

## **Shaping future directions for dance education**

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### **Abstract**

The relationship between curriculum development and teacher's practice is often diminished through political and cultural agendas as well as changing trends in teacher education and students' interests and experiences in dance. The ongoing research and forum presentations by Dance and the Child International (daCi) colleagues on international curriculum developments have identified that many countries have developed meaningful dance curricula that reveal that identity development is closely linked to learning and education. Unfortunately, the implementation of those curricula have been impeded by many barriers, such as the lack of respect and understanding of the role of dance education for all young people, the adequate training for dance artists, specialist and generalist teachers, and a clear set of standards for dance education. It is evident that the need for advocacy and collaboration is essential for the maintenance and implementation of dance curricula in our schools.

In this paper, ideas and successes may provide a platform from which to support and guide dance experiences for young people. Firstly, an outline of the results of a survey questionnaire that was sent to dance educators in selected countries will be outlined. The results of the survey questionnaire provide insight into how dance is experienced, and insight into the deeper personal meanings of people who stayed involved in dance beyond childhood. Additionally, the findings propose key characteristics of dance learning that advocate for the importance of a comprehensive dance education. Secondly, identifying the major learning outcomes of international dance curricula and relating them to what young people have said about their experiences may convey what is needed in future curricula development for both young students and teacher education.

*Keywords:* dance, education, learning, curriculum, advocacy

### **Introduction**

This paper focuses on the collaboration and research of four colleagues from different countries — Australia, Canada, Denmark, and the United States of America — who are dedicated to the development and implementation of dance programs and curricula for young people. Exchanges between the colleagues and other dance professionals began in 2012 in two locations: the Dance and the Child International/World Dance Alliance (daCi/WDA) Global Dance Summit in Taipei, Taiwan, in July, and the UNESCO World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE) Summit in Rovaniemi, Finland, in November. Further conversations continued through Skype and email and culminated in presentations at significant meetings and conferences. We were concerned about answering the following questions:

- a) How do young people engage in dance and how do these dance experiences contribute to their chosen lifestyles and careers;
- b) What provision of dance education is made for young people in both formal, non-formal, and informal settings; and,

c) What is being learned in the experiences provided for young people?

The conversations were initiated at the daCi/WDA Global Dance Summit held in Taipei in July 2012 following a five-session special curriculum event, titled *Curriculum in Motion*. The session brought together conference participants from many different countries to share dance curriculum experiences and ideas, and to consider how countries might learn from each other and work together to shape the development and implementation of a high quality standard of dance education, particularly in schools. The following topics were suggested: the latest developments in curriculum that are shaping the meaning of dance education; the obstacles to providing dance education; the theories shaping curricula; the differences between the curricula; the recognition and acceptance of a well-balanced concept and benchmarks; and the role of the generalist educator, dance teacher, and dance artist.

Exchanges continued at the UNESCO World Alliance for Arts Education (WAAE) Summit held at the fourth summit in Rovaniemi, Finland, November 7-9, 2012, in partnership with the University of Lapland, entitled *Cultural Encounters and Northern Reflections*. Rovaniemi, in the far north of Finland, fosters cultural understanding, especially within the Circumpolar North. Rovaniemi provided an ideal place for WAAE to celebrate achievements to date and also prepare future agendas and action. The aims of the summit were to review and develop the WAAE's strategic plans within the areas of research, advocacy, and networking, and to develop the relationship between creative pedagogies and the cultivations of knowledge-based societies that nurture sustainable development, global solidarity, cooperation, and human rights through strategic partnerships between the WAAE, industry, civil society, and government representatives. The summit provided an ideal context to further our discussions and to communicate with other delegates interested in dance education.

The conversations brought about two studies that will be discussed in this paper. Firstly, an outline of the results of a survey questionnaire and additional interviews that were sent to dance participants in selected countries will be outlined. The survey questionnaire and interviews provide insight into how dance is experienced and uncovers the deeper personal meanings of people staying involved in dance. Secondly, the identification of the major learning outcomes of the selected dance curricula from the *Curriculum in Motion* project will be outlined. Finally, a discussion of the relationship of those major curricula learning outcomes to what young people

have said about their experiences may convey what is needed in future curricula development for both young students and teacher education.

