

## **Curriculum in motion – Special event**

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### Abstract

Dance in the curriculum faces challenges throughout the world for reasons that are both specific and global. Dance is constantly being threatened due to the increasing focus in schools on math, science, and literacy, as well as world financial concerns. Dance in the curriculum has been an ongoing discussion among dance educators for more than 35 years. At the daCi/WDA Global Dance Summit held in Taipei in July 2012, a five-session curriculum event was held to bring together dance curriculum experiences and ideas from the many participants, including dance educators from various countries, including the United States, Germany, Estonia, Taiwan, India, and Papua New Guinea.

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

The five sessions of the Curriculum in Motion – Special Event were organized as:

- Part 1: Introduction to the special event;
- Part 2: Around the world (panel of single case presentations);
- Part 3: Broad overview of curriculum developments internationally (roundtable); and
- Part 4 and 5: World Café and final discussion: Towards the future.

Overall, the discussions considered the following questions:

- What are the latest developments in curriculum around the world that are shaping the meaning of dance education?
- If dance is not happening, what are the obstacles?
- Can countries learn from each other?

- Is there a difference between dance in advanced countries and dance in developing countries?
- Is this on-going discussion based in theory, and, if so, what are the theories?
- What kind of benchmarks would be helpful in order to get a high quality standard for dance education, particularly in schools?
- Is it useful to establish a diverse and well-balanced dance concept for general education that is internationally recognized?
- Which role can dance artists play in the development and implementation of dance in the curriculum?

New questions arose during the discussions, particularly a need to specify what we mean by dance, the role of the teachers, and a careful look at the values that are being carried through curriculum development.

### **Around the world: Panel of single case presentations**

Session One was an introduction in which the five sessions were outlined, including the overarching questions. The questions introduced in Part 1 of the special event on curriculum were first framed in curriculum presentations from several countries, including Croatia, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, Estonia, and India. Each presentation included the development of a national curriculum in the individual country, and the progress and roadblocks to the development.

In 2000, dance was included in the New Zealand curriculum with the expectation that all students would have opportunities to learn dance as part of their schooling. By the end of 2008, dance was the fastest growing curriculum subject, and professional development was closely linked to the university level. After a change of government, professional development in the arts was withdrawn in favor of numeracy and literacy, and dance is no longer viewed as a priority in many schools. Liz Melchior discussed dilemmas that teachers face and suggested ways forward for dance education in the current political climate. She emphasized that specialist teachers exist only at the secondary level. The focus in primary schools is to integrate dance as opposed to dance as a discrete subject, which seems to be the philosophical thrust of this curriculum. An additional question that arose from this presentation is whether dance is a means, an end, or both.

Australia is currently moving towards the implementation of a national curriculum developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), with dance included in “The Arts” learning area. Jeff Meiners presented research by Emma Gill, which investigated teachers’ understanding of dance curriculum content, and the assistance required in order to teach dance to all students. Research findings may contribute to the development of a dance curriculum that will encourage more generalist teachers to include dance in their teaching, therefore increasing the possibility of students participating in dance and being prepared for lifelong dance opportunities. Jeff Meiners added that in Australia, there is a new curriculum document that is being considered and open to comments.

In Estonia, dance is in the process of making its way into schools of general education.

The Estonian Dance Education Union (EDEU), represented in this discussion by Anu Sööt, developed and introduced a dance curriculum that was included under the curriculum of general physical education. Dance as one part of this mandatory subject focuses on three main areas of dance: creative dance, Estonian and other folk dances, and standard/Latin dances. In addition, an elective module focuses on technique, creative dance, composition, and analyzing dance. One challenge is that the physical education teachers are generally not prepared to teach dance. Teacher education is being examined to see why this is so.

In many Indian schools, dance is part of extra-curricular or even co-curricular activity, but has always given more importance to dance as a product rather than a process. It has generally been neither a tool for communication and connection between mind and body, nor an area that has potential for developing a connection between images and experiences in life. Urmimala Sarkar Munsri presented the evolution of Dance in Education in India, covering both Dance Education and Dance in Education.

Ivančica Janković presented the development of Croatian curriculum, its fields and expected achievements, as well as how far certain parts of curricula from Scotland, New Zealand, and Saskatchewan have influenced it.

The session concluded with a presentation by Cornelia Baumgart discussing the current situation in Germany and the presence of dance artists as the primary teachers in public schools.

### **Broad overview of curriculum developments internationally**

Following the single case presentations, others were invited to extend the discussion to include curriculum developments in their own countries, with the attempt to include all who were present at the conference who could speak about each national curriculum development. Cornelia Baumgart began with a short overview of dance curricula in different countries, as gleaned from a survey. The survey showed that dance is located within the curriculum in varying places in each country and at each educational level. The survey also brought up the discussion of who is teaching dance.

Marc Richard discussed dance in Canada, which has a long tradition, beginning in Physical Education in the 1950s. This led to the development of daCi. Now dance is considered an art form and includes discussions of creating, performing, and cultural appreciation. However, there are not many institutions that train dance educators, which is a challenge. Mostly dance is included in generalist teacher education.

Dance and other arts standards are currently being re-written in the USA as the National Coalition of Core Arts Standards – Dance, Music, Theatre, Media Arts, and Visual Arts, to be available in 2013. Lynnette Overby is one of the writers and presented this new vision. These new standards will include body cognition and new research. The standards are voluntary, as has been the history of standards in the USA, and are based on the following: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, International Standards Literature, College-level Arts Standards, New Technology, Bloom's Taxonomy (revised), Backwards by Design, and

Cornerstone Assessments. The Framework will include creating, performing, responding, and connecting/relating. Because these revisions are so clearly based on research and theory, it raises the question of how many dance standards do this.

Dörte Wolter presented a fuller view of dance in Germany. It is now part of physical education and music everywhere. There is a quality framework that was created by the Education Ministry, which includes a holistic approach.

Yi-Jung Wu presented an overview of the Taiwan curriculum and the place of dance within that curriculum. All learning must be connected to life experience. There are 11 subjects in elementary and 22 in secondary. As in New Zealand, performing arts (dance and drama) is a learning area.

In Slovenia, as presented by Vesna Geršak, dance is well integrated in preschool. In the primary curriculum, dance is part of physical education and music, with most of the focus on product. A new curriculum is currently being written.

Elisabete Monteiro briefly discussed some of the issues of dance in Portugal. It is located in physical education in secondary, and in primary, the generalist teacher covers some ballroom dance and traditional dance; teachers seem to not cover creative movement. No one is actually checking to see what is being taught.

Jamaica has a unique problem, as presented by Nicholeen Degrasse-Johnson. Dance is recognized as a cultural activity, but there is a prevalent attitude that it does not need to be taught since it is so widely practiced. Within schools, dance is included in physical education, taught by general teachers and also as an extra-curricular activity. Generally, dance is more about product than process, leaving opportunities open to only skilled dancers.

Though Finland has an active daCi group, Fanny Gurevitsch emphasized that the country also has challenges. Dance is well developed in the private sector which, quite unique to Finland, has a very strong connection with the school system and Ministry of Education, but it is not in schools on its own. It is more traditionally included in physical education.

Finally, Ann Kipling Brown presented the concept of the International Baccalaureate, which is not situated within a particular country. Next year, dance will be included in this degree following a pilot program in many schools. It will be examined at a standard and higher level. The actual curriculum is posted on the website and describes a curriculum connected to a theory of knowledge.

### **World Café**

During the World Café event, small tables had in-depth discussions about the following questions:

1. What are the educational goals (of dance and in relation to general education)? Do they have to be the same everywhere?

2. Who are the teachers? How do we prepare teachers and artists to teach in schools?
3. Who has a voice when a curriculum is created, who should have a voice and how can we support each other in strengthening our voices?
4. What is the role of the teachers that are supposed to implement a curriculum? Who is holding them responsible?
5. How can daCi and WDA advocate for dance for children and young people?

### **Educational Goals**

1. Within an existing formal education system, a structural approach that theorizes the diverse educational values of dance (beyond just a leisure activity) can be very useful. The dominant Laban-derived model provides this.
2. The Laban model allows for the art aspect to be emphasized. In response, the following question comes to mind: Do the current discipline/content-driven categories in formal education systems best provide a possibility for a way of knowing, such as dance, to be integrated?
3. Regional identity should determine how dance is valued and how it is then taught. Response: Who determines regional and national identity, and can this be as oppressive as global/ imperial hegemony?
4. Dance instils self-discipline and focus to achieve a personal best. Response: Does this reflect an approach to dance education that limits the other functions for dance, such as communication, creativity, and collaboration?
5. Inclusivity of all in the community. Response: This can limit personal excellence.

**Role of teachers.** Depending on the location, the teachers are sometimes generalists, sometimes specialists, and sometimes a combination of the two. The resulting discussion from this table pointed continually to the local issues and there was no consensus. Standards and outcome documents often direct the role of the teacher. Recommendations from this discussion are that the teacher needs to be an advocate who pushes from within. The preparation should be for teaching dance in the classroom. The teacher should be prepared with post graduate education, be prepared to take risks, and be aware of the possibility and potential of dance to make learning enjoyable and meaningful for the students.

**Teaching and preparation of teachers.** Who teaches dance in schools at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels? This is different even within the same country, and can be dance specialist teachers, PE teachers, general teachers, and artists. There is a consensus that their motivation to teach can be very different, but it is not possible to generalize – it has mainly to do with their personal interest in dance. An explanation for the difficulty many teachers encounter with dance and a reason why they choose not to teach it is that they have not met dance when they were in schools themselves. Some countries have good experiences with models, where artists and teachers teach together. It is agreed that there is a strong need for in-service courses at different levels.

**Voice.** The following is the outcome of the discussion of who should have a voice when a curriculum is developed:

1. Teachers' voices should be incorporated – all teachers should be involved in various stages;
2. Private schools of dance;
3. Parents;
4. Other national and governmental organizations;
5. Individuals/groups who know the discipline;
6. Researchers; and
7. Graduate students, undergraduate students, pre-K-grade 12 students.

*Advocacy.* DaCi and WDA could:

- Develop a model for the management of knowledge data with evidence that might be useful for advocacy, such as the curricula in different countries, theses and dissertations, research and practice methodologies used, and philosophies supporting/leading dance in the education systems;
- Create and disseminate press releases that support dance curriculum development across the world;
- Develop the survey that has been initiated by daCi in partnership with the WDA education and training network to a next level, and also develop a survey for Ministries of Education and Culture in each country;
- Establish standards/recommendations for dance artists working in schools;
- Act as a platform to share information, for example, through developing an international network that focuses on dance curriculum; and
- Develop a quality framework with guidance and recommendations for dance curricula.

*Strategies:*

1. Communicate information about dance curricula to members;
2. Request feedback;
3. Develop an action plan – long term strategic plan;
4. Australia is a good model for advocacy, which should be promoted;
5. Take information forward to Denmark daCi Conference 2015;
6. Create a database of information to share throughout daCi; and
7. DaCi should become a member of a world arts education organization.

### **Towards the future**

To begin the discussion, we invited critical reflection from Dr. Susan Stinson, who has been involved in dance education, curriculum development, and in daCi since 1978, when the organization was initiated. She noted that there are always multiple forces that guide curricula; governments are involved and usually there are short timelines for creating new documents. In creating new standards and curriculum, we always ask, “What do students need to know and be able to do in dance?” Starting with existing documents, we too often end up replicating what has been because that is what we know. Can we ask instead, “What might be?” and “Since time is a limited resource, what

matters most?” In suggesting how to determine what truly matters, she suggested reflecting on big questions, such as:

- What does it mean to be human?
- How shall we live together?

The discussion about next steps turned to advocacy and collaboration. The partnership of daCi and WDA is a good start, and the focus can also be brought to World Alliance of Arts Education meetings. We have learned that many countries have a dance curriculum in some form, and some (for example, countries from Africa) worried that they are losing their own culture with the current emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Research has not been a major part of the curriculum discussions so far, so the next step for partnerships needs to be research across borders.

### **Suggested questions and steps ahead arising from the discussion**

- Training of dance artists in schools? (This can easily disempower teachers. Can artists go in with an idea of being a collaborator more than the expert?)
- Could daCi and WDA devise curriculum/guidelines that can be used in contexts other than schools (“community curriculum”)? In some countries the school systems diminish what art can do.
- When looking at the whole world, it is important to consider cultural and religious differences that offer different possibilities and also challenges. For example, in Muslim countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, there is a question of whether dance can be practiced at all other than within a religious framework.
- Invite organizations/companies to be partners (for example Unicef and Oxfam).

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**Dr. Charlotte Svendler Nielsen** is Assistant Professor and head of Education Studies at the Department of Exercise and Sport Sciences, research group *Body, Learning and Identity*, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Studying dance at the University of Brighton, UK, she has taught and performed in many contexts. She has published articles in Danish, English, and Spanish, and co-edited a number of books and the *Nordic Journal of Dance – practice, education and research*. She is a member of the executive board of

daCi, and chair of the committee for papers, panels, projects dialogues, and proceedings for daCi/WDA Global Dance Summit 2012.

**Cornelia Baumgart** is a teacher and a certified dance and theatre educator (Berlin University of the Arts) with a focus on creative dance, including freelance work in the field of cultural education (training, research, project management, coaching, and organization). An initiator of curricular and extracurricular artistic projects, she lobbies for dance and drama, and is national representative for daCi Germany. As a founding member of the Federal Association Dance in Schools, she has been involved in creating the quality frameworks for dance curriculum and coaching dance artists/teachers in education projects.

**Ivančica Janković** graduated from the Zagreb Faculty of Arts and the Ana Maletic School of Contemporary Dance in Zagreb, Croatia. Following her professional career with the Zagreb Dance Company, she began teaching at the Ana Maletic School where, since 1974, she has focused on educating young people in Laban's theory and practice. In 2001, she received the Annual Teaching Award. She also writes about dance education, translates movement and dance textbooks from English into Croatian, and gives lectures and workshops at home and abroad. A longstanding daCi Board member, she founded the daCi Croatia Chapter in 2006.

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