

## **By Dance, of Experience, and for Higher Education**

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Through a philosophical journey with educational theorists such as H'Doubler, John Dewey, Smith-Autard, the National Standards, Bloom, Mosston, Goodlad, and Bruner, my vision of dance education has changed dramatically.

In terms of H'doubler, dance educator should teach dance “as an art form as well as a science” (H'Doubler, xix) and must help students to develop their emotional, intellectual, and spiritual energy and the power within. Because dance is an expression of “inner personality” (H'Doubler, p62), expressed through the medium of human body, dance teacher should teach human body as a science and the expression of internal individuality, as an art form. Learning requires constant research and continuous communication with the learners. Because learning is a continuous process, it is never simple. The learner will learn from the teacher not only the movements, but also his/her emotional expressions. The more one learns, the more it becomes complex for the learner. The moment one understands his/her body structure and knows how to shift his weights from one foot to the other, he/she can feel his/her heart beat, blood flow, and his/her own breathing. He/she can also feel, in one moment the earth, the sand and the ocean. Then one can feel huge amount of space and the exact movement he/she wants to create. Even with a simple movement without any purpose, dance is still an interesting experience. However, if one understands his/her body and feelings, it will be very clear for him/her as to what he/she is supposed to be doing at that particular moment.

Consequently, dance teacher should teach human body as a science and help the students with the process of transforming aesthetic experience to a physical movement. Of course many stages of developments and transformations are involved: some are artistic and some are scientific. If dance educators can teach students these multi levels of personality development as well as various skills and

techniques, the students will ultimately become quite comfortable with the artistic and scientific elements of dance. After they become used to these various layers and levels of learning, they will become very creative once their intuitions are trained.

Dance educator must continue to study the theoretical aspects of a movement i.e., how a body movement came from and what kind of energy one has to exert to produce a single movement in a body, energy, shape and space harmony. If dance educator learns a very systematic method of teaching dance, definitely share the academic research methods and materials directly with students on a daily basis. Then teaching dancing becomes a direct communication channel between teacher and learner. Once educational method reaches that level of teaching, educator can help to students to find out what they want to learn and how they wish to express their “inner personality” through movements.

In addition, dance educator realized that teaching dancing involves helping students digest aesthetic experience (“impress”) and help them develop their personality in “emotional, intellectual and spiritual” (H'Doubler, p62), capacity. I believe that the personality is like a mirror and an empty receptacle that can filter an aesthetic experience or any feelings. Dance is a final artistic product of this process of filtering one's inner personality using body as a medium.

After my experience with these educational theorists, my vision of dance education has broadened and sharpened at the same time as I begin to establish my philosophy as an educator: my vision has broadened by reading materials of educators with vision and sharpened by the fact that the ultimate focus and beneficiary of my vision statement must be my students.

I also noticed that the draft of my vision statement did not put such an emphasis on the experience. Although my focus on emotional communication referred to “the process of reconstruction of experience” (Dewey, p64), I never thought about the nature and philosophy of experience and its importance in such depth before. I now learned that I should assist the learners in “the process of reconstructing their experiences” (Dewey, p64) and I should carefully

select experiences that will survive “fruitfully and creatively” (Dewey, p28) in later experiences that will lead to constructive growth of the learners. As an educator, I should guide my students in reorganizing their experiences so that they will be continually growing.

In order for me to effectively help my students with their present dreams, desires, needs and purpose, I have to understand each learner’s past experience. Consequently, I must understand each student’s external conditions as much as possible so that I can guide them to achieve their dreams through dance education. In a learning process, the most important role a teacher plays in dance education is to encourage the student and help him/her find out his/her maximum potential as a dancer and help him/her to understand why he/she wants to dance. I must also guide my students with all my knowledge and experience in order for them not to lose too much energy and time in discovering his/her own talents and skills.

However, because all of us the dance educators are only human and therefore are not perfect with his/her own unique experience, we must be very careful not to be too subjective in evaluating and selecting proper experiences that will help the learners continually grow without losing their desire to continue learning.

