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**Teaching for Transformation:  
Reflective practice for transformative dance education  
in children's community dance.**

A thesis  
submitted **in partial fulfilment**  
of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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## Abstract

Dance is a marvelous developmental tool for holistic growth (Graham, 2002; H'Doubler, 1940). In current times, dance opportunities for children are generally found in the dance studios and reserved for those with money, time, or talent. In many such cases, dance classes aim towards examinations, driven by *traditional dance pedagogy*: typically, authoritative and mechanical transmission of steps and skills (Coe, 2003; Shaprio, 1999; Stinson, 2016). In comparison, the New Zealand public school system offers a comprehensive dance curriculum designed for all children to approach dance as holistic creative development (Ministry of Education, 2018). However, the potential of the current curriculum is not realised for various reasons (Bolwell, 2014; Buck & Snook, 2017; Cheeseman, 2009). Therefore, there exists a need in Aotearoa New Zealand for accessible and quality dance education for our children to experience the benefits of participation in dance. There are some small recreational dance offerings in studios and community settings that are bridging the gap between skills and creativity, by offering *learner-centered pedagogy* and increasing accessibility and democracy in the dance sector (Buckek, 1992; Burnidge, 2012; Dragon, 2015; Dyer, 2009; Green, 2007; Sansom, 2011). Transformational learning is an objective of learner-centered or democratic dance education and is discussed by dance scholars (Antilla, 2015; Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001). Additionally, scholars note the importance of teacher's reflective practice to facilitate transformation because reflective practice provides educators with a critical lens to challenge traditional or authoritarian pedagogical models, which have been found socially and educationally problematic (Bright, 2013; Duda & Queded, 2011; Risner, 2009, 2017; Shapiro, 2016; Stevens & Huddy, 2017; Tembrioti & Tsangaridou, 2013; Warburton, 2008). Where there is rigorous discussion about these topics in higher education (with adults) there is limited research on transformation and reflective practice within dance for children of primary age, particularly in New Zealand and so this ethnographic study aims to illuminate our country's own unique pedagogical practices in community/recreational dance. This focus on our own context may contribute to a greater understanding of our unique value systems that inform transformative learning through dance for children in New Zealand, and further insight into how reflective practice is utilised to facilitate it.



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# Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgments .....	v
Table of Contents .....	vii
List of Figures .....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	11
Why Dance Education? .....	11
Thesis Structure .....	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	21
Pedagogical Theory .....	21
Dance Pedagogy .....	27
Transformation .....	37
Reflection for Transformative Pedagogy .....	41
Reflective Process .....	43
Conclusion: Reflective Practice for Transformative Pedagogy .....	46
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods .....	49
Methodology .....	50
Engaging Participants .....	53
Ethical Considerations .....	55
Methods .....	55
Analysis of Findings .....	61
Presentation of the Findings .....	64
Chapter 4: Community Dance Educators in Action .....	67
Clare Battersby .....	68
Patti Mitchley .....	69
Helene Burgstaller .....	70
Harriettanne Embling .....	71



Joanna Sylvester .....	72
Participant Considerations .....	73
Liahona Walus .....	74
Reflection in Community Dance Education: A Narrative Tale.....	75
Pre-planned Lesson Plan: .....	76
The Lesson.....	77
Reflections on Dance Class .....	90
Chapter 5: Reflective Practice in Children's Dance .....	95
How do the Participants Reflect? .....	95
Values in Reflection .....	98
Chapter 6: Reflective Practice for Transformation.....	117
Transformative Experiences Are Passed On .....	117
Objectives Reflect Dance Educators' transformation .....	124
Values Inform Pedagogy .....	128
Transformative Dance Pedagogy for Cultural Change.....	144
Chapter 7: Conclusions.....	151
General Conclusion .....	151
Limitations.....	153
Recommendations for Further Research .....	154
Implications .....	154
References .....	159
Appendices .....	169

## List of Figures

Figure 1 A Four Phase Approach to Reflective Learning (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission.....	45
Figure 2 Bright Approach to Reflective Practice (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission. ....	45
Figure 3: A Four Phase Approach to Reflective Learning (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission.....	97
Figure 4: Bright Approach to Reflective Practice (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission. ....	98



# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Why Dance Education?

*“He aha te mea nui o te ao? He tangata, he tangata, he tangata.”*

*What is most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people!*

The *whakatauki* (Māori proverb) above has greatly influenced my choices, including my interest in post graduate study in education. My journey to find education as a career and passion has come from a desire to educate and serve others, as pathways that previously attracted me lacked the social connection that inspires me. As I neared the end of my undergraduate study (Bachelor of Science in Biology with an additional major in Dance from Brigham Young University in the United States of America), I found myself involved in pedagogy courses for various genres of dance and likewise part of a team of mixed method researchers testing alternative learning styles in biology education. I found this work in education exciting and challenging both mentally and emotionally. Teaching evoked memories, reflections of my past as a learner and dreams of what the future could hold for myself as an educator and for those that I could possibly inspire. I have since longed to become a teacher, and while school teacher training is a firm goal that will be achieved when the timing is right, I realise I am already a teacher and always have been. As a mother, community dance educator, volunteer youth worker in my church and mum at my local Playcentre, I have come to recognise teaching is just a part of me.

What began as a way to make ends meet has become my passion. Teaching dance was an accessible pathway to paid part-time work as a 'stay at home' mother of small children. Knowing firmly that I wanted to primarily be at home during the youngest years of my children's lives, having the opportunities to find part time work within my fields of interest has been a huge blessing. Though I have a background in the sciences as well as the arts (including dance, music, and visual arts), dance education has become the focal vocation (beside motherhood) for this season of my life and it is really resonating with me as I see the benefit for myself and those I teach. Dance teaching provides me as an

educator with a creative and artistic outlet, keeps me physically active, improves my motherhood skills as I patiently work with children from all walks of life, and strengthens my personal values about community and citizenship in society. More importantly, through my experiences teaching dance I have seen the benefits to those who dance. For the purpose of this thesis I will focus on primary school aged children, and in my experiences so far, I have come to champion dance as a marvellous developmental tool because of the many children I have seen grow due to participation with this medium. For this reason, I chose to continue on the path of dance education, seeking this Master's degree as an aid in becoming more capable of transforming lives through dance.

In my current dance teaching position, I was offered additional responsibilities beyond teaching. The role involved developing the entire programme which pushed me to evaluate all aspects of our dance offerings including values and objectives. While this gave me freedom in some respects, I am still bound by a business model and management policies. Being situated in the community I have been challenged to question the “dance world” culture that surrounds dance training and education in New Zealand and as it relates to the wider Western world, neoliberalism, and elitism. Parents, co-workers, and even my own expectations have provided challenges to my personal values about why we dance, what is dance education, and how it should be taught/experienced. As I have danced and taught in various settings and across multiple genres and contexts, I would say there are plenty of aspects of the “dance world” culture that do not sit well with me, particularly the cultural narratives that control who has access to what, and how the alternatives are undervalued and, in some cases, mocked. This relates to how dance has become an elitist product to be consumed rather than a natural expression of being. These narratives find their way into the minds and values of children (including myself) and carry on through generations of adults who cannot dance, will not dance, or never had the chance to dance. This is a terrible loss, in my opinion, and thus I am led to seek improvement and alternatives to this narrative. Perhaps my interest has come because through reflection I have become more aware of the powerful social implications dance experiences can have on young children. Issues such as inclusion, accessibility, fair power dynamics, and voice within the dance world have become significant objectives that I evaluate in my own practice. I have come to value

dance education as a pathway for change in society through the positive development of children and the power of their voice to change the future of society. The philosophical challenges I have experienced have enabled me to articulate my value system more clearly, and while I'm sure these values will continue to grow and develop, reflecting often reminds and enables me to continually practice intentional pedagogy.

Reflection has led me to look at my own values and has helped me to reconcile past feelings of marginalization I felt only recently. Overall my participation in dance as a child/young person would not be considered elite, and I am personally critically aware of this. I do not boast many dance examination scores or recognitions and that has always been a personal disappointment, for I had few opportunities to sit any exams. Having always wanted to dance in a studio, compete, and train for exams as a child I have always slightly resented the fact that this was not a possibility for me in my low-income upbringing. However, I always danced, blessed by a culture, family, and religion that values the arts in all its forms. As a young adult I did as much as I could to fill the gap between my goals and reality, realizing in many instances that this part of the dance world was not recoverable as it was aimed at children and I was no longer a child. Nevertheless, that didn't stop me performing all over the world and reaching high technical standards... so I have had to examine if those missing exams really mattered once I grew to become an adult dancer anyway. This also leads me to question why, with the exception of aiming for professional dancing, examination and competition, is the primary dance experience in our societal culture thrusting neoliberalism upon children if it is not necessary. In retrospect I can see that my pathway is different than the traditional pathway in dance, and likely different opportunities would have resulted if I had passed through the traditional system, possibly great opportunities that more closely resemble what I was culturally constructed to yearn for. However, I also question that road for its narrow-minded outcomes, either all in or nothing at all adult destination. At my current stage in life I can reflect on my experiences and see some benefits from my alternate pathway, appreciating how it has shaped my life.

Dance has always existed as a constant in my life and looking back is associated with vivid memories of times otherwise long forgotten. As a small 'A-Māori-can' (Māori child living in the United States) I always wanted to dance,

just like my older sister who was ten years older and who benefitted from a wealthier season in my family's lifetime (mostly in the United States where dance is cheaper and more accessible). My earliest memories of structured participation in dance around the age of 3-5 include the Hawaiian hula, and kapa haka each spring in Phoenix, Arizona. My older sister was the most graceful dancer; I have fond memories following her around to weeks of practice for the annual Aloha Festival. Our whole whanau gathered to participate with all our Polynesian cousins living in Arizona. The days were long, disciplined, and hot (it's the desert after all) but dance in this context was all about family, community, and generous servings of coco Samoa after practice! From this early age my engagement with dance made me feel connected, important, proud of my heritage, inspired by my elders to embody the stylized hand, arm, and hip motions that express the stories of my ancestors and encouraged to find my own way to move to beats of an uncle's drum. These are my earliest recollections of dance.

