, Y.-Y., 2009). For many students, the Performing Arts class is equivalent to a film-watching class (Chiu, T.-C., 2010), when not assigned to academic learning or tests. The shift of the teacher's role from knowledge transmitter to producer, or from curricular executor to developer, allowed them to become aware of the needs in enhancing professional knowledge and abilities (Wang, 2011). Thus, some teachers with dance backgrounds conducted action research with the goal of enhancing students' knowledge and skills in Performing Arts by bringing the essential experience of movement exploration, performance, and creation via creative dance (Chang, Y.-I., 2010; Chiu, T.-C., 2010), or by developing an in-service teacher training program for teachers of other subjects to learn how to apply Motif Writing to lead movement-based classes (Chen, Y.-Y., 2009).

To teachers with arts backgrounds, the stress on integration in the Nine-year Curriculum concerned educators in Visual Art and Music, bringing the new possibility for innovation in terms of curriculum design and teaching strategies (Lee, 2008; Chiu, H.-C., 2007; Hsu, 2006; Chiu, Y.-C., 2006). Those with dance or drama backgrounds felt unqualified to teach certain content material beyond their specialties; this was because dance and drama are independent training systems in higher education, but are incorporated into the same subject of Performing Arts in compulsory education (Chen, Y.-Y., 2009). All of the Performing Arts textbooks are drama-oriented, with few dance-related activities in them (Lin, M.-H., 2009). For the teacher-researchers reviewed in this study, this difficult condition made them look for dance-related ways of delivering non-dance content, or to develop completely new curricula beyond textbooks if schools approved.

### **Planning**

Based on the above-mentioned difficulties, the teacher-researchers created curricula that they believed could solve the problems. Each of the curricula is unique, and can be grouped into several modes according to their designs, including Movement Element Mode, Imagery Mode, Tradition Mode, Performance Mode, Inter-discipline Mode, and Intra-discipline Mode. Many curricula incorporated more than one mode to achieve multiple purposes. Due to page limits, only Movement Element Mode and Imagery Mode, which include most of the curricula that are reviewed in this study, will be discussed below.

#### **Movement element mode of curriculum design**

Movement elements and related themes that have been developed by Rudolf Laban (1988, revised by Ullmann) have been acknowledged and further developed by dance educators for their function of providing concrete frameworks for guidance, while also leaving space for creativity (Chang, 2007). The most fundamental approach of this mode is to present movement elements or themes of Body, Space, Time, Effort, and Relationship as the topics of learning, exemplified by Chia-Hsin Shih (2011), Chia-Ying Hsiao (2011), and Hsuan-Hui Chen (2011). The basic curricular structure consists of blocks of movement elements or themes that are introduced one at a time through movement activities developed around the elements and/or themes (see Figure 1). The first element is usually Body, as it is the most familiar to students. However, Ya-Yun Chen (2009) urged Space to be first for junior high school students who had little experience with creative dance; it would help them avoid self-consciousness of their own bodies. The curriculum

proceeds as the teacher adds more movement elements and guides students to create dance phrases out of them. Through the learning process, students accumulate their abilities in bodily expression and their interpersonal skills by exploring a single element, element combinations, dance-making, and group work.

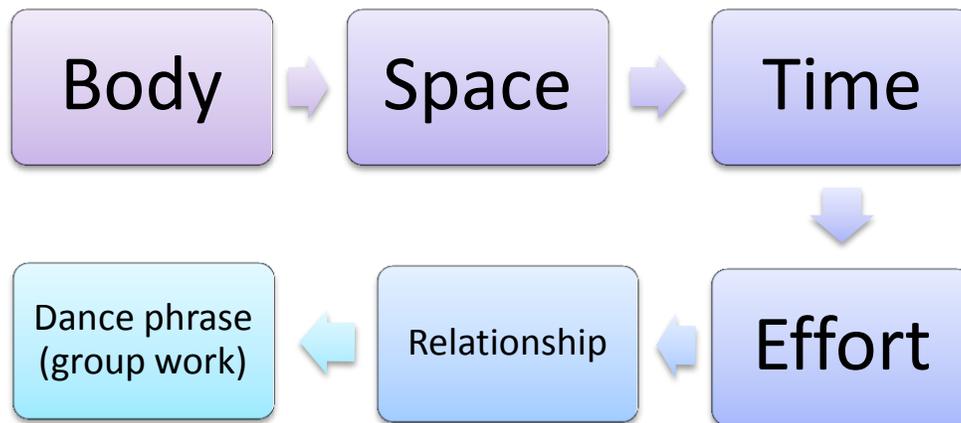


Figure 1. The Basic Structure of the Movement Element Mode of Curriculum Design. *Drawn by Min-ping Lin.*