Furthermore, I am able to use three (3) different models of dance education: “educational model, professional model, and mid-way model” (Smith-Autard, p26). Educational model in dance education puts emphasis on the process of learning, “subjective feelings, creativity and imagination of the learners” (Smith-Autard, p26). The professional model focuses on the final outcome, objective techniques, and skills of the professionals. And finally through Mid-way model, dance educators should adopt strengths of both models: perfect harmony of both teaching models will eventually lead to “artistic, aesthetic and cultural education” (Smith-Autard, p26). This knowledge reaffirmed my teaching methods that I somehow inherited from my own learning experience.

When I teach dance, I often demonstrate skills and techniques of the professional for my students to imitate. After the students master

the techniques, I normally help them to develop imagination and feelings to create subjective movements.

I believe learning should involve opening and enlarging the mind of the learner to receive in order to express a particular movement. If a student is ready to learn, he/she will open his/her mind to process the information he/she needs. If I want to dance beautifully, softly and elegantly, in order to create that particular movement, I must sense that particular feeling at that moment.

When I reflect on my own experience of dance education, most of my learning experience consists of learning techniques and skills from professionals. At the present moment, unfortunately, most teachers in ballroom dance teach in “professional way” because the teachers themselves are not exposed to other teaching methods and materials. I was also exposed to somewhat “authoritarian teaching methods” (Lakes, p3), but fortunately it was not a “psychologically abusive environment” (Lakes, p3). Still many teachers who teach ballroom dance believe that until the students master the techniques, they cannot teach creativity. Initially I agreed with them because I was not exposed to various teaching methods and techniques. I now think that any good educator can help the students to develop imagination and creativity to express feelings or emotions at any age by using any combinations of teaching models or use them simultaneously in one class.

I very extremely impressed with high standards for arts education because the Standards expect that the “arts should teach humanity how to live” (Standards, p5). Then dance educators should also teach the students how to live. By teaching them how to live, dance education becomes the most important part of education which will “maintain our culture and civilization” (Standards, p5). I believe that the educational institutions these days focus on teaching the young how to make a living rather than teaching them how to live.

However, because of high expectations put on the arts education from the educators of the arts education, I was relieved and thrilled to find out that some people have strong faith in teaching the young how to live. They insist that the teachers should help the students to

develop their “self-esteem, self-discipline, cooperation and self-motivation” (Standards, p7), through arts education so that they will maintain culture and civilization. If arts education plays a major role of maintaining our civilization, as a dance educator, I must be very proud of my important role for the future generations to come.

Dancing and dance education became my life. However, I believe that dance is not only about body movements although one feels alive while dancing. At the beginning of my dance career, I just enjoyed dancing. As a competitive dancer, I wanted to win. As a performer, I wanted to share my feelings with my audience and with my partner. Finally, I believe that the most humanitarian level of dancing involves teaching dance because it involves sharing all experience and knowledge that I possess with my students.

In addition, I can also use different styles to teach: “command style, task style, reciprocal style, and individual style” (Mosston, 20-85). Most of my learning experience consists of command style. If I am not exposed to these various styles, I will not be able to abandon command style pedagogical legacy in dance education. However, now that I am exposed to these styles and what each style can accomplish, I can apply combinations of these styles or use them in a sequence. If I want to teach techniques, I would use command style; if I want the students to execute certain task(s), I would use task style; and if I want the students to develop socialization skills, I would use reciprocal style.

As a dance educator, I should also consider the fact that learning involves “academic, vocational, social and civil, and persona level” (Remer, p18). I should further emphasize the importance of education by making the primary objective of school as the development of “the full potential of each individual” (Remer, p16) and “the integration of one’s total life experience” (Remer, p17).