Regarding formal dance training I began the classic jazz, tap, ballet combination class and the All-American favourite 'cheerleading' at around age six, also following the path of my sister whose performances I regularly attended. I can still visualize some of her dance numbers, costumes, and discussions about which dance shoes or cheer uniforms my mother needed to buy. I remember wanting in to that special, privileged world and it was finally my chance! While I found dance class exciting because I looked like a ballerina/cheerleader I did find classes lacklustre and slightly awkward. I had no friends, there was no time to talk, and I remember feeling different, perhaps the only brown kid (yes, I managed to become brown in the AZ heat) in the class, slightly older than the tiny little blonde girls next to me. I can vividly remember the studio walls covered in trophies and photos of perfectly poised dancers greeting me as I entered every week. I was a solid listener, but was always yearning to learn something cooler, trickier, faster than the basic techniques I was taught. However, I really did not enjoy dance class. I particularly struggled with enjoying the methodical structure of the ballet section of class and being stuck on my 'spot' for the whole class. Skillwise I really struggled to make clear sounds in tap dancing, but continued for some time as nothing could stop me wearing the tap shoes (including everywhere I went). I can still remember the thrill of changing my shoes between genres and the different leotards I rotated each week. It made me feel like I was a real dancer.

In my memory I can go back in time and feel the pride I had in performance at a recital in my special purple tutu or that feeling of “I’m a dancer, that’s why I have these shoes” as I clicked down the street in my tap shoes!

Later, our family moved home to Wellington at the age of 10 where suddenly the elite status of the arts in New Zealand meant I could no longer afford extracurricular lessons. However, dance was not lost to me as I was able to dance at school where I got involved in performance as much as I could. Performances at school were much more fun than dance class! I was a very quiet child but creating and performing dance was always easy and made me feel awesome, it was one area I liked to lead. One year, Black Grace Dance Company toured New Zealand with the Artists in Schools programme. When they workshopped with our year 8 class I remember just lapping it up, possibly with a chip on my shoulder of... I used to take dance classes, so I must be a pro. I loved soaking up their performance, choreographic advice, and creative energy. Their visit inspired our teachers to prepare us to perform at a large Wellington schools dance festival called *Artsplash* in 2001. I became the group captain for our piece, leading several lunch time choreography sessions to create our dance about aliens and outer space to be performed at the one and only Michael Fowler Centre. I have clear memories of that creative process, choreographing on the playground with friends, finding ways for the younger children to move as well, feeling responsibility to them and respect from them, and working tirelessly to perfect our ‘costumes’ during lunchtimes. Dance gave me purpose and a place to feel like I could change the world. We worked together to create something everyone was proud of, and all could participate in. The feeling of being on stage in costumes we made, in the dark waiting for our cues to move is clearly fused into my being.

Clearly a fan of the arts I continue to seek opportunities at high school, Church College of New Zealand (CCNZ), where I had multiple opportunities to dance, auditioning successfully for multiple performance groups and tour groups, travelling around New Zealand. I was afforded opportunities to learn from expert teachers of all the Polynesian specialties, and western dance styles like ballet, hip hop, and contemporary dance. As part of the Polynesian cultural group I adored watching the aunties (and uncles) dance for us, demonstrating and describing ancient cultural tales from whence the movements came. Sharing with us their hula, siva, haka with all the wisdom and life experience that we so admired, these



women (and men) truly showed me that dance is an expression that only refines with age and does not diminish but is amplified. I have since experienced many more mentors like this in many genres, particularly special when linked to ethnic dance forms. Their expressions I treat as gifts to have been able to learn from them and then pass on. The CCNZ tours were in large part a missionary effort, taking the arts on the road to spread the good word of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and so our performances were dedicated to Him, in the hopes of sharing our testimonies, and his peace with our audience. This responsibility to take upon myself that representation has definitely affected the way I see dance performance, teaching me how to analyse movement, song, and theatre in order to consider its value for imparting positivity, peace, love, and uplifting messages. This reflects the thirteenth Article of Faith, or creeds our Church lives by... "We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul - We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things. If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praise worthy we seek after these things" (The Articles of Faith, 1842/1981). This frames how I view, create, perform, teach, and experience dance and illustrates that my faith influences those values.

It was these opportunities and my remaining yearning to be "trained" in a dance studio that prompted my aspirations to further seek dance training and higher performance opportunities. It was not until I graduated from High School that I was out on my own, job in hand, and able to pay for my own ballet classes in Wellington city that I reconnected with a studio. Well behind technically I had lots of work to do but I had a dream, some talent, and the will to make it happen. I flew back to the United States where I successfully auditioned for the dance major at Brigham Young University (BYU). Here I had more options than I could have ever imagined at the University with the biggest dance programme in the United States. Five years of training and touring nationally and internationally was a dream come true with opportunities to study dance forms I did not even know existed. While at BYU I was able to dance all day, every day, and I learned great things about myself. I found a deep love for ballet, how it felt to be 'just so'. I loved the structure and order and how it made me feel secure. Consequently, I realised contemporary dance left me feeling quite vulnerable, and often scared.

Staring down the barrel roll you can't quite master when it's your turn next across the floor is not a great feeling... teacher gaze is real! I tended to lean away from contemporary dance because of the way the teachers pushed boundaries that often left me feeling incapable or uncomfortable. Contact improvisation quite honestly terrified me the first time it appeared in technique class. However, my dance major included a wide range of styles and I found excitement in ballroom, though I did realize I am not a competitive person and could never quite apply enough make up or sequins to quite match up. Eventually, I found World Dance where competition was out, teamwork was in and I loved it. Dancing felt right for me when it connected me to others and I was able to learn about the intrinsic origins of cultural dance.

Dancing for the International Folk Dance Ensemble at a festival in Croatia I recall one last experience dancing a southern suite with my company before I graduated from BYU. This was the last time I would dance with close friends. Many of us had danced together for three or four years, including my dance partner of three years. It was truly the end of a season. Dancing with my closest friends for the last time was an emotional experience. Within seconds of the music playing I caught a glimpse of a tearful friend and like wildfire the emotions and tears spread across the group. Our performance was not negatively affected: we danced harder, more in tune with each other, grateful for one another. I have had this experience many times, often at the end of seasons during a final performance. Dance is about these moments, moments where I know I am experiencing life absolutely to the fullest... where sounds, sights, and the exuberance of movement carry me to connect with others and I feel I am situated in the right place.

These experiences (and countless more) still resonate with me because they are part of my development. To me they are transformations that kept me interested in dance, and motivated me to reach for further opportunities, and affected my perceptions of family, culture, leadership, community, and identity. These moments matter so much to me that I could take a kinaesthetic portal ride back to that time and place. Tears flow as I feel them all over again. And, because of the immense joy of the transformations I have experienced as a participant in dance, whether by watching, learning, performing, or creating dance I want to share this with others. Children who participate in dance will have their own

unique pathway, but this pathway will always exist within the 'culturally focussed' dance world and their experience will be affected by the values society has created. As a teacher of dance in the community context, I face the effects of this daily. I want to make sure my students have access to the best dance has to offer. I have been taught dance by several methods in several contexts and now see that this was a better experience than the one-dimensional traditional experience I thought I always wanted. Armed with this critical eye, I would like to provide opportunities that offer children a dance experience with as little of any negative cultural narrative possible so that they too can experience transformation.

Studying for a master's degree in dance education is really an effort to continue learning and growing as an intentional dance educator qualified to provide these transformative opportunities. As I have undertaken this research I have had the opportunity to review literature relevant to the research topic. The research question interested me because I anticipated it would provide me with pedagogical examples to follow, and a community to be a part of as I learnt from expert educators' practical ways to improve my effectiveness in transformative pedagogy. What I have gained is a new appreciation for reflective practice where my past experiences are critical to my ability to act in any refined way.

In this study I aim to reflect upon my experiences and reflect on each day of class to ensure the best objectives are identified and that I am teaching them. So I ask myself: Am I creating opportunities for my dancers to have positive transformative experiences? Am I reinforcing the experiences that impacted me negatively, just because they are easy, expected? Am I buying into the cultural expectations, the ones I held in esteem so highly as a child myself, and now profess to deny? Do I have the right to mould my pedagogy towards those best bits if they are different than the expected, the common? These are all questions that have led me to my research question:

*How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance.*

## **Thesis Structure**

This thesis will illustrate the reflective processes utilized by educators in community/recreational dance contexts in order to explore the research question: *How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance.* To do so I will present a review of the literature, providing foundational understandings of pedagogy in general education as well as these specific to dance, and the concepts of transformation and reflection. Then, I will outline my methodology and the research project. The results section will be presented in part as a narrative, to illustrate the values and culture experienced by the group of participants, and subsequently I will discuss these values in order to understand and articulate the research question. This will then be followed by my conclusions about the research, with added discussion on implications for me personally and implications for the dance community, limitations, and further possibilities resulting from this research.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review and discuss the literature in dance education research. I will discuss pedagogy as it is generally understood within education and then as it is practiced in the context of dance, encompassing shifting perspectives. I will then discuss transformation and reflective process in dance education as a background to my research.