Instead of focusing on one element at a time, some teachers emphasized the connections between one major element and the others to achieve certain educational objectives (see Figure 2). For example, in order to change the class' negative group dynamics, Nien (2009) had the element of Relationship to be the theme of her curriculum. Shih (2011) also employed Relationship to improve the personal interactions of two mentally disabled students. Yu-chen Chiu (2006) focused on Space to incorporate creative dance into a curriculum of Visual Art. Tzu-Chien Chiu (2010) used an umbrella concept of "stage" to guide students to apply the spatial concept of stage to the collaborative process, while creating and performing self-selected forms of performing arts.

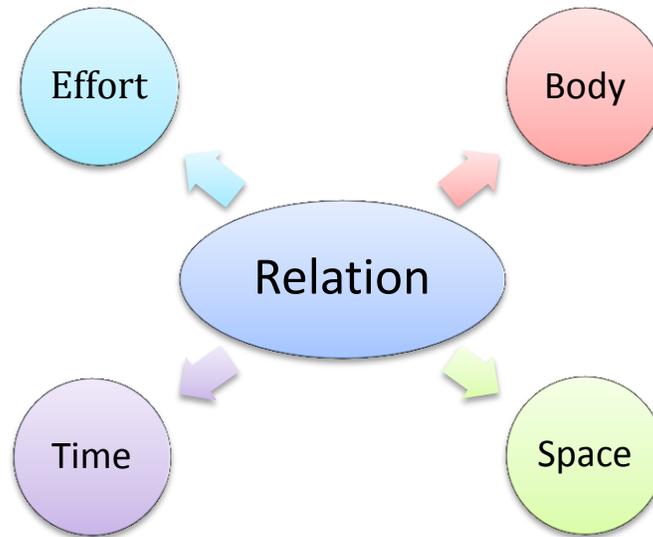


Figure 2. The Variation of the Movement Element Mode of Curriculum Design  
*Drawn by Min-ping Lin.*

**Imagery mode of curriculum design.** Many teachers who worked on the Movement Element Mode also connected movement elements strongly with students' life experience and games (see Figure 3).

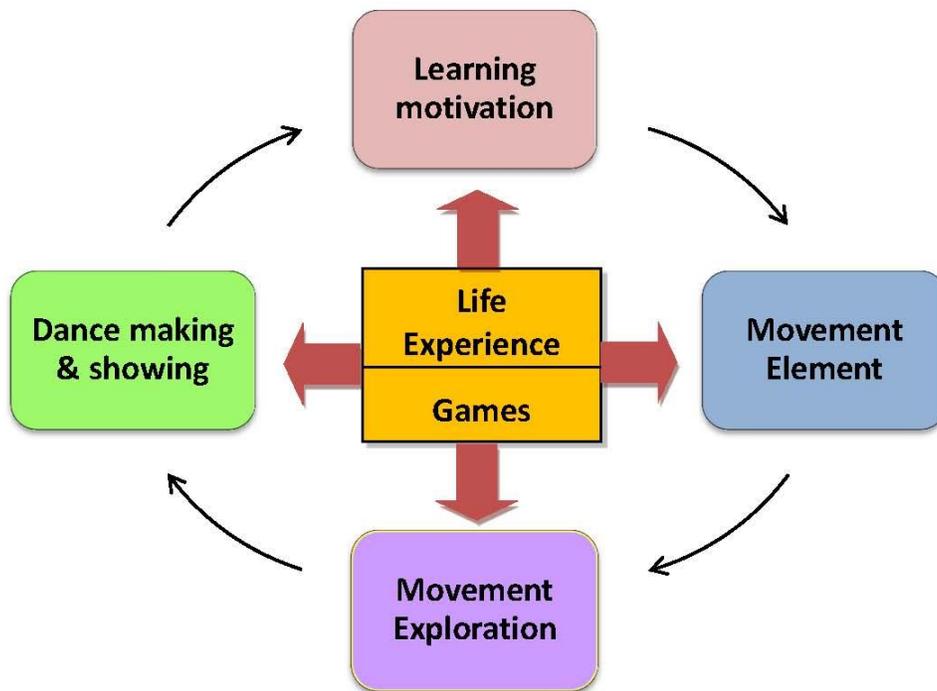


Figure 3. The Structure of the Imagery Mode of Curriculum Design  
*Drawn by Yi-jung Wu.*

The Movement Element Mode is a way for teachers to demonstrate the connection between dance and life. Most of the teachers found that their students became more motivated and engaged in dance activities when they realized that they were actually doing something familiar and fun. Sometimes the themes that were found in life experiences were emphasized so strongly that they turned into subjects of learning, while movement elements served as the teachers' lens of observation during guidance. The life experiences that they connected are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Life experiences connected in imagery mode of curriculum.