I opened a dance studio because I wanted to share all my knowledge, techniques and experience with my students, while I remain as a ballroom dance competitor. I wanted to help my students to have infinite knowledge, help them to clear their minds, and guide them to find out what they are doing as a learner. However, at this

moment, I realized that I should also guide my students to be the full potential of whatever they can be and also to integrate their dance life into their total life experience. In order for me to carry out my vision of dance education, I must teach my students more than dance techniques; I must help my students to develop their vision of how to live in order for them to maintain our culture and civilization.

In addition, each lesson must have a clear objective based upon two dimensions: ‘cognitive process dimension and knowledge dimension’ (Anderson, 28-29). As a dance educator, I was thrilled to know these dimensions. I normally begin my lesson with “remembering” and with “factual knowledge” to teach techniques and finish with “creating” and “meta-cognitive knowledge” (Anderson, 28-29), unaware of the process in the interim. However, after I am familiar with the Taxonomy dimensions, I am fully aware of my intentions and objectives for each lesson and I can utilize these dimensions as a continuing learning process for my students.

Finally, I became aware of the fact that my life and my vision statement is my culture because I am creating a “narrative meaning through the interaction between me and the culture” (Bruner, p45). Through this narrative meaning process, my desires, dreams, and intentions are transformed into actions and experiences. And the desires and intentions are realized through “participation in the symbolic systems of culture” (Bruner, p45). As a dance educator, I must help my students to construct a narrative meaning through participation in the culture and to transform their actions through understanding of symbolic meaning in the culture. I should also teach my students that they do not exist alone and they are the products of the culture and society. Since the culture and the environment are very crucial to the learners, I must provide a very positive and healthy learning environment for them.

In addition, I believe the dance educators must be aware of each student’s physical problems and what motivated the student to dance. Teaching also requires helping the students to open their minds. Once the students open their minds, they will easily communicate with the teachers and other classmates. Teaching is all about giving and not

about receiving although the teachers receive much emotional satisfaction indirectly from teaching. A good teacher must be able to provide his students with many positive feelings including happiness, challenges and other tastes of emotional well-being. Then the students will receive such positive energy and learn in a free and creative environment.

One day suddenly, I was so happy to remember what my mother used to tell me, “Do not use other people for your benefit and do not listen to any bad languages other people use. Please share what you know and what you have with other people. Then you will be truly happy and when you are happy, you have already accomplished your dream.”

I feel truly happy that my dream came true because I always wanted to teach and share whatever I possess with my students. However, the most important thing is that I became a learner again. I still remember all my happy and enjoyable moments and the best times spent in my college life because I studied and learned incredibly. I am quite certain that at New York University (NYU) and Sungkyunkwan University (SKKU), I will absorb so much knowledge, methods and skills from books, research materials, professors and classmates. I truly believe that my education at the graduate school will successfully guide me to what I have to do and where I have to go and finally achieve my goal as an excellent dance educator and a superb dancer.

In addition to learning, I want to publish books on ballroom dancing, an easy and clear ways to teach and learn ballroom dancing. Then I will be truly blessed to teach and to be a creative dancer at the same time. In this moment, I am ready to be a great scholar in dance education and a champion in ballroom dancing. While ballroom dance competition is all about my ego, teaching dance education is all about other people. I wish to keep a perfect balance between the competition and the academia.

Finally, I wish my students will view me as a teacher, a learner, a challenger and a pioneer because I never stop teaching and dancing. I am quite sure that my students believe that I will always move

forward. However, I always know deep in my heart that it is because of my students' infinite support and deep faith in me that I can keep on dancing and teaching. I always believe that if I achieve what I want to accomplish someday, it is because my students are always in my thoughts and I always appreciate their continuous support. For that I am always thankful.

After all, what I appreciate the most at this moment is that God is always with me and guides me whether I am teaching or dancing, sad or happy. I can possibly say that I am an educator and a dancer; I teach and dance today and I will teach and dance tomorrow. Dance education and dancing is my life and spirit and that is what I mostly appreciate in life. I am blessed because God gave me this way of life.

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