### Pedagogical Theory

Pedagogy is generally defined as the art, science, method, and practice of teaching (Oxford, 2017; Merriam-Webster, 2017; Mortimore & Watkins, 1999). The controversially defined term 'pedagogy' is mentioned minimally in the literature (Mortimore & Watkins, 1999) however under the definition above it is represented widely in discussions about educational and curriculum theory (Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Koff, 2015; Melchior, 2015) as it is the intentional practices or methods of teaching that communicate the curriculum and therefore build an education. Further specified, pedagogy is concerned with the practices or methods that intend to pass on or produce knowledge and this is not limited to teacher directed activity but could include facilitated opportunities, i.e. environment or learner directed activity (Mortimore & Watkins, 1999; Tinning, 2008). Tinning (2008), argues however that *intent* is essential to qualify pedagogy; pedagogical work occurs where a teacher, learner, external facility, and subject matter collide for the intentional purpose of knowledge production. Therefore, we know pedagogy to be "any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another" (Mortimore & Watkins, 1999, p. 3).

Intentional planning, however, has its limits and Tinning (2008) explains that there can be a divide between what learning is intended and what occurs. Pedagogical work results in both expected and unexpected consequences, and this idea is central to this thesis and the themes of values (intentions), action, and reflection in pedagogical practice. Pedagogy includes what and how the teacher teaches, and would involve objectives selected, teaching styles, conventions, demeanour and methods to teach those objectives.

Unexpected consequences of intentional pedagogy are coined "hidden curriculum" by some scholars (Apple & Beane, 2007; Barbour, 2016; Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2016). While the term 'hidden' may sound unfavourable, consequences are not all negative. The term can remind us that all learners are receiving more from their class time than the intended skills or the curriculum. Unexpected learning outcomes can affect learner experience and therefore values: the thoughts, beliefs, practices, and identities within not only the subject intended (i.e. reinforcing the ways of teaching and learning sport for example) but actually beyond and into all areas of life, culture, and society (Dewey, 1916; Dragon, 2015; Freire, 1970; Mason, 2017; O'Sullivan, 1999; Shapiro, 1998, 2008; Tinning, 2008). The values passed on through society continue to be reinforced to maintain dominant culture in the educational system from generation to generation (Dewey, 1916; Dragon, 2015; Dyer, 2009; Shapiro, 1998). In our own country of New Zealand, an example of this type of loop occurred where the education system imposed on Māori by colonisers in the 1800s led non-Māori and Māori to internalize what races should or should not learn, inventing the idea that Māori were merely physical beings, a societal value that has persisted and damaged the educational and life experience of Māori to this day (Hokowhitu, 2003). Therefore, the learning and life experience children in New Zealand and throughout the world are susceptible to damage by the reinforcement of negative aspects of the hidden curriculum present in the education system. These aspects will be discussed at length later in this literature review. However, the point I make here is that the growing awareness of the power of educational systems on societal values has warranted a wealth of research on these affects and the power of alternative pedagogy, as a means to intentionally challenge negative consequences of education and the hidden curriculum that has been under-covered (Apple & Beane, 2007; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Greene, 1995; Shapiro, 1998, 2016; Stinson, 2016; Tinning, 2008).

### **Traditional pedagogy.**

Traditional pedagogy involves the methods of passive transmission of skills from a teacher of authority to an empty learner. Traditional methods include narrowly prescribed curriculums taught without regard for individual needs and interests. The standardisation of traditional pedagogy reinforces the power imbalance

between teacher and student. However, scholars identified that the traditional skill-production-based paradigm common to earlier and modern day education can be problematic. Criticisms of traditional pedagogy include several examples of the unintentional consequences brought about by transmissive teaching methods. Early education philosophers including Dewey (1916), Greene (1995), and Freire (1970) criticized transmissive pedagogies where the submissive learner is passively deposited with outcome-based knowledge determined and 'banked' by an expert teacher. Almost a century's worth of research supports the notion that banked transmission creates unintelligent habits or rote memorized facts rather than applied understanding that can be used elsewhere in life (Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1916; Greene, 1995; Mayer, 2002). This pedagogy, mirroring society at large, supports the oppression of the marginalized, maintaining the dominant culture (Ewing, 2005) via the power imbalance of authoritarian relationship between the expert teacher and the lowly learner waiting to be filled with knowledge (Freire, 1970; Shapiro, 2016; Stinson, 2016; Warburton, 2008). Children are one such marginalised group, were seen as empty buckets to be filled in order to be brought up to the standard of adults, without regard to "instinctive or native powers of the young" or any contribution they could make (Dewey, 1916, p.63; Stinson, 2016). They were similarly assimilated to learn the same things, the same way, to become useful. The voice and inherent traits of the learner were not given space to contribute their worth, for their worth was not valued by those in power, resulting in forced assimilation to the dominant culture (Ewing, 2005). "One cannot expect positive results from educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by the people... such a programme constitutes cultural invasion, good intentions withstanding" (Freire, 1970, p.95).

Postmodern scholars note the loss of learner voice in authoritarian relationships, putting all importance on the curricular outcomes prescribed by those in authority without regard for the needs and interests of those who receive it. Standardization where banked knowledge is then regurgitated fails learners of diverse backgrounds and learning styles where multidisciplinary and multiple intelligence approaches would better suited (Garber, 2010; Koff, 2000; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). The one size fits all approach with the use of narrowly prescribed skill-oriented curriculums, and standardization of



pedagogical methods and high stakes assessment does not produce personal meaning and deep understanding, and speaks volumes about what should be learned, how, and what all learners outcomes should be (Mason, 2017).

Where power imbalance becomes the norm culturally, learners may automatically assume they have nothing to offer and become passive receptacles to be acted upon rather than feeling empowered to contribute and act on their ideas and perspectives (Freire, 1970). Learner voice may become so stifled that they can no longer act to protect themselves from harm, or worse, fail to recognise harm. Harm may look like lack of self-confidence, extrinsic motivation to learn, or even abuse. Such aspects of the hidden curriculum are particularly worrisome for children considering they are receiving and internalizing their education with each new learning experience.

But, it's not just how they are learning but what they are learning as well. "There may be training but there is no education" (Dewey, 1916, p. 40). Only twenty years ago Greene (1995) said, "Our discussions of standards and curriculum frameworks and outcomes still have not touched seriously upon the matter of our purposes as a society: upon what it means to educate live persons, to empower the young not simply to make a living and contribute to the nation's economic welfare but to live and along with others, remake their own worlds" (p. 170). This notion, that an education should exist to build and support a good life would render many trained skills that preoccupy our curriculum unessential (Dewey, 1916; Greene, 1995). Standardization of narrow skill based curricula, pedagogy, and assessment fails learners when it comes to accurately assessing learning, particularly meaningful learning capable of application toward personal life goals (Mason, 2017).

Recent research discusses the continued domination of historic traditional focus on 'what to learn' in curriculum theory and pedagogy due to the effect of 'Globalization' and 'Westernized' values driving financial and political forces (Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Shapiro, 2008). Where Globalization denotes ideas of diversity and inclusion it is more about monoculturization with Western ideals spreading across the globe (O'Sullivan, 1999; Shapiro, 2008). Neoliberalism and capitalism are two Western modern-day ideologies that "reconfigure people as productive economic entrepreneurs who are responsible for making sound choices in their education, work, health, and lifestyle" (Macdonald, 2011, pg. 37).

Neoliberal policies have misguidedly redirected the priority of the purpose of education and the subsequent curriculum, towards knowledge content with market 'use value', as demonstration of responsible life choices (Davie & Evans, 2014, pg. 871). The purpose of knowledge acquisition here is preparation to become a financial entity offering skill value to the job market (Attick, 2017; Greene, 1995; Mason, 2017). This extends to children who "are conceived of as human resources rather than persons... much of the time, they are spoken of as if they were raw materials to be shaped to market demands" (Greene, 1995, p. 32). New Zealand schools "transformed from inclusive and democratic sites of learning into conservative institutions more concerned with their own status and less concerned with the needs of all students," especially the marginalized, in the 1990s as neoliberal policy reform 'Tomorrow's Schools' was implemented (Schoone, 2017, p. 809).

However, scholars criticize this competitive, economy driven ideology as incompatible with quality life. "Social interests are likely to be lost from view... the notion which ignores its social necessity and its identity with all human association that affect conscious life..." (Dewey, 1916, p. 13). As citizens buy into these ideas combined with the technological advancements of this generation they are losing citizenship, becoming more privatized and disconnected (Greene, 1995; Mason, 2017; O'Sullivan, 1999), and losing their connection to the essential qualities of life. O'Sullivan (1999) said that education "must be based on the foundation of authentic human needs... We need a place to satisfy our values to global village needs for protection, affection, understanding, participation, idleness, creation, identity and freedom" (p. 238). Therefore, humanity needs an alternative to traditional pedagogy as the narrowly prescribed curriculum society has adopted, with all of its standardized transmissions are not serving us, rather hurting us.

### **Postmodern shift in pedagogy.**

Curriculum theory has evolved substantially in the last century from its traditional beginnings as scholars have begun to question 'why we seek an education.' Educational researchers have discovered more about how human beings learn and about what is unintentionally passed on in the process of education, and this has led to innovation of alternative pedagogies (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Greene,

1995; Mason, 2017; Novak, 2012). The literature cites an overall shift in the 20th century from traditional or transmissive pedagogies to those of a constructive nature that are better suited for engaged learning/meaningful transformation (Novak, 2012). These include several constructive variations including experiential, inductive, critical, feminist, democratic, and several other alternative pedagogy theories that challenge the underpinning purpose, content, and pedagogical methods of traditional education (Novak, 2012). As mentioned briefly above, the purposes of education shifted from 'what shall we learn' to a more process based paradigm or 'how can education facilitate a well lived life' (Dewey, 1916; Greene, 1995; Koff, 2015; Mason, 2017; Shapiro, 2008; Stinson, 2016). These pedagogies differ from traditional pedagogy in that the goal to facilitate a well lived life motivates educators to respect the innate voice of the person who is learner, by teaching appropriate skills and lessons, in a way that will resonate with that individual and their needs.