Category	Examples
Body/Movement	Wake-up ritual, functional movement, body part
Object	Rubber band, mirror, tool, toy, prop
Living	Architecture, clothes, food, location
Recreation	Dance, movie, TV commercial, dice, sports, traveling, cartoon, pop music, movement games, birthday celebration, taking pictures
Arts	Sculpture, story, drawing, poetry, color, picture book
Nature	Plant, animal
Symbol	Diagram, written word, number
Technology	Robot, computer function

### Acting

In the spiral phase of acting, most of the teacher-researchers struggled with how to motivate reluctant students to move and how to guide willing students to innovate in their daily movements. In addition to connecting life experiences, as mentioned above, the teacher-researchers utilized a lot of teaching aids, including imaginary contexts, games, images, stories, props, pictures, or words, to provide students with several experiences of creative dance “scaffolding,” a term coined by Vygotsky to mean the assistance of possible development (as cited by Chang, 1996). To guide students toward innovation in their physical expressions, most of the teachers reminded them of the change of movement elements through verbal instructions. A few teachers, such as Shu-Lien Huang (2007) and Shu-Mei Liu (2008), incorporated symbols of Motif Writing and found it an effective visual aid for students in both general and special education to increase concentration and the clarity of movement expression. In the creative process, some teachers, such as Tseng (2011), developed learning sheets, slides, and posters for students to visualize their choreographic structures. In general, all of the teachers encouraged students to work in groups, using group power to overcome personal limits of imagery and to defeat the fear of creating and performing alone, while group work might also cause conflict and result in pressure (Hsiao, 2011; Nien, 2009). It was usually a challenge for most teachers to constantly adjust their original plans to actually solve practical problems.

### Observing

Most of the teacher-researchers closely observed their students' responses as well as their own teaching, tracking their problem-solving process and personal growth by analyzing issues and meanings that were revealed via the multiple resources of research data, which included video-recording of the class, students' learning sheets, the teachers' reflective teaching logs, and

observers' logs. The problems that were often observed by this group of teacher-researchers are as follows:

1. Incorporating too many movement elements in one session: With a session that is only 40 minutes long in elementary school and 45 minutes long in junior high school, some of the teachers immediately confronted the problems of running out of time and had to reconsider the focus of each lesson based on students' ability, while others were able to schedule two continuous sessions every week (e.g., Wang, 2011; Lin, C.-C., 2009; Lee, 2008).
2. Dealing with a seemingly messy situation: Students in the creating process are often engaged in heated discussions with peers, while their bodies may not express relatively sophisticated movements due to insufficient education of physical creativity (Chiang, 2009). Some may get over-excited and cross the boundary between freedom and chaos (Tseng, 2011; Chiang, 2009). As Mei-Hung Lin (2009) articulated, "Incorporating fun, excitement, and presentation in one lesson, the Performing Arts class is often considered 'noisy' by the school" (p. 117). How to maintain the balance between freedom and discipline has been an issue that is often confronted by most of the teachers.
3. Confronting other teachers' criticisms of students' immature works: Due to the above-mentioned messy situation during a creative dance class, the teachers constantly had to communicate with school authorities and teachers who looked for discipline and polished dance works, urging them to pay more attention to students' creative processes than product (Liu, 2008; Chiang, 2009; Chuang, 2002). Chiu-Li Chen (2007) also admitted that individual expression of physical creativity was not apparent in her study. Facing concern that students' works were more like physical activities than dance, Yu-Hui Lee (2008) had to re-define the meaning of dance for other teachers. On the other hand, Pei-shih Chu's (2007) teaching was acknowledged by teachers in other learning areas, who saw students' potentials, individual learning modes, and needs revealed during the learning process.
4. Not having a well-equipped room for dancing: Some of the teachers were not assigned to a dance studio with the proper size and elevated dance floor. Storage spaces, hallways, outdoor or indoor basketball courts, fine arts classrooms, and Taekwondo practice rooms have been referenced, in some of the 30 theses, as utilized dance space (Huang, 2007; Lin, M.-H., 2009; Tseng, 2011; Tsao, 2009; Liu, 2008; Lin, C.-C., 2009; Lee, 2008). Other teachers had a so-called Performing Arts classroom. However, some of them were located in basements, which are often stuffy, hot, noisy, small, or full of furniture or unnecessary objects (Wang, 2011). Many teachers had to adjust their lesson plans accordingly.
5. Confronting the paradox between creativity and demonstration: Concerning whether physical demonstration might restrict students' creativity, many of the teachers realized that students with little experience in physical expression relied on the teacher's demonstration to obtain the sense of security and to visualize the meaning of "creativity" (Lin, M.-H., 2009). Chiang (2009) discovered that her demonstration with constant

changing of speed in warm-up could decrease junior high school students' sense of frustration and self-consciousness in physical expression while increasing their concentration and determination at the beginning of the class. Even for students of the Dance Class, the teacher's participation in movement exploration also helped release the tension between the teacher and students, and helped to embody positive interpersonal relationships for students (Hsiao, 2011). Thus, the real question for the teachers became how to guide students to go beyond demonstration (Lin, M.-H., 2009).

6. Not having sufficient teaching resources about dance: All the textbooks of Performing Arts in Taiwan are drama-oriented. The teachers had to adapt the contents to make them more dance teacher-friendly (if the school demanded following the textbooks), or, as did most of the teacher-researchers reviewed in this study, to develop their own curricula (Lin, M.-H., 2009; Ko, 2003).

### **Reflecting**

By continuously reflecting, adjusting, and re-planning the next move, all the teacher-researchers found that creative dance could benefit students of all ages with varied abilities, including adult learners, in the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social levels. In addition, conducting action research could enhance the teacher's professional knowledge, teaching abilities, understanding of students' needs, use of teaching aids, and sense of achievement. Although reflecting is often placed in the last phase of the spiral cycles of action research, reflection often takes place throughout the teaching process and career. As van Manen (1990) points out, knowledge is embedded in action. This section will discuss two of the issues raised from the teacher-researchers' reflections that are worthy of attention:

1. Although each thesis limited its research goal to only one or two elements in the teaching/learning process of creative dance, the collection of all the findings sends a strong message that we are beings with physical, emotional, cognitive, and social components all interconnected, and creative dance could benefit all aspects of human beings. By linking the research findings of Chiang (2009), Lee (2008), Chiu (2007), and M.-H. Lin (2009), for example, one may discover that self-esteem, creativity, physical expression, and personal relationships are interconnected and may be simultaneously enhanced in the creative dance class, not to mention other benefits, such as learning motivation and multiple intelligences.
2. All the researchers showed their full commitment to teaching. Indeed, the teaching of creative dance emphasizes process more than product. Being a meaning-making process, the class of creative dance usually looks messy, and students' works are often criticized as not dance-like. This misunderstanding demands extra energy and skills from teachers in terms of classroom management, communication skills, and advocacy. On the other hand, perhaps we should take students' active engagement in creative dance in a positive way, urging teachers, schools, and scholars in other fields to reconsider a question: How do we make students as fully engaged in academic classes as they are in creative dance? Dance education can contribute to the practice of education in general in terms of student engagement, embodiment of knowledge, and the creation of meaningful learning experience.

After a review of 30 theses, two action research studies that were conducted by Min-ping Lin (2012) and Ching-lung Tseng (2011), respectively, will be discussed as examples of the implementation of creative dance in schools in Taiwan.

### **Action research on the integration of street dance into the teaching of creative dance (Min-ping Lin)**

#### **Rationale**

Having been a Performing Arts teacher for years, I found that junior high school students are not accustomed to expressing themselves, probably because they have not been provided the opportunity to do so since childhood. Nevertheless, they are highly attracted to Street Dance. Therefore, I decided to investigate the possibility of integrating elements of Street Dance in Creative Dance by conducting action research on one of my Grade 7 Performing Arts classes.

#### **Purposes of research**

1. To explore the change of students' learning motivation during my Performing Arts class that integrated Street Dance with Creative Dance;
2. To understand students' learning process in terms of physical expression during my Performing Arts class;
3. To analyze the meanings and reflections during my course of Creative Dance teaching.

#### **Curriculum design**

Utilizing Street Dance as a medium for guidance, I designed a Creative Dance curriculum for my seventh-grade Performing Arts classes that incorporated activities of dancing, dance-making, and dance appreciation with the educational objectives of enhancing students' cognition, affection, and psychomotor skills. Three units were included in the curriculum:

- Unit 1 –“Street Dance as life”: Students' life experiences were used to develop movements and dance phrases, while certain styles of Street Dance and their connections with life were introduced to arouse learning motivation.
- Unit 2 – “Exploration of Street Dance style”: Movement elements were applied to explore a variety of movement qualities and possibilities of Street Dance.
- Unit 3 – “Choreography and performance”: Students worked in groups to select movement materials that had been practiced, created dances out of them, and presented them to music.

Table 2 shows the movement elements in coherence with each Street Dance style.

Table 2. The links between Street Dance movement features and movement elements.

Style of Street Dance	Movement Elements
Breaking	Space (Level), Shape
Popping	Time (Long, Short)
Locking	Effort (Strong, Sudden)
Reggae	Effort (Light, Sustain)
Hip-Hop	Time (Rhythm)

### **Research findings and discussions**

I found that students could quickly engage in the learning process when being brought into the world of Street Dance. Students expressed their love of Street Dance and their admiration of street dancers, wanting to try out Street Dance movements. For example, one student indicated, “When I watched so many [street] dances, it made me feel it’s really wonderful. I hope I could actually dance them.”

Looking for inspiration from daily life, I situated the learning context in game-like activities, which made students feel interested, looking forward to their next class. This student, for instance, said, “It was fun in that each class had different activities. Every week we looked forward to the performing arts class.”

### **The enhancement of students’ learning motivation**

In terms of cognition, students learned various styles of Street Dance and movement elements of Creative Dance. In the exploration of movement elements, in particular, they found that the same movement changed when a new element was introduced. Meanwhile, the same subject matter could be expressed with different body shapes. For example, one student said, “I found that my movements are the same with no. 30. But my movement showed a gigantic microphone.” Another added, “Even though the thing to do is the same ... each person shows different movements.”

In terms of learning attitude, most students were engaged in movement exploration off stage. However, their movements would be confined after I praised them. Still tending not to perform if they chose, after 10 lessons, they were able to better appreciate other people’s dances, describing the strengths and weaknesses of the performances, and discussing how to improve for a better performance. A sample of students’ writings is as follows: “I think the best dancers should go to the last group! Their movements were simple and clear, and they changed their formations! As for our team, I think our movements seemed too small, and our formation was all the same. That team deserves our learning.”

As to physical expression, it was found that each style of Street Dance helped students express themselves in a clearer way in certain movement elements. For example, the freezing action of Breaking could encourage students’ use of the horizontal plane, even though it was not easy for them to stay still in their shapes. Moreover, students could further represent the shapes of daily life objects by applying the knowledge of movement elements to physical expressions. In the process of movement exploration, more students were willing to challenge themselves with creative movement. Their movement performance and choreography have made progress.

### **The process of creative dance teaching and reflection**

While teaching this class, I found some problems that demanded my attention. For example, some students responded that they had been doing the same thing every week. In fact, each week, I had students explore different movement elements by working on the same movement combinations that were developed in the first week. The reason for students' mis-impression might be due to their insufficient bodily experiences and movement sensitivity. While emphasizing students' interest in Street Dance, I seemed to pay less attention to students' bodily experiences and sensitivity. The consistent class procedure, which developed from warm-up, movement exploration, and discussion, to presentation, might be another reason for students to find the class the same every week. The class procedure may need to have some variations so that students will not feel the same every week. I realized I need to do this in my next course design.

### **Conclusions**

1. Integration of Street Dance into Creative Dance teaching could enhance students' learning motivation.
2. Integration of Street Dance into Creative Dance teaching could enhance students' learning in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor areas.
3. Conducting action research on teaching could enhance the teacher's professional growth, helping the teacher observe students' abilities, needs, and understandings, and to realize the teaching routines that had been taken for granted.

### **From mimicking to choreographing: The design and implementation of a fifth-grade folk dance curriculum (Ching-lung Tseng)**

#### **Purpose and rationale of the research**

From my teaching experience, I have found out that most folk dance teachers typically teach via the imitation method, where students learn by mimicking. Today, creative thinking and teaching are encouraged, and I hope to stimulate students' creative thinking during limited class hours while teaching them folk dance. Based on the premise that the folk dance style in each dance's particular country of origin is unchanged, I instructed students to learn the original folk dance steps and then guided them to reorganize the basic steps or make other formation changes by themselves. It was expected that they would integrate folk dance teaching with choreographing. By conducting action research, I explored the process of curriculum implementation and revision.

#### **Research context**

The research participants were 35 fifth graders (18 boys and 17 girls) whom I taught in Happy Primary School (pseudonym). The folk dance curriculum consisted of 15 sessions (originally designed as 12 sessions) and was implemented twice a week in 2007. Each session was 40 minutes long.

#### **Curriculum content analysis**

The folk dance pieces studied in this curriculum included Russian, Slovak, and Malaysian. The

geographic locations of these countries cover the regions of North Asia, Southeast Asia, and Europe, which were selected to broaden the students' world views. In addition to the geographical element, the differences of each dance were also considered. The Russian folkdance emphasized integration of props into the dance, whereas Slovak folkdance emphasized coordination of the limbs and improvisation of the body. Malaysian folkdance is done in a sitting position; with limited elements for choreography, it thus challenged students to ponder creation out of limitation.

### **Research findings and discussion**

Originally, I thought Russian folkdance was not difficult and that, using spoons as props, students should be interested. In fact, students did not perform the dance steps as I expected, because the basic steps include some small and delicate movements that are not easy for beginners. However, 74% of the students expressed interest in this dance on their learning sheets and thought they did well. This indicated that most students might not pay attention to the dance style, but that they felt happy as long as they could complete the sequence of the dance. This made me understand that it would be enough to have the students "experience" the dance even if they did not attain correctness of the style. The students can learn more in-depth in the future.

There are body slapping movements in the Slovak and Malaysian folk dances, which was easier for beginners to master. I added "paper, scissor, stone" to the beginning of the Slovak Dance, hoping to raise interest from the students (especially the boys). The class went out of control and became chaotic, and I regretted the arrangement. After the game stopped and the students started to practice the basic steps again, almost all of the students unexpectedly made progress. This indicated that integration with games did achieve learning.

I also found out that teaching aids can help students learn how to choreograph easily and quickly. The evolutionary process of my teaching aids was as follows:

1. In Unit 1, each group had a learning sheet to record their choreography. However, recording almost became the work of the group leaders, with little involvement from other students. Besides, a small recording sheet could not serve as a reminder when the students were practicing their choreography.
2. In Unit 2, A4-size learning sheets were replaced with slides. Although the contents could be displayed on the blackboard so all students could read, they did not solve the problem of involvement as observed in Unit 1. In addition, when the room was not dark enough or when a projector was not available, it became difficult to teach choreography.
3. In Unit 3, I changed the slides to full-size posters and movement cards for students to arrange in the sequence of movements. As a result, students became more involved and harmonious in group discussions, feeling more satisfied and confident with their choreography. The posters could be seen easily by all the performers as they were performing. Of all the students, 59% said that they preferred posters to be used in teaching and discussion.

“Choreography Learning” was especially emphasized, which included three aspects: self-creating movements, formation change, and combination of basic steps:

1. In the Russian Dance Unit, I had students work on all three choreographic elements, which seemed to lay too much burden upon them. As a result, they improvised instead of reproducing their self-created movements of spoon-striking while performing.
2. In the Slovak Dance Unit, I had students work on only “self-creating movements” (such as slapping body) and a “combination of basic steps” to reduce their burden for creation. But for the self-creating movements, I needed to project the slides of students’ choreographic charts during their presentations to check whether they were reproducing their dance works correctly.
3. “The combination of basic steps” was kept as the only choreographic element in the Malaysia Dance Unit. Instead of “formation change,” the students were instructed to use “level change.” The students responded enthusiastically and the activities went smoothly.

### Conclusions

In general, especially with a limited time frame, no more than two choreographic elements should be attempted to avoid pressure for the students. “Combination of basic steps” was a choreographic element that was easier to master for higher grade primary school students. In the aspect of “self-creating movement,” the teacher had to guide students to confirm the movements they had made in order to avoid overly “casual” presentations.

### Reflection

By the end of the process, I found that the difficulty level of the basic steps did not affect the students’ ability to choreograph. However, it would be better to add the choreographic elements gradually. There were too many choreographic elements in Unit 1. I was too greedy, and hoped to teach everything, which resulted in confusion and burden for the students. If I could have taught this class again, I would limit myself to “combination of basic steps” in Unit 1; in Unit 2, “formation changes” or “self-creating movements” would be added; in Unit 3, it would be up to the students to decide which parts needed to be choreographed. With these changes, dance teaching would have gone more smoothly.

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<sup>2</sup> Because there are common first names in Chinese, in the list of references, all the Romanized spelling of the Chinese names are followed by Chinese characters for Chinese readers who are interested in in-depth studies.

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