

Where are you from? Creative dance crossing boundaries — to nurture roots and wings through a creative dance workshop for young children

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This project dialogue deals with how to get from the curriculum to the classroom practice. It focuses on the teaching and learning process involved in teaching a creative dance workshop to young multicultural children aged between two and 10 years old in Hong Kong. In the presentation, I ask: What is Creative Dance? Why is it an appropriate form of dance for young children? What are the teachers' roles in this process? How do the students' and teachers' identities and cultural backgrounds interact and influence the learning experiences? The project suggests that dance as an art form has a valuable place in the education of children within a holistic curriculum that can provide young children with fruitful dance experiences. Dance education is a learning pathway for children to express themselves, understand, and embrace their own identity or collective cultural identity.

In researching creative dance and how to teach it, I have found more than one answer. There is a wealth of inspiring literature on teaching dance, on teaching young children, on the learning process, and on the creative process. But in the end, it is more than just a collection of knowledge and skills. It is about how we apply the knowledge and the skills when teaching. Teaching creative dance is not about the outcome itself but about how to get there. In arts education, the desired outcome can be neither precise nor the same for all children. One example and the most relevant in the process when working in a multicultural context was the introduction of dance elements through primary school subjects, stimulating children's inquiry via an interdisciplinary approach. The International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum was chosen as the subject of exploration and practice (see www.ibo.org). The IB Primary Years Program (PYP) fosters positive attitudes such as respect, tolerance, and responsibility, and provides opportunities for meaningful action and social service. The IB PYP unit of inquiry, "How we express ourselves," offers ways in which we can discover and express ideas, feelings, nature, culture, beliefs, and values; the ways in which we reflect on, extend, and enjoy our creativity; and our appreciation of the aesthetic.

Based on this experience, I propose that dance as an art form has a valuable place in the education of young children within a holistic curriculum where the educator can guide them through movement awareness and exploration, thus providing them with a fruitful and rich experience. In order to understand the process and contribute creatively, teachers must participate and be actively involved with their students. To nurture the process is to keep it alive and growing. The teacher's role is to strike the balance between content and delivery through guidance and flexibility, and to provide space for exploration and tools for composition as well for the refinement of such expression, to give children voices as well as listening skills, and to teach steps as well as the motives to do them.

Keywords: Creative dance, children, multicultural, identity

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Evelin Keller trained in classical ballet at the Ballet Rosana Abubakir in Bahia-Brazil, from an early age until becoming a member of the teacher's board in 1990. She holds a dance degree from University Federal of Bahia-Brazil (1999) and completed a Master of Fine Arts degree from Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in 2011. As a dancer and choreographer, she has worked with Gisela Rocha Dance Company, Switzerland (2001-2002); Stromereien (2003); Tanz Haus, Zurich (2003); Danca Brasil, Rio de Janeiro (2000); Almada Dance Festival, Portugal (2001); and Dance on Screen, London (2003). She founded Motive for Motion Dance Work and promotes dance classes and workshops for children, youths, and adults.