Educational research has indicated that pedagogy supporting a process where the needs and inherent traits learners (including children) bring into class are respected, can enhance the learning relationship and create meaningful understanding and application that far exceeds rote learning (Dewey, 1916; H'Doubler, 1940; Mayer, 2002). "Surely, nothing can be more important than finding the source of learning, not in extrinsic demand, but in human freedom" (Greene, 1995, p. 132). Intrinsic engagement in learning results from learner's interests and needs being met. A way to do this is allowing the learner to contribute, balancing the power dynamic to allow for the learners' voice. Learner-centred pedagogy is gaining momentum, where children's interests are sought and direct the pathways of learning. Children's needs are met through a wider curriculum concerned with more than skills and taught for a variety of learning styles to accommodate different abilities and styles. Nielsen (2015, p.118) said "meaningful experiences are central to the process of creating knowledge." Where children have a say in what and how they learn, they maintain their power and freedom to learn and apply that learning to their life in meaningful ways. It is easy to imagine how the reinforcement of these values, engaged learning, self-worth, and strong place in culture would represent positive pedagogical outcomes, rather than those of the traditionalist past.

However, today the research continues to identify an ongoing relationship between education and traditional ideals, regardless of the strong body of theory challenging it. This illustrates a divide between idealistic pedagogy that is intended, and what actually occurs. Though educational bodies and even teachers themselves intend to teach alternatively as per the current research trends, there are significant struggles in getting rid of our traditional past; the traditional values reinforce themselves for generations to come (Dragon, 2015). Due to the market driven policy discussed previously, education has maintained deep rooted elements of performativity, supporting traditional pedagogy that chases achievement for their own market survival (Greene, 1995; O’Sullivan, 1999). Where neoliberalist policy and educator values are out of sync, there is little support for learning opportunities that are meaningful to a diverse range of students, and in part directed by them. This pressure forces curriculum to remain directed towards skill based outcomes and standardized testing, resulting in transmissive pedagogy in order to bank significant skills upon learners quickly and efficiently (Attick, 2017; Davie & Evans, 2014; Koff, 2015; Garret & Meiners, 2015; Mason, 2017; Melchior, 2015; Stinson, 2016). In contrast, alternative pedagogies such as child-centred education, are underutilized in our schools, in part because this pedagogy takes time, effort, and resources beyond that generally available to teachers in current educational contexts (Schoone, 2017). The pressures to maintain standards and achieve performative goals make it harder for educators to escape the cycle or even find time to question what they are a part of.

## **Dance Pedagogy**

Dance as a subject is comprised of many elements. Dance is not just something to do but to feel and experience physically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially with all senses (Coe, 2003; Graham, 2002; Werbrouck, 2004). There are physical skills of body placements and technique, and physical skills of energy and momentum, intellectual skills requiring critical thinking skills, spatial awareness, memory and patterning, rhythm and musicality, connectedness, vulnerability, risk, and performance related challenges. Graham (2002) talks about the several reasons for participation in dance in New Zealand illuminated from her own

study, including: "socializing, performance, entertainment, recreation, spirituality, education, physical fitness, therapy, religion, culture, creativity, health and wellbeing, competition, aesthetics, research and self-expression" (p. 129).

Therefore, the range of objectives are wide and this creates the need for a range of pedagogies to meet such a variety of needs (Coe, 2003). Because the learning of dance includes so many aspects of the total human experience, it influences values greatly because of the "vulnerable and delicate qualities of dance experience" that can be constructive or destructive (Antilla, 2009, p. 79). How a dancer is taught generally prescribes the way they live in their body, how they continue to dance, and how they teach dance (Coe, 2003; Dragon, 2015; Stinson, 2016). Generations of teachers teaching like they were taught, reinforces the dominant cultural values surrounding why we dance, what is dance, and how it should be taught (Dragon, 2015). Similar to general education the reinforcement of culture and its implications are powerful as they relate to the body and lived experience. This has led to dancers and dance educators questioning the traditional past and our own hidden curriculum.

### **Traditional pedagogy in dance education.**

Traditional pedagogy in dance is concerned with the one-directional transmission and transfer of knowledge and technical skills from the teacher with authority to the student for performance or assessment (Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Dyer, 2009; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Novak, 2012; Stinson, 2016; Warburton, 2008). In the case of dance, traditional pedagogy has been the primary method of "instruction" for centuries, where the expert demonstrates a figure or step and the obedient student repeats the codified skill until successful to reach an aesthetic product (Coe, 2003; Dyer, 2009; H'Doubler, 1940; Shapiro, 1999).

The dancer's way of being in the world is circumscribed. The body, as sculpted object and highly-trained precision instrument, demands total attention. The technical language of ballet reinforces this prescribed image of the dancer. It emphasises skills and training for proficiency and therefore follows the scientific approach in its concern with dispassionate training and technical control. The student is valued for her or his ability to follow directions, replicate set skills, show commitment by virtually

eliminating most other relationships and social roles, and by presenting an image of the dancer's body as little more than an automaton... In this approach the dancer learns to treat the body as object, an object submitted to rigorous training for the purpose of creating an image of perfection, and object mechanized for movement, and an object to be relinquished to authority, whether teacher, choreographer, or dance system. This is the dominant discourse of dance. Any other discourse is not considered to be 'real dance' (Shapiro, 1999, p. 129).

The Western fine art aesthetic values of grace, elegance, bodily form, compounded with standardization prioritizes some dance art forms as more prestigious than others (Shapiro, 2008; Smith, 2007) reflected in Shapiro's quote above that "any other discourse is not considered to be 'real dance'" (Shapiro, 1999, p. 129). Genres such as syllabus ballet, jazz, and contemporary are considered 'fine arts' in dance because they are skill-based techniques for creation of perfect images (Shapiro, 1999, 2008). In contrast, folk dance, creative, and street styles are regarded as less prestigious as lesser arts due to their more organic embodied approach. This is despite the argument that dance originated as an integral part of humanity, as a birth right (Amans, 2008; H'Doubler, 1940; Graham, 2002). Where once "dance had been the means through which all ethnic groups have captured and communicated the essential spiritual essence and values of their people," today, the stereotypical purpose of dance in New Zealand has changed (Graham, 2002, p. 128). To be a dancer in New Zealand is to meet the image of sensualized perfection, the image society has painted because of traditional values that are constantly being reinforced by media that neglect the several significant results of dance via misrepresentations (Graham, 2002). This illustrates that the current Western dance culture values the aesthetic above the intrinsic, and values dance that is skill based over any connection to self, community, or place; echoing market values of product over process.

Traditional pedagogy is valued in Western dance, enabling a dancer to gain enough physical experience to develop muscle memory and strength to perform technical movement skills accurately and in unison with other dancers and music, meeting the visual objectives of choreographers and society (Stinson, 2016). Brown & Keely (1994, p.1) said "Training develops the neural pathways

formed by education into well-grooved and well-worn tracks that permit repetitive performance with a high degree of efficiency. Training is aimed at the formation of habits that are so ingrained by repetition that only minimal outlay of nervous energy is required for performance" (as cited in Ambrosio, 2015, p. 9). Research into the experience of adult dancers notes a respect and appreciation for the structure of traditionalist training by those who have adapted to the culture and an insistence that such pedagogy is necessary for success in genres such as ballet (Clark & Markula, 2017; Wagonner, 2004). However, scholars criticize transmissive methods of dance instruction as the only way to produce strong technical performance and further warn that traditional pedagogy alone is harmful for various reasons. At the extremely negative end of a wide spectrum of dance pedagogy, an example may include militant instruction that utilizes fear, competition, degradation, abuse and unsafe body practice to produce compliance (Coe, 2003; Stinson, 2016; Wagonner, 2004; Warburton, 2008).

Authoritarianism, the imbalance of power held entirely with the teacher, gradually trains the dancer to become susceptible to the above-mentioned abuse through perceived loss of power, accepting ill treatment, and internalizing of self-destructive ideas about body image and self-worth. Authoritarianism pervades western concert dance (Burnidge, 2012). "The body is culturally constructed and tied up in power" (Green, 2007, p. 1124) Here dancers are empty buckets that need to be filled by an expert teacher who banks information and skill upon the docile body via demonstration, rote memorization, and manual corrections (Clark & Markula, 2017; H'Doubler, 1940; Shapiro, 1999; Stinson, 2016). This stunts the dancer's natural impulses to move instinctively or feel from the inside (somatics) (Brigham Young University, 2010), rather experiencing their body as an object to control to match that of their teacher whom they respect and admire (Burnidge, 2012; Shapiro, 1999; Wagonner, 2004).

The body is left to the voice of authority--put into a mode of passivity as the dancer waits to be moulded. Objectification of the body is a requirement. Its meaning and purpose becomes defined by its ability to represent the correct image defined by the technical language of dance instruction. The dancer, knowing that she or he is valued and evaluated

on surface appearance, learns to appraise her or himself this way (Shapiro, 1999, p. 127).

The teachers' gaze authorizes who can and should participate, and this privileges the most ideal dancers and marginalizes others (Garrett & Meiners; 2015; Green, 2007; Risner & Stinson, 2010; Wagonner, 2004; Warburton, 2008). This can lead to self-obsession and unhealthy competition (Shapiro, 1999).