### ***Dance Learning in Motion* survey questionnaire and interviews**

The *Dance Learning in Motion* study attempted to ascertain how young people engage in dance and how those dance experiences contribute to their chosen lifestyles and careers. In particular, it would help to characterize what learning is in dance. The study related to the work of Susanne Keuchel, which highlights UNESCO's definitions of "different fields of education" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 5). Keuchel suggests that "formal learning" is concerned with curriculum offerings within education and training institutions: " 'non-formal' learning is learning that has been acquired in addition or alternatively to formal learning; and 'informal learning' is learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities, and through interests and activities of all individuals" (Keuchal, 2014). These definitions assisted in designing the questions for the survey questionnaire (see Table 1), which was sent to leading dance educators in universities from each of the participating countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Taiwan, and the USA. These lead educators then distributed the survey questionnaire by email to volunteers who were members of groups, such as tertiary university dance students, recent graduates, or teachers from various institutions. We later followed up with in-depth interviews that asked selected participants to comment further about their experiences.

### **Findings of the survey questionnaire**

The participants were asked a series of questions that delved into their experience in dance and their thoughts about those experiences and what should be offered in dance education. The responses were collated into one document and were reviewed by each researcher. Firstly, the Likert scale responses and explanations regarding age, skill, and experience in dance were collated. And secondly, using van Manen's (1990) hermeneutic phenomenology, which recommends three stages — "a wholistic reading approach"; "a selective reading approach"; and "a detailed reading approach" (p. 93) — the researchers reviewed the detailed responses individually and then together. In this second analysis, themes were identified as being important characteristics of dance learning.

The first set of questions asked respondents to provide information about themselves and their involvement in dance. The 176 respondents included participants between the ages of 18-70 years of age who identified their experiences as teachers of dance or dance-related activities, and as university students at the undergraduate or graduate levels, some of whom had recently completed a university degree. The majority described its skills in dance as very good. The respondents were also asked about the importance of dance for school students and whether dance should be part of the primary/elementary and secondary school students' learning.

The majority agreed that dance is important to human experience, identifying that dance is “uplifting and gives a sense of connection to your mind and body” (respondent no. 87) and that dance “promotes healthy living” (respondent no. 119). The majority also identified the maximum benefits of dance education and agreed that dance should be a part of primary/elementary school students' learning. One participant said:

It is core curriculum and a way of learning and knowing the world. Dance is a language of expression and is universal. Dance is movement and we need to move to stay healthy, strong, and confident. Dance is an art and we need art in our lives to know what it is to be human. (respondent no. 10)

**Table 1**

| <b><i>Dance Learning in Motion Survey Questionnaire</i></b>  |
|--|
| 1. What is your age group?   |
| 2. What do you do? (student, teacher, etc.)  |
| 3. On a scale of 1-5, how do you rate your skills and knowledge of dance?  |
| 4. Dance is an important part of human experience. (scale from agree to disagree)  |
| 5. Dance should be a part of all primary/elementary school students' learning experiences.<br>Please explain your response in a few sentences. |
| 6. Dance should be a curriculum option for all secondary/high school students.<br>Please explain your response in a few sentences.             |
| 7. Why have you chosen that dance should be a part of your life?   |
| 8. Please tell us about any important dance experiences you've had.  |
| 9. What kind of dance experiences do you recall at home?   |
| 10. What kinds of dance experiences, if any, do you recall during your time in elementary or high school?                                      |
| 11. What kinds of dance experiences, if any, do you recall outside of school?  |
| 12. If you have ever taught dance in any capacity, please give details.  |
| 13. What can be learned through dance? (One sentence)  |
| 14. Please give your city and country.   |

The majority also agreed that dance should be a part of the high school students' learning, identifying again the value of dance in its offering opportunities for creating and expressing oneself. One respondent expressed:

Dance can be used as a form of expression and an outlet for creativity. High school is a difficult time for adolescents, and dance can create a welcoming, safe environment to grow and learn as individuals as well as with a community. (respondent no. 53)

Articulating that dance in the secondary school is not about a career but about growth and expression, one respondent said:

We don't know what we don't know. If students are not given the opportunity to dance as they mature, they are not likely to experience the power of the body a vehicle for art and expression. We don't live in our bodies enough; we live in desks, operating from the neck up. Students need to experience dance as a natural part of school culture and a way of learning. Dance, too often, is reserved for the elite, the studio. (respondent no. 10)

We had not anticipated a varied group in the respondents but considered it positive for the analysis. It was equally positive that there was a range of careers, and how the respondents identified themselves. The responses to the questions about the importance of dance in our lives and the education of young people were overwhelmingly supportive of dance being available at all curricula levels of formal schooling.

The next set of questions invited the respondents to talk about their particular experiences in dance and how important those experiences had been in their lives. The questions specifically inquired about their experiences at home, at school, outside of school, and any teaching experience. The questions queried those experiences and why they were of particular importance. A final question asked them what could be learned through dance. In reading the responses, it was evident that the respondents were very passionate about dance and desired that all young people should have dance in their lives.

In the second analysis, themes emerged as being important characteristics of dance learning: embodiment, culture, holistic development, and communication.

The theme of embodiment was identified as kinesthetic awareness, and mind-body connections were revealed through such statements as "Dance is my way of being; it is my way of living as a person in this world" (respondent no. 63) and "It is good for my physical and emotional well-being" ( respondent no. 36).

The theme of culture was identified as connectivity, community, awareness of differences of others, identity, openness, and social skills. The following testaments support the roles that dance plays in developing and supporting such competencies. Respondents identified that dance "is important to the development of the cultural sense, aesthetic sense, and social sense of the

child, adolescent, or adult” (respondent no. 84) and “is a form of personal and cultural expression” (respondent no. 52).

The theme, holistic development, was identified as personal (including sense of self, self-esteem, confidence, knowledge of feelings) and physical (including coordination and motor development). Many respondents wrote that dance changed their lives, gave them a sense of freedom, and helped them to find their way in the world. One person explained, “I love moving in different/new ways. It is good exercise, and I love how it can tell a story, as well as feel freeing” (respondent no. 24).

The final theme, communication, was defined as creativity and expression. Several expressed the opinion that dance provides the opportunity to express oneself and provides “a form of expression for societal issues” (respondent no. 131). One respondent described “Through dance, I can express myself from my deepest impulses and bring out who I am. I also feel deeply connected in my dance community and a sense of togetherness” (respondent no. 64).

The researchers consider that the survey questionnaire provided an initial step in ascertaining how people experience dance in formal, informal, and non-formal settings from countries in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Asia Pacific region. The four themes and sub-themes: embodiment, culture, holistic development, and communication confirmed for the researchers the importance of dance education and its significance in the development of our young students to do well aesthetically, academically, and socially. One respondent summarized the themes, saying, “Dance is an essential part of the human experience; is a means of socializing, communicating, expressing, exercising, developing coordination, enjoyment, teaching, learning, sharing, explaining, and emoting” (respondent no. 22). The respondents clearly revealed the power of dance in the informal, non-formal, and formal settings, and the significance of dance in their lives. It is also clear from the responses that dance is not offered as a curriculum subject in all schools at the elementary and secondary levels. It is also evident that many in the informal context experience dance and that not all young people have access to dance in those specialized settings, such as dance studios. Studying dance could be the way to success where students engage in creative activities, collaborate with others, and problem-solve ideas. Such practice teaches creativity, ways of thinking and communication, provokes imagination and possibilities, and is central to the arts/dance, but also vital to our rapidly changing world and required skills of the 21st century.

## Interviews

The researchers recognized that there were strengths and weaknesses to the survey questionnaire. It was considered that it may only create a snapshot and does not always provide in-depth information. Using the results from the survey questionnaire, qualitative focused interviews with selected respondents representing geographic diversity and different experiences in dance were implemented. Three current dance educators (Cassandra, Berenice, and Markos) were invited to participate in in-depth interviews that were conducted and subsequently coded and analyzed in the same way as the survey questionnaire. The interview questions (Table 2) probed further into their dance experiences and asked about their first recollection of dance experiences in informal, non-formal, and formal settings, and the conflicts or disconnects that might have existed when they began formal dance, and how they reconciled these. They were also asked to talk more about why they have chosen dance as part of their lives.

**Table 2**

| <b>Interview Questions</b>  |
|---|
| 1. Tell me about your first recollection of dance experiences?  |
| 2. Discuss the conflicts or disconnects that might have existed when you began formal dance, and how you reconciled these.                      |
| 3. In the survey, you gave a number to this statement: Dance is an important part of human experience. Agree to disagree. Please now elaborate. |
| 4. Why have you chosen that dance should be a part of your life?  |
| 5. Please tell us about any important dance experiences you've had.   |
| 6. What kind of dance experiences do you recall at home?  |
| 7. What kinds of dance experiences, if any, do you recall during your time in elementary or high school?  |
| 8. What kinds of dance experiences, if any, do you recall outside of school?  |
| 9. What can be learned through dance?   |

Cassandra and Berenice had their first experiences in dance studios while Markos' first dance experiences were in community-based dance activities. When talking about initial

influences, Cassandra described how she became quickly discouraged through lack of encouragement at the studio and home when she began dancing at the age of six in a dance studio. Later in her teen years, she returned to dancing with a school friend and that inspired her to continue her studies in dance and dance education. In comparison, Berenice and Markos were actively encouraged by their parents to dance and continued to dance from an early age. All three participants had studied dance and dance education at the university level, Berenice and Markos studying at the graduate level. They agreed that dance was an important part of the human experience, explaining that dance “is essential to everyone” (Berenice); “It’s a great gift my family, my parents, gave to me; it’s part of who I am. It’s now part of my personality and who I am” (Markos); and “I look at it from a physical, emotional, energetic, spiritual aspect” (Cassandra). They cherished the experiences that dance has given them: Berenice explained that she valued “traveling to different places of my country to dance and study”; Markos said, “using dance to facilitate different forms of empowerment in disadvantaged communities”; and according to Cassandra, it was “working at a school that has so many kids with different languages, or different traumas; I find that that’s the universal language.”

In the analysis of the interviews, key features of dance learning were revealed. The themes were culture, holistic development, and communication. The theme of culture was identified as identity, community, and awareness of the difference of others. Berenice explained, “I remember being also engaged and actively encouraged to dance because my parents are avid dancers ... It was such a joy and such a great moment in just feeling close with my family and enjoying that having that as an extra opportunity.” Markos describes missing his friends and that “The reason why I miss them is not because I don’t see them anymore, but it’s because I have memories about those moments that we had creating music and dance together.”

The theme of holistic development was identified as a sense of self, lack of confidence/having confidence, and self-esteem. They all agreed that dance could be a cathartic experience and could help to build confidence. Cassandra’s comment reflects that dance can help that sense of self: “I do believe that dance is essential for everyone and just being inside that experience helped me to reflect on the many ways that it has made me a better person, a better human being just being connected to other dancers and not only in the romantic sense of it.” Berenice identifies the confidence that dance affords as having “the ability to kind of pull down all the barriers and boundaries for us to venture out and interact with more experiences.”

The final theme of communication was identified as expression. Cassandra believes “It means speaking my truth and being authentic and living a life that is passionate” and “it’s a way of life; it’s a form of so many different kinds of expression.” Markos further explains,

I came from a culture where dance happens the way breathing in and out happens in daily life, so it’s not taken seriously as an academic subject or even a professional career. So within those contradictions and strictures, I was personally able to locate how dance can be essential to my personal life and the communities that I set out and aspired to serve.

The interviews also revealed a further category, one of disconnect. Each of the respondents identified that there was a lack of continuity or disconnect between informal and formal dance experiences, that in many cases formal learning contradicted informal learning. Markos described a disconnect: “learning dance in formal settings did not allow me to work closely and connect with others using dance as a space.” He further clarified, “Because we ended up working towards getting a good grade, or competing with each other to get a good mark and be rewarded through quantifiable grading and assessment.” Many dancers express a disconnection when they join dancers from the mainstream dance forms, such as ballet, jazz, or modern. Berenice explained her previous experience was in folkloric dance and that a disconnect emerged when she entered undergraduate studies and did “not perceive myself as a strong dancer in relationship to the techniques or styles that were present, were offered, in that setting.” She believed “It is actually a cultural thing because I have that feeling that you are not a dancer unless you can hold your leg up here, or you can do so many pirouettes, or you can do this and that or you can do those amazing tricks.” Cassandra’s early experiences in jazz dance led her to reflect that while “watching some of my instructors in a jazz class and thinking something — what is the disconnect for myself and trying not to judge them. And really when I look back on it was because it was outdated. I was doing the same routines, like outdated jazz, for seven years.”

### **Findings of the interviews**

The findings of the interviews supported the themes and statements found in the survey questionnaire, providing a more in-depth discussion of dance learning. In particular, the themes of culture, holistic development, and communication were clearly revealed. Even though the

theme of embodiment was not so evident, there were some references to the importance of kinesthetic awareness and mind-body connection. The final theme of disconnect emerged from the interviews, revealing situations that occurred for many respondents in experiencing dance in formal and non-formal settings, such as lack of recognition and respect for different dance forms and teaching contexts, out-of-date dance syllabi, focus on skill training, and no opportunities to create or communicate with others. Berenice expressed a disconnect in the following statement:

Learning dance in formal settings did not allow me to work closely and connect with others using dance as a space. Because we ended up working towards getting a good grade, or working towards out competing with each other to get a good mark and be rewarded through quantifiable grading and assessment.

Markos summarizes the thoughts and values placed on dance by the respondents:

Everything that makes you functional to be [effective], to be productive, to be successful in life you can learn through dance. To be in connection with your body, to be in confidence with yourself, and to notice things deeply, to appreciate things deeply, sense of community, participation, discipline, and like everything you do through dance.

### **Dance curriculum**

Within this paper, curriculum is used interchangeably with national or regional standards in the arts. To be truthful, the writing of standards is not meant to be prescriptive and is intended to present frameworks in which curriculum can be constructed. This then leaves the actual curriculum in the domain of the local entity where instruction takes place. For these purposes, curriculum theories will apply to the development of these standards documents.

The theoretical approach of curriculum today has followed the philosophy of John Dewey (1859-1952), who advocated for inquiry-based education where students approach real-world problems through open-ended inquiry, thinking skills, and metacognition. Experts, such as Ted Aoki, Max van Manen, and Pinar, have also deeply influenced curriculum scholarship and development. Pinar (2011) “argues that curriculum — or *currere* — is an organic idea rather than a Socratic message that never changes” and suggests that “teachers must discover this *currere* for

themselves through methods of self-reflection and self-discovery” (p. 3). Aoki (1993) articulately outlines the importance of integrating critical cultural exploration into curriculum and pursuing curriculum research as a phenomenological activity. This connects with van Manen’s (2007) thinking that teachers and researchers are attentive to the “promise that phenomenology can make to practice” (p. 13). Olsen (2012) identifies that Aoki’s work leads the way in viewing a lived curriculum that acknowledges the individual differences of those learning, and quoting Aoki, “accommodates lived meanings, thereby legitimating thoughtful everyday narratives” (Olsen, 2012 quotes Aoki, 1993, p. 263). Essentially the curriculum-as-planned is the work of curriculum planners who produce a document to guide the learning. The curriculum-as-lived is the implementation of that curriculum by the teacher. Thus the teacher lives in the uncomfortable spaces between the curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived, recognizing the individual differences of those learning and responding to the learner’s needs and aspirations (Olsen, 2012, para. 9). Aoki (1993) believed that if teachers respond to their students and recognize the unique narratives they hold, they will bring knowledge and wisdom to their practice (p. 257).

Curriculum development involves understanding curriculum models and selecting one most appropriate for the learner and the teaching environment. The task involves inquiring into educational practice, interpreting the language of curriculum, planning and implementing of curricula, and considering the role of administrators, teachers, and artists in mediating curriculum with students. It is important to ask what knowledge is of most worth, but above all, the curriculum should respond positively to each student’s unique needs and identify and remove barriers for learning. It is often much easier to present concepts and informational knowledge than it is to bring about personal learnings and understandings through reflective practice.

The writings of many dance scholars and dance curriculum writers reflect the above-mentioned experts in curriculum development and pedagogy, identifying the issue that many dance teachers have not been prepared in their training or personal experiences of dance to teach in those in-between spaces of the curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived. How can we prepare a dance curriculum that provides students with a good dance experience and enables them to learn more about others and themselves, and prepares them to actively participate in society in a meaningful and artistic way? It is of paramount importance that the curriculum is culturally sensitive and responds to today’s complex classrooms that include students of different

background, ability, race, ethnicity, and faith, and having different needs and desires. Young people bring with them knowledge and experience in dance, knowledge of contemporary popular culture and media, and the ability to employ technology to create and communicate globally.

Some dance teachers lack confidence and some have negative attitudes to the teaching of dance in the suggested curricula of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and, in some places, dance is given low priority in the school program. Many teachers have been trained to teach the set syllabi and exercises of a dance form and focus on the mastery of technique, which, in many cases, is based in a western form. There seems to be a lack of understanding and willingness to perceive dance as a means of expressing personal ideas and values, unraveling identity, and seeking cultural understanding. McCarthy-Brown (2009) distinctly explains that in her teaching, she wanted to share what she had learned and knew about dance, and came to the realization that there was more to dance education. She explained,

I thought if I instilled the prevailing value for technique in my students, I would provide them with access into the world of dance (as if they were not already a part of the world of dance). What I did not realize at the time was that to instill technique as the pinnacle of achievement served to devalue the culture of dance to which many of my students were affectionately tied. (p. 121)

Risner and Stinson (2010), in examining dance education training and practice, identify that “we add courses to the curriculum in ‘global dance’ rather than rethinking our assumptions about how we think of all dance” (p. 5). Kerr-Berry (2010) identifies in her final editorial that more needs to be done to “reflect what is happening outside the walls of our studio and classroom” (p. 3), and challenges “a hierarchical relationship between concert dance and everything else, or ‘self’ and ‘other’” (p. 4). Risner (2010) and Kerr-Berry (2010) challenge the impact of the multiculturalism debate that has produced world dance courses, but as Risner says, has had little effect on “... student or faculty populations” (p. 4). Kerr-Berry suggests rethinking the separation of dance forms and positioning: “... all dance as world dance” (p. 4). Cooper Albright (2003) calls “for a pedagogical space in which we can at once honor cultural difference while at the same time affirm a willingness to engage our bodies in historical and cross-cultural analysis” (p. 177).

Further in the 2010 *Journal of Dance Education*, Risner brings together scholars Bond, Musil, and Stinson to identify the responsibilities of higher education and to rethink dance education programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels that prepare teachers and artists for the various teaching contexts and address issues of curriculum content. They identify issues of equity in programming, focus of content, limited resources, effects of globalization and technology, and the divides between artists and educators and studio-based and educational dance. Even though scholars from the United States present these issues, we believe they will resonate with many scholars from other countries.

In this time of examining what is happening in dance education at the post-secondary as well as the primary and secondary levels, it seemed appropriate to reflect on the *Curriculum in Motion* project and connect these findings with the *Dance Learning in Motion* Survey Questionnaire and interview projects.

### **Dance curriculum research project**

The writers employed several reviews of dance curricula (dance standards documents to assess what is happening in dance education). Firstly, they looked at the Study of Standards for International Arts Education (The College Board, 2011). Secondly, they reviewed the discussion of the *Curriculum in Motion* sessions. Thirdly, the themes identified in the *Dance Learning in Motion* Survey Questionnaire and interviews were used to look at commonalities.

In the Study of Standards for International Arts Education (The College Board, 2011), it was found of the 15 countries reviewed, that national arts standards were organized “in bands or levels according to the age and/or grade levels of the students,” reflecting “what it is believed children are capable of cognitively, socially, and in fine motor abilities at various stages of their development” (p. 5). Each country included dance as a separate area within the broad arts education curriculum.

### ***Curriculum in Motion* project**

The project led by Susan R. Koff, USA, Charlotte Svendler Nielsen, Denmark, Cornelia Baumgart, Germany and Ivančica Janković, Croatia, at the daCi/WDA Global Dance Summit in 2012 encouraged participants from different countries to share dance curriculum experiences and ideas, and to consider how educators might learn from each other and work together to shape the

development and implementation of a high quality standard of dance education, particularly in schools. It was propitious that this project was held at the Global Dance Summit in Taipei in 2012 of the two organizations, daCi and WDA, as the initiative clearly reflected the major aims of both associations. daCi, a non-profit association founded in 1978, aims “to recognise and develop dance for young people, with respect for the ethnic, gender, and cultural identities of each young person within a spirit of international understanding” (Article II). In particular, opportunities for young people to experience dance as “creators, performers, and spectators” would be enriched through research and exchange between countries (Article II). The WDA, specifically The Education and Training Network, “provides opportunities for sharing curriculum information and resources, and a forum for professional exchange. It covers dance training of professional artists, and dance education and appreciation in schools, studios, and communities” (para. 3).

It was evident from the description and discussion of the curricula shared by the participants of the *Curriculum in Motion* sessions that not every country designed and implemented curricula in the same way. Single-case presentations were invited from selected countries followed by other participants sharing curriculum developments in their countries. Table 3 identifies the responsibility for curriculum development, those who teach the dance curriculum, and the emphasis and competency areas identified for the programs. Curricula were prepared by the state, province, or country, making comparisons sometimes difficult, however, it was possible to identify major learning competencies. Competencies were generally identified as students being able to create, perform, and appreciate dance, and a few focused on specific dance forms that were to be experienced. Dance was taught mainly within arts education with a few examples where dance was part of physical education and/or music, and those teaching dance ranged from generalist teachers mainly in the primary school context and dance specialists and artists in the secondary school contexts. There was an emphasis on dance as an art form with students undertaking personal study and connecting to life experiences. A few placed importance on the dance product. Many themes for dance learning (Table 4), such as expression, body, social, emotional, and creative benefits were reflected within curriculum documents, as identified, for example, within the “Aims” for dance in the new Australian curriculum (2013):

Dance is expressive movement with purpose and form. Through dance, students represent,

question, and celebrate human experience, using the body as the instrument and movement as the medium for personal, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical communication. Like all art forms, dance has the capacity to engage, inspire, and enrich all students, exciting the imagination and encouraging students to reach their creative and expressive potential.

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/thearts/Rationale-Aims/dance>

### **Conclusion**

Through this multiple event, multiple-country research project, three phases were conducted in order to ascertain the type of dance learning within formal, informal, and non-formal contexts:

- A survey
- In-depth interviews
- Analysis of curriculum (standards documents) from multiple countries

The first set of qualitative themes concerning the importance of dance education emerged from the survey and were embodiment, culture, holistic development, and communication. On the basis of this survey, we then conducted three in-depth interviews with respondents to the survey, and those were qualitatively analyzed revealing the themes of culture, holistic development, and communication, and a new theme of disconnect. This theme was fascinating and has not yet been fully explored, but opened some of the questions and inquiry into the direction of curriculum and pedagogy. The survey and interviews provided the perspective of the dance student who is now a teacher. The turn to curriculum documents is both to seek a different perspective and also to return to the inception of this project, the “curriculum event” that was held in 2012.

Disconnect as a theme provided the inquiry that directed us back to curriculum with the question: Is the disconnect provided by curricula structure, teaching, or both? How will we know? Disconnect is a perception on the basis of the students, as they moved through different phases of their own dance learning. So we turn our focus now to pedagogy, because the enactment of curriculum is pedagogy. Analysis of the curriculum documents alone will not

provide an answer to this question. To complete this investigation, we must see how curriculum is enacted, and this is also a culturally-situated event.

There are many high-quality programs in formal, informal, and non-formal settings providing effective and meaningful experiences in dance for students. However, a recognition and connection between these types of experiences often shapes a young person's interest and passion for dance. Dance learning that mediates between these different types of learning is often in the domain of the student. The next question in this research is not only what type of teaching facilitates participation in dance, but what type of teaching values dance learning in all its settings? Those qualities that were identified in the themes of the *Dance Learning in Motion* Survey Questionnaire and interviews demonstrate clearly what can be learned in, through, and about dance. It appears that the field of dance education, including policy makers, dance educators, and curriculum writers, needs to reexamine the focus of dance curriculum documents, reassess what is happening in teacher preparation, and deliver the most appropriate dance education for students in formal, informal, and non-formal settings.

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