The resulting disconnection from the dancer's own voice can diminish artistry in the process of meeting the demands of outward aesthetics only, disregarding the meaning for the dancer themselves. Dancers become mimics rather than artists with a voice of their own (Coe, 2003; Clark & Marula, 2017). Aesthetic-based technique that is learned becomes irrelevant to the creation of quality life without connection and personal meaning (Stinson, 2016). Citizenship may be impaired as dance becomes about the outward meeting of others' ideals (Garrett & Meiners, 2015). Opportunities are missed to connect with others and the world with a sense of confidence and individuality. Studio dance in New Zealand reflects this skill-based priority by developing hip hop and contemporary syllabi (such as New Zealand Association of Modern Dance, Modern Dance Syllabus of New Zealand, Urban Ignition, for example); for previously improvisational genres of dance. However, the loss in depth that occurs with a focus on skill only endangers dance as an art form, and choreography has suffered in recent times due to the lack of diversity (Ririe, 2010). This additionally puts every child's right to "study dance taught as an art form" at risk (Bucek, 1992; National Dance Education Organization, 2001, p. 34). Scholars note the importance of experiencing dance as an art form because it is "education in and an appreciation of the art of dance that will last a lifetime" (Werbrouck, 2004, p. 66). This quote alludes to the necessity of the intrinsic motivations to dance as vital for interest and participation in dance that will last longer than childhood classes, examinations, and competitions (Duda & Quedsted, 2011).

### **Alternative dance pedagogies.**

Within the last three decades there has been a shift in dance education from a narrow approach focused on the mastery of a prescribed curriculum, to including a more open approach with concern for the subjective experience of learners and



their learning beyond technical mastery (Antilla, 2009; Koff, 2015; Risner, 2017; Tembriotti & Tsangaridou, 2014; Werbrouck, 2004). In response to the negative consequences of traditional pedagogy alone, much research has been done to consider pedagogical methods that meet both technical and human needs such as embodiment, development, well-being, and relationships (Antilla, 2009; Barbour, 2011, 2016; Frichtel, 2017; Stinson, 2016). Within dance education alternative pedagogies, including critical/democratic dance pedagogy, creative dance pedagogy, and learner-centred (child-centred) pedagogy have evolved (Bucek, 1992; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003, Dragon, 2015; Dyer, 2009; Frichtel, 2017; Green, 2007; Sansom, 2011; Stinson, 2016). Alternative pedagogies share some commonalities in underlying values: the reasons for why we dance are not so much concerned with an objective aesthetic appeal but rather how dance as art can *illicit meaning making to improve the life of the dancer* (Dyer, 2009; Frichtel, 2017; Stinson, 2015, 2016). Additionally, common to these alternatives is the development of democratic responses to facilitate meeting the challenges of skill acquisition without diminishing voice and making meaning for the dance artist (Barbour, 2011, 2016; Coe, 2003; Clark & Markula, 2017; Dragon, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2017; Nielsen, 2015; Stinson, 2016).

Creative pedagogy is a common alternative pedagogical style identified by scholars. Arguably originating from a philosophical challenge to tradition, creative pedagogy "places more emphasis on offering more freedom for students, to display through movement, their own imaginative responses to given ideas," essentially freeing their voice (Coe, 2003, p. 41). This is represented by methods of teaching that facilitate exploration of movement, dance elements, music, and interpersonal skills for dance making. One criticism of the pedagogy is that often educators teaching within this style want to draw emotion and creativity out of students without providing them enough to learn or work with (Coe, 2003; Stinson, 2016). Skills including technical control, alignment, and an understanding and use of the dance elements have been identified as essentials for exploration that challenge and satisfy the child's dance experience (Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001; 2007). While creative educators acknowledge the intrinsic contributions children bring to dance class, they should know that rather than just expecting children to show up and 'dance,' more can be done to enhance their learning experience by providing them with greater building blocks for

engagement, challenge, and meaning making (Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001; 2007; Sansom, 2011).

Learner-centred pedagogy, developed from the postmodern paradigm and is similarly concerned with providing freedom to develop the unique voice of the dancer but enhanced to ensure learning is a central goal (Coe, 2003). Research identifies an underlying belief that all dancers (children and adults) come with a wealth of experiences that shape natural movement signatures and that allowing these to exist in the dance class promotes meaning making, agency and student interest, all improving their ability to learn and conceptualize movement created by and taught to them (Dyer, 2009; Dewey, 1916; H'Doubler, 1940; Giguere, 2011; Stinson, 2016). Learner-centred pedagogy brings attention to the cultural, physical, and psychological differences of dancers, and provides democratic response to accommodate variations in cultural sensitivities, body size or function, and learning style in a way that is "both inclusive of all the community, as well as a location for personal excellence" (Koff, 2015, p. 7; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2017; Dragon, 2015; Stinson, 2016). Associated with this style is assessment that tracks individual progress versus standardized outcomes (Chian, 2015; Giguere, 2011; Koff, 2015; Stinson, 2016). Research champions learner-centred pedagogy as a means of increasing the accessibility of dance to more than the physically, monetarily, culturally privileged few who fit well with the Westernized traditional dance culture (Bucek, 1992; Risner & Stinson, 2010; Garrett & Meiners, 2015).

Of critical pedagogy in general, Fujino, et al., (2018) said,

For us, critical pedagogy produces informed understandings of the political, cultural, racial, and gendered dynamics of social life as a prelude for a politics of democratization. Against the mechanical-learning, product-oriented, market-driven pedagogy of neoliberal schooling, ours is an epistemology aligned with Paulo Freire's (1970/2007) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that views education as a practice of freedom and demands critique of, and intervention in, social problems and structures of oppression (p.69).

Critical dance pedagogy then, is concerned with the greater social implications of dance education and the possibilities for meaningful understanding (transformation) and a democratic life for the student and the wider community (Risner & Stinson, 2010; Stinson, 2016). Critical dance pedagogy explores how the body is 'socially habituated' in dance and how that status affects the dancer (Dragon, 2015; Green, 2007; Shapiro, 1998;1999). Pedagogy would play out in tangible ways in the culture and critical dance pedagogues want to challenge dominant systems utilizing democratic methods that balance out authoritarian relationships and oppressive systems and illicit the dancer's voice (Antilla, 2009; Burnidge, 2012; Dragon, 2015; Frichtel, 2017; Green, 2007). As accessibility increases in socially responsible dance education, the possibility for values to change within dance culture, the way it is learned and taught then cycle outward into the community (Dragon, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2017). Public understanding and acceptance about what constitutes worthwhile dance activity, the purpose of dance, how it may be experienced, and perceptions of the body and its relationship to the world, can change at a cultural level and could also improve the community dance and school curriculum dance contexts. Antilla (2009) supports this claim by saying the current articulation of the meaning of dance and its purpose within general education and life will "generate powerful counterarguments to the neoliberal and modernist educational discourse" (p. 201). The power of pedagogy then extends to personal and community change, deep within value systems. This is transformation."One of the present-day objectives of critical pedagogy is the transformation of the global society where the interests of the people must not be asserted at the expense of others. Hence there is no support for the development of the transformative school without a suitable social context" (Novak, 2012, p. 166). Shapiro (1998) talks about imagination and creativity for change making, "expressions of who we are and who we want to become" (p.11), that can enrich students "critical, creative and moral capacities." Dance being a medium where imagination and creativity can be freely explored therefore, represents the perfect vehicle for transformation.

Alternative pedagogies may be idealistic and more difficult to implement in the current dance culture. Frichtel (2017) states "seldom are students' experiential assessments of learning critically considered in developing curricula and creating learning activities" (p. 43). Dance education curricula and

subsequently dance pedagogy are affected by the pressure of the system that facilitates traditional pedagogy in general education as educators fulfil their responsibilities to their students and their parents (Posey, 2002; Werbrouck, 2004). Dance studios often pride themselves on offering the best product to attract selective consumers typical of our day and age. Meeting the parents' desired "results" as discussed by Werbrouck (2004) may look like titles and awards that glorify competitive aesthetics of perfection (Posey, 2002). This reinforces elitism in dance, where only those with talent, money, and capable of coping with traditional pedagogy can succeed and this elitism challenges 'every child's right to dance' (Antilla, 2009; Gilbert, 2005; National Dance Education Organization, 2001).

To combat this, in 2000/2007 a new art and dance curriculum was established to the rejoicing of dance specialist educators as an opportunity to reach all children in public schools (Cheeseman, 2009; Ministry of Education, 2018; Sansom, 2011). The curriculum, which is based on creative dance and one strand supporting the use of multicultural forms of dance to widen the acceptance of dance as an expressive art form and community; a development from dance previously only being considered a physical act as part of Physical Education (Gilbert, 2005; Green, 2007; Posey, 2002; Sansom, 2011). But research shows dance education in New Zealand primary schools is difficult and underutilized due to curriculum priorities for literacy and numeracy and limited teacher training about what dance is and how to teach it (Bolwell, 2014; Buck & Snook, 2017; Cadzow, 2008; Cheeseman, 2009; Melchior, 2015; Sansom, 2011, Snook & Buck, 2014a). This is a great deal of pressure on schools, often pushing dance further into the margins (Buck & Snook, 2017; Melchior, 2015; Snook & Buck, 2014a).

The financially fuelled political climate of the Western world (including New Zealand) has long championed school subjects subjects with perceived knowledge capital as responsible priorities for a strong future market: literacy, numeracy, and technology (Bolwell, 2014; Cheeseman, 2009; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Pope, 2014; Snook & Buck, 2014a). "The National Curriculum of Aotearoa New Zealand defines eight learning areas, but the time or attention afforded to each of these areas across any school week is anything but equitable – at least in practice" (Pope, 2014, p. 503). As an art, dance finds itself undervalued in school curricula all over the world (Antilla, 2009; Bucek, 1992; Gilbert, 2005; Koff,

2015; Sansom, 2011) in comparison to literacy and numeracy and this is certainly true in New Zealand (Bolwell, 2014; Cheeseman, 2009; Melchior, 2015; Snook & Buck, 2014a). Even in comparison to other arts (visual, music, theatre) dance is considered the "poor cousin" (Snook & Buck, 2014a, p.20; Cheeseman, 2008).

In the literature several researchers note that in order for dance to maintain its legitimacy in schools/community's discussions surrounding curriculum and pedagogy similarly focus on 'what is taught' or skill based outcomes and standardised assessment, in order to present the subject as an objective product increasing market value of the learner (Attick, 2017; Bolwell, 2014; Koff, 2015, Mason, 2017; Stinson, 2015). Assessment in dance cites a growing trend of objective testing, examinations, and rankings (Stinson, 2015). In order to accomplish objective assessment, skills are prescribed, but teachers untrained in dance feel an overall lack in confidence to teach and assess the subject (Buck & Snook, 2017; Snook & Buck, 2014a), perhaps because they receive far too little dance education training in preservice primary teacher courses and teachers do not teach what they have no experience with (Cheeseman, 2009; Gilbert, 2005; Snook & Buck, 2014b). Where some may try, utilizing a traditional approach to assessment, the body may be objectified leaving little room to value the inherent movement qualities of the dancer (Buck, 2015; Stinson, 2015; Wagonner, 2004), and leaving public schools susceptible to the negative aspects of dance culture, such as comparison and body shaming. And so, dance educators must be advocates for change, knowledgeable of research and able to talk policy in order to make room for dance in schools and quality teacher training because "while dancers and dance educators, for the most part, recognise the inherent value of participation in dance, others outside the field do not" (Antilla, 2009; Gilbert, 2005; Minton, 2010, p. 2). "Without any ongoing continuation of dance in the classroom, dance will most likely always remain an optional extra or an extracurricular subject for those with a particular interest" and will be ticked off as done by way of a yearly production or a daily dose of Jump Jam (Snook & Buck, 2014a, p. 21, 25).

Though numerous 'specialised' dance educators are concerned with 'the purpose of dance' and aware of elements of the 'hidden curriculum', the pressure to maintain legitimacy and impart objective skills to reach set standards in order to meet assessment standards leads to the marginalization of dance education and

the continued use of traditional pedagogy in studios and schools (Werbrouck, 2004). As described above, dance educators feel pressure to act as an economic entity in order to maintain their job or business. "Dance schools in the private sector reflect the image the public holds of dance. In this image, dance is perceived to be highly competitive... Artistry, creativity, aesthetics, and educational values are all secondary to the primary popular image" (Posey, 2002, p.46). However, the reinforcement of dominant cultures of teaching and learning through generations leaves parents and children susceptible to these societal ideas about what dance is acceptable (Bucek, 1992) and compounded by the neoliberal pressures to become a selective consumer (Garrett & Meiners, 2015). Therefore, alternative dance offerings are less common and may be viewed unfavourably and as less beneficial to the commercial success of a dancer. Traditional pedagogy as utilized in dance training remains a societal benchmark for dance in New Zealand and the values that support this negatively affect the application of the public-school curriculum in schools. This illustrates the conservative, traditional societal values held by New Zealanders about what dance is, its purpose, and by whom and how it should be taught. These values are often held by people who do not understand or have not experienced the developmentally life-changing benefits of dance beyond that of physical mastery and mental discipline, and thus have not challenged their own assumptions about dance. Learner-centred pedagogy in dance, while alternative and emerging, holds a powerful key to teaching for meaning and for the skills children need for a good life as it provides opportunities to experience transformative learning that not only develops the self, but our communities and culture.

## **Transformation**

Dance scholars, educators, and performers note that their passion and persistence in the field of dance exists as a response to such benefits, or positive *transformative* experiences (Antilla, 2015; Barbour, 2011; Coe, 2003; Reire, 2010; Shapiro, 2015; Stinson, 2016), that have elevated self-knowing and formed an attachment between themselves and the art form. It is this embodied attachment that affixes dance as a vehicle for personal learning, expression, connection, and community (Antilla, 2009; 2015; Barbour, 2011, 2016; Bond and

Stinson, 2000/2001; Koff, 2002; Melchior, 2015; Shaprio, 1998; Stinson, 2016). It motivates hard work in technique class, appreciation for and creation of dance as art, and in many cases, propels artists down the pathway of teaching and facilitating transformative learning experiences within future students (Coe, 2003; Dragon, 2015; Graham, 2002; Stinson, 2016).

Transformation in dance is a multisensory experience resulting from embodied experience (Shapiro, 1999; 1998). Dance connects to all areas of the body and transcends time, space, and shared experience (embodiment) and this is foundational to learning because as Eva Antilla (2015) describes when physical movement and inner body sensations combine it creates a physical change simultaneous with reflections that translate to meaning (p.81). Bodies are "inscribed by the culture in which we live" (Green, 2007, p.1121), and this "body knowledge" can lead to understanding, critical thinking and change (Shapiro, 2016, p. 6). Shapiro (1998) describes the "body as a site for critical reflection." (p.11). This is particularly true for children who learn by exploration of movement, and sense before they even communicate with words (Bucek, 1992; Sansom, 2011). Therefore, meaning and understanding of the world and the child's place in it is dependent on embodied exploration. Embodied exploration is best facilitated by dance education than through traditionally dictated training because "dance education continues the explorations of body parts, and movement in sequence with self, others, and the environment, through variations of time, space, and energy, these elements of dance are best explored and experienced in a creative and student-centred fashion without impositions of style or codified forms..." with "self-knowledge as its aim" (Koff, 2000, p. 28).

Transformative pedagogy then is concerned with transforming the person at a meaningful level, developing in them understanding that is relevant to them and propels them to grow, change, and act (Freire, 1970; Graham, 2002). Positive transformations may include moments of exhilaration at acquiring physical power and skill, performing to an audience, finding personal meaning in movement, or the simple joy of meeting a best friend at the barre and feeling a sense of belonging there. Of course, juxtaposed to positive transformation experiences exists negative transformation, experienced by all who try dancing, to some degree. Examples include body shaming to eating disorders, militant teaching styles, unsafe dance practice, or gender/ethnic/ability exclusion, competition, and

abuse (Coe, 2003; Shapiro, 2016; Wagonner, 2004; Warburton, 2008). It is easy to see that participation in dance and pedagogy (and the pedagogue) plays a large part in facilitating positive or negative transformation for the individual and society as the dancers embody the values they learn, by the way they are taught via the hidden curriculum (Graham, 2002; Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2016). "Arts educators have a valuable in role to play in setting future political, social and cultural agendas. Yes, it is a soft power... but arts educators are connection to the heartbeat of society" (Buck, 2015, p. 165). Participation in democratic dance can aid in social justice to counter globalization, inequalities, poverty, racism as education within the arts develops within the dancer social, emotional, perceptive capacity to understand diverse peoples and viewpoints and a voice to advocate with (Frichtel, 2017; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Risner, 2009; Shapiro, 2016; Snook & Buck, 2014b, p. 222).

Currently, researchers have explored transformational experiences in adult dance education students, as scholars in academia are utilizing the various alternative pedagogies (Barbour, 2016; Barr, 2013; Garber, 2010; Stinson, 2016). But, there is less exploration of positive transformational learning in children's dance to date. Research on children's dance is showing focus on motivation, critical thinking skills (Chen & Cone, 2003; Giguere, 2011), and engagement in dance as a mechanism for improved learning in other subject areas (again showing attempts in dance to maintain legitimacy). However, the voice of the child is recognised as important and their engagement to make meaning in movement is relevant in the literature (Bucek, 1992; Melchior, 2015; Nielsen, 2015; Sansom, 2011; Stinson, 2016). Dance educators are aware that neglecting skills acquisition no more favours the child than neglecting their unique needs (Barbour, 2011, 2016; Dyer, 2009; Stinson, 2016). There is supporting evidence that while meaning making is the predominant goal, developing solid motor skill technique is essential to increase movement vocabulary and enable transformative communication through the medium of dance (Chian, 2015; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Melchior, 2015; Stinson, 2016). When "a focus is placed on releasing the creative potential of the individual student to enhance self-esteem, the student will become more confident to explore mastery of physical dance competence" (Coe, 2003, p.41). The idea of transformative experiences for learning movement skills is discussed in physical education and sport also, with understanding that children



must "capture internal reasons for participating in sport, such as pleasure or intrinsic fulfilment" with warnings against pedagogy that pressures children into skill for extrinsic reasons (Duda & Quested, 2011, p. 125). Forced skills learning may push children away from sport and dance, while transformative pedagogy may support continued involvement in that sport or dance and provide the platform for the intrinsic motivation to achieve higher skills and artistry (Chian, 2015; H'Doubler; 1940). The challenge is to teach skills democratically.

Ambrosio (2015) discusses the two-pronged challenge dance educators face: "(1) making sure that students possess the information they need to progress technically and intellectually, and (2) helping students develop their own sense of artistry and their own passion for and commitment to the art form" (p.7 ) and that teaching technique alone is not enough (Stinson, 2016). Stinson (2016) further discussed the process of realization by dance educators that they will not be able to include all that is good to learn and exclude all that is bad to experience. With "time [as] a finite resource, . . . the opposite side of every strength is a weakness and a choice to do one thing, is a choice not to do the other. The best any of us can do-- is to become wide awake-- conscious of our values" (Stinson, 2016/first published in 2001, p. 60). Transformation then becomes possible only when appropriate pedagogies are utilized to bring out meaning making in the dancer. Child centred pedagogy requires the educator to be reflective of those values and act upon those reflections in order to teach relevantly to the child's needs. "Transformative learning is oriented towards students and the dialogue with them" (Novak, 2012, p. 167), offering a definition of learning lent from Senge et al. (2000) as changing oneself and the environment and this is heavily influenced by pedagogy.

Teachers, as reflective practitioners, explore the learning and teaching possibilities with a view to discovering new methods and ways in which they would help them students pursue changes on their own. Individual or social transformative learning is a deeply emotional, spiritual, cognitive, discursive but also an inter-subjective process; the quality of our relationship with significant others. The concept of a simultaneous change of an individual and the society seems idealistic, as it is not clear whether the social changes reach to the national level, the global level or

stay within narrower communities (families, classes, schools) (Novak, 2012, p.167).

## **Reflection for Transformative Pedagogy**

"Reflective thinking leads to reflective judgements as performer, teacher, and research, to look beyond what is expected" (Huddy & Stevens, 2016, p. 68). Reflective practice is a widely discussed topic in education, the arts and sport, and now growing in dance research as a way to improve pedagogical practice, particularly in teacher training (Antilla, 2009; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Duda & Quedsted, 2011; Dyer, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2017; Frichtel, 2017; Graham, Holt/Hale, & Parker, 2013; Miles, 2011; Risner, 2009, 2017; Smith, 2007; Huddy & Stevens, 2016; Stinson, 2016; Tembriotti & Tsangaridou, 2014; Warburton, 2008). Reflective practice is a vehicle towards awareness of an educator's past/held beliefs, their values, and to explore the intentions and outcomes of an educator's pedagogy (Barbour, 2011; Buck, 2015; Fitzgerald, 2017; Graham et al., 2013; Miles, 2011; Sansom, 2015; Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2016). Dance educators teach with their unique sets of values and their practice is shaped by their own unique experiences (Antilla, 2009; Ashley, 2013; Coe, 2003; Dragon, 2015; Frichtel, 2017; Risner, 2009; Smith, 2007; Stinson, 2016; Warburton, 2008). Value appraisal is essential for intentional teaching, allowing educators to "turn their observational and analytical skills on themselves" and make sense of their teaching and literally learn about themselves to ensure they are providing positive and healthy learning experiences (Miles, 2011, p. 114). According to Bright (2013, p. 10), theories say "the importance of reflective learning lies in the opportunity to make sense of experience." When reflection is "purposive and intentional... the practitioner experiences an increase in confidence in their own practice" (Bright, 2013, p.10) and likely will teach for their objectives as they are wide awake to their values (Stinson, 2016).

Reflective practitioners think about their experiences in practice and view them as opportunities to learn. They examine their definitions of knowledge, seek to develop broad and multifaceted types of knowledge, and recognise that their knowledge is never complete. Reflective

practitioners are concerned about the contexts of their practices and the implications of action. They reflect on themselves, including their assumptions and their theories of action of practice, and take action grounded in self-awareness. Finally, reflective practitioners recognise and seek to act from a place of praxis, a balanced coming together of action and reflection (Kinsella, 2001, p.197).

Bright (2013) describes learning as any change in an individual or group (cognitive, affective, behavioural, psychological, spiritual, or practical skills) and champions reflection as key to learning for art making, including dance making. Coe (2003) describes dance as "a multi-sensory experience" with factors additional to some other educational subjects. Dance educators sharing an art form combining physically, emotionally, and spiritually powerful experiences are particularly needy of reflection to carefully navigate the intentional and unintentional learning passed on via dance.

By listening to the language of our own teaching we find the gaping absence of a discourse that might make it possible for students to question why they dance, what body experiences they have when dancing, and how they might make sense of them in relation to their everyday body experience; such classes can encourage them to critically reflect upon who they are, and how that is influenced by the larger culture in which they live (Shapiro, 1999, p. 136).

Educators may unknowingly teach contrary to their values, professing one system but acting upon another, possibly due to the way they were taught dance themselves. When values and actions are not in harmony, reflection aids in the ability of challenging negative implications of their ideas about dance, and therefore supports positive changes to their pedagogy (Burnidge, 2012; Freire, 1970; Stinson, 2016; Warburton, 2008).

Many scholars discuss their journey and in turn describe their evolution away from transmissive pedagogies as they have discovered the hidden curriculum and challenged their own assumptions and values (Barbour, 2016; Burnidge, 2012; Dyer, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2017; Turpeinan, 2015; Warburton,

2008). They describe their development within alternative pedagogies suited to their context and how they searched for meaning that negotiates their subconsciously held beliefs that come from their past experiences, and possible training, and what they want to achieve now according to research, and growing awareness. Tembrioti & Tsangaridou (2014) suggest that reflection is the main way that scholars and educators since the 1990s and particularly in higher education contexts, have moved from mastery based technical focus to become more student centred, with practices becoming more concerned with the subjective experience of the dancer. This shows that dance as a field is becoming more aware of the hidden curricula of dance. Researchers are identifying negative aspects that have come from traditional pedagogy and are regaining an 'organic' relationship with dance, aware once again of the ability to develop the whole human being—creativity, thinking skills, and community—again. Reflective practice remains used by some, not all. For various reasons discussed previously, including the market economy, aesthetic principles, and culturally held beliefs of the consumers of dance, traditional pedagogy remains in many contexts.

### **Reflective Process**

There are several proposed reflective processes differing in definition, theory, and practical function suggested by various scholars. Scholars note that most originate from the influential work of three key theorists such as Dewey (1933) Van Manen (1977), and Schon (1983, 1987) (Miles, 2011; Tembrioti & Tsangaridou, 2014, p. 6). Bright (2013) and Huddy & Stevens (2016), also include Kolb (1984) as a foundational reflective learning cycle. These authors' work will be briefly discussed to highlight what is meant generally by reflective practice.

Dewey's (1933) model challenged 'routine' actions with 'reflective' teacher actions. Routine actions would be "directed by impulse, tradition, and authority, while reflexive action depends on active, persistent, careful consideration" (as cited in Tembrioti & Tsangaridou, 2014, p. 6). Van Manen's (1977) theorizing structures three levels of reflection, from a focus on technical goals, to an analytical process for meaning making, to "critical questions relating to moral, ethical and political aspects of pedagogy" (Tembrioti & Tsangaridou; 2014, p.9). Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, the basic cycle from which other educators

and researchers have elaborated and which enables educators to engage in more specific and critical reflection (Huddy & Stevens, 2016). It involves four phases, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (Bright, 2013, p. 11; Kolb, 1984). Concrete experience involves learning from specific experiences, such as participating in the actual class and the action of teaching class, noticing what is happening, observing attitudes, engagement, and skill aptitude). Reflective observation is described by Bright (2013) as "careful observation before making judgments" (p.12) which entails looking for meaning by reflecting on what happened in dance class, vibe of dancers, how dancers met objectives, and how well dancers respond to tasks. Then abstract conceptualisation involves logical analysis and planning: why did those outcomes happen, and what was affecting it, what can be done to solve issues? Lastly, active experimentation involves learning by doing, risk taking, planning the next class and putting next steps into practice (Bright, 2013).

Bright (2013) further describes Zepke's (2003) expanded application of reflection beyond the individual (the educator), describing reflection as a process to include the experiences of others in our own meaning making (p.10). This is integral to the field of education where experiences as an educator are not separate from the experiences of several others. Education is a social enterprise involving students, parents, policy makers/gatekeepers, and social values and actions. It is fair to say that dance education, once again unique in its extraordinary function in society would evoke strong social reactions. Due to this, the dance educators participate in the reflective cycle by positioning their reflective learning alongside that of those they teach, and those whom their pedagogy affects. In order to do this, they are aware of the experiences of others and are responsive to those experiences.

Figure 1 is a mixed cycle originating from the merging of Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984) and Schon's Four Phases of Learning (Schon, 1983) collated by Bright (2013). This model may better support the experiences of dance educators because Schon's model captures this key element common in teaching, that of 'reflection-in-action.' "Reflection-in-action refers to the process of interpreting, analysing, and offering solutions to complex and situational problems during an action. Reflection-on-action takes place when the practitioner has left the arena of venture and mentally reconstructs that arena to

analyse actions and events" (Tembrioti & Tsangaridou, 2014, p.6).

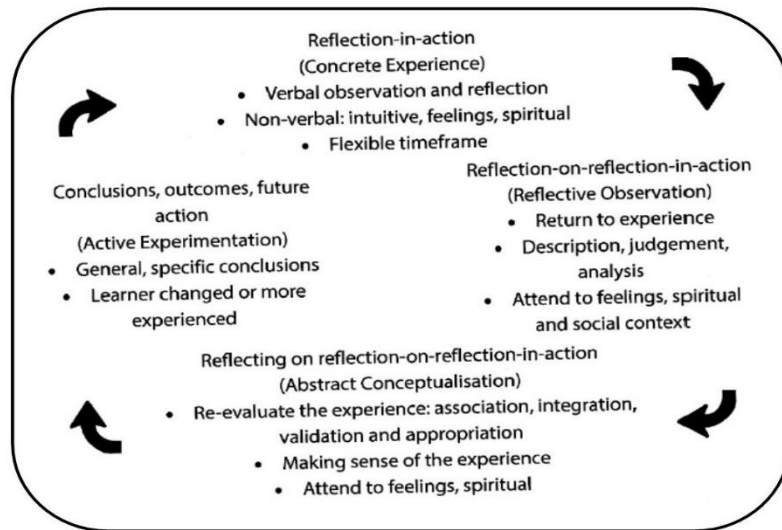


Figure 1A Four Phase Approach to Reflective Learning (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission

Figure 3 (below), the Bright Approach to Reflective Practice (Bright, 2013, p.27) simplifies each step found in Figure 2, additionally arranging both cycles in relation to each other in a way that you can clearly see the mini cycles going on during Phase 1 (teaching practice in class) in relation to the wider cycle from week to week/class to class.

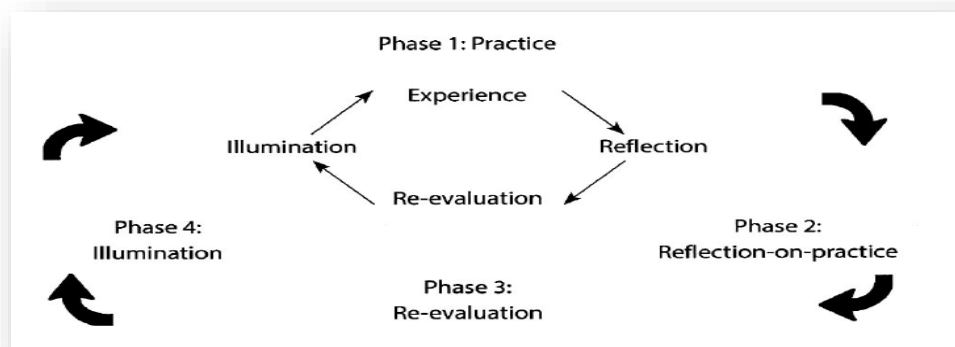


Figure 2 Bright Approach to Reflective Practice (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission.

The reflective practitioner believes that not only do actions frequently speak louder than words, but that by attending to our actions in the ordinary, mundane events of our seemingly routine biographies we (1)

come to understand ourselves and others to a greater degree, (2) recognize our own complicity in oppressive structures we seek to eliminate, and (3) inform our potential for individual and collective action for making a better world (Risner, 2017, p. 90).

### **Conclusion: Reflective Practice for Transformative Pedagogy**

In the literature review I have illuminated reflective processes as key to learner-centred dance education that contributes to transformative experiences in dancers and therefore provides a good starting point for exploring the research question: *How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance.* However, transformation and reflective practice as topics in the literature remain primarily concerned with higher education and professional dancers, and there is less exploration of reflective practice by teachers of children's dance, particularly in New Zealand. I have experienced myself how impressionable dancers are in a multisensory medium, it seems very important to develop open pedagogies for children, the most impressionable of all human age groups, to minimise the impact of negative hidden curriculum. There is evidence of alternative pedagogy in children's dance but there is little change in the world of children's dance due to political, cultural, and economic influences that support the continuation of traditional pedagogy, competition, and examination of dancers in studios (Posey, 2002). Further, dance in schools remains undervalued in comparison with literacy and numeracy.

There exists in the literature a gap regarding transformative pedagogy for children's dance in relation to how it is facilitated and specifically with focus on reflective practice. Acknowledging the use of reflective practice as essential to learner-centred pedagogy, I seek to explore the use of reflection by expert dance educators in facilitating positive transformational experiences in learning children's dance. I will research this in the context of community/recreational dance classes to explore dance pedagogy free from policy and national standards of public education, syllabi constraints of studio training and with teachers who are potentially more able to challenge traditional pedagogy. Community dance educators have the flexibility to “include a broad range of practices and styles”

that reflect a variety of philosophies as held by the diverse community of educators (Amans, 2008, p. 4) and that affect objectives and pedagogical methods as they feel necessary, with more chance of alternative pedagogies being utilized. This encourages dancers to negotiate their understanding of dance as a process or product (Barr, 2013). There is little discussion of this in New Zealand particularly, which is essential to understand our own specific context. Community dance, due to its accessibility to a wider range of the community and utilizing a process-based pedagogy, potentially offers a broader representation of dance than what is seen when considering children privileged by affluence or talent dancing in private studios (Amans, 2008; Barr, 2013). Further, such domestic research offers a study unique to Aotearoa New Zealand and will highlight what is important to our own dancers and educators at home.





### Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

The focus of this chapter is to provide a discussion of the overall research design utilised in order to answer the research question: *How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance.*

Research design and methods are framed within the researcher's theoretical paradigm. A paradigm is a theoretical worldview that guides ontology (determines what is truth), epistemology (how we can come to know it) (Krauss, 2005; Markula & Silk, 2011), research question development, methodology selections, and methods for data collection. Two common paradigms are the positivist and interpretivist perspectives. Positivists view reality to be singular and include concrete, tangible, externally objective facts to be measured (Krauss, 2005; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In contrast, interpretivists consider multiple realities, abstract thought, values, and meanings subjectively and socially constructed in unique contexts (Barbour, 2011; Green & Stinson, 1999; Krauss, 2005; Smith, 2007). The world views of each of these two paradigms reflect different perspectives in educational theory. Traditional pedagogy educational practices value a singular interest in the production of tangible, measurable skills for success in the market (Attick, 2017; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Greene, 1995; Mason, 2017; Stinson, 2016). In comparison, transformative postmodern educational practices prioritize the values and meaning making of learners in their unique context (Barbour, 2011; Freire, 1970; Novak, 2012; O'Sullivan, 1999; Shapiro, 2008).

Because my personal teaching philosophy and research goals lean toward transformative pedagogy, I have selected an interpretivist paradigm to guide my research design. I aim to examine understandings about the values and reflections of expert dance educators as they reflect their social/cultural construction. In this research I am seeking to make meaning from educators' values and reflections and context specific interactions between teacher and learner (ontology). Each educator has a unique background of experience that frames their values, including biases and prejudices, and manifests in unique ways through their pedagogy (Ashley, 2013; Burnidge, 2012; Smith, 2007; Snook & Buck, 2014b;

Stinson, 2016; Warburton, 2008). In addition, each student is unique, bringing together age, cultural, ethnic, demographic, gender differences unique to the region and community of the dance class (Coe, 2003; Dewey; 1916; H'Doubler, 1940). Therefore, the pedagogy and reflective processes of each teacher and the learners subsequent context will represent multiple truths.

The interpretivist paradigm has influenced the development of my research question, which has evolved as I have reconsidered what knowledge I am looking to understand, and what is possible to know (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Green & Stinson, 1999; Krauss, 2005; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). A clear, theoretically positioned research question determines the appropriate methods and instruments to collect theoretically valid evidence (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In this case, an interpretivist paradigm utilizes qualitative methodology and interview methods to derive meaning via subjective interpretation, multi-voiced reflection of meaning, and experiences (Markula & Silk, 2011). Such interpretations could provide insight for the dance education sector and act as a catalyst for future enquiry. Appropriate research design and paradigm, including methodology, should be carefully selected and applied purposefully when conducting research rather than gathering haphazard experiences as evidence for knowledge (Cohen et al., 2011; Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Lewin, & Lowden, 2011).

## **Methodology**

Ethnography is the qualitative methodology of choice for this research project. This methodology is concerned with a researcher constructing a thick descriptive, vivid contextual view of an individual or group (Cohen et al., 2011). Originating from the realm of anthropology, ethnography as a method yields a textured insight into the fabric of human behaviour and culture (Davida, 2011; Frosch, 1999; Sands, 2002) going beyond identifying cultural occurrences. Sands (2002) states that "sport reflects culture, and culture reflects sport" (p. 8). Similarly, how we are dancing reflects the fabric of our behaviour and our social culture. And, our culture can be transformed by how we teach dance, learn dance, and view dance (Shapiro, 2016). For this reason, ethnography is a good choice for dance research. Going beyond the stereotypical anthropological objectification of foreign folk dances, ethnography may involve telling the rich stories of the cultural constructs

of educators, learners, performers and appreciators of dance (Buck, Fortin, & Long, 2011; Davida, 2011; Frosch, 1999). Davida (2011, p. 10-11) discusses its extension to western art dance, highlighting the contribution Fisher (2003), Kealiinohomoku (1969-70), Novak (1990), and Wulff (1998) have made to critical analysis of the dance field. Frosch (1999) described good ethnography as messy and that not about homogeneity. Ethnography proves useful in understanding the multiple and at times conflicting contexts of culture and provides rich descriptions that raise critical issues. With the wide range of cultural values pervading dance communities and pedagogy in various contexts it is easy to see why ethnographic studies would provide problem solving and understandings for the sector (Ashley, 2013; Frosch, 1999; Loytonen, 2011).

For this research I seek to gain insight into the pedagogical culture of experienced educators in a particular niche of dance education in New Zealand and in doing so will uncover the ways dance offerings in this country reflect, celebrate, challenge the culture and values of problem solving. Most importantly, I want to challenge myself to examine my own cultural beliefs and pedagogy, a by-product of any good ethnography (Sands, 2002). Since I began this research, I have developed an understanding that pedagogy is more than a method of teaching: it is the loom upon which the strands of our culture are woven. It is thick with contextual significance, messy and at times contradictory (Frosch, 1999). Ethnography itself is a methodology concerned with 'writing about the people' and this written aspect allows for the colour and texture that reflects the mess of pedagogy (Frosch, 1999; Mills & Morton, 2009).

In ethnographic research, the researcher has a responsibility to understand the context, and portray groups and situations in their natural setting (i.e. pre-existing dance classes rather than a contrived setting). Ethnography utilizes observations of situations to interpret the contextualized behaviours in order to understand and explain values and lived experience native to the participants (Menter et al., 2011). The 'reality' that emerges is a co-construct with participants as the result of interactive research methods where research and participants define their own meanings (multi-voiced) (Markula & Silk, 2011). Mills & Morton (2009) suggest that this is an ideal method for conveying the immediacy and rawness of educational experiences into analytical patterns and insights for readers to compare and connect. Education has valued ethnographic methods in

recent decades for discovering educational values held by teachers and learners, administrators, and political forces (Smith, 2007).

Within and additional to ethnography, educational and arts/dance specific educational research has widely utilized case study as methodology in similar studies of expert teacher pedagogy (Melchior, 2011; Risner, 2014; Smith, 2007; You, 2009). One study similar in design (You, 2009) also utilized observation and interview in order to follow the expert pedagogy of a famous adult/tertiary dance teacher in Korea. Similarly, Chappell (2007) utilized both methods to study the creative teaching approaches of expert specialist dance teachers. Close to the philosophical approach I wished for my study Smith (2007) has informed my design greatly. In this study, Smith queries the pedagogical practice of visual art educators in New Zealand schools, with focus on ethnic/cultural diversity, pedagogy and the educators own value systems that inform their practice. While her research investigated another artistic medium there are many similarities. Similar to my research, Smith's fieldwork was influenced by educational theorists (e.g. Freire, 1970) that championed democratic education for all. Additionally, Smith is from New Zealand and developed her research questions and subsequent methodology to respond to the unique context of our own nation as demonstrated by articulating a strong understanding of the political, social and cultural challenges to art education (and specifically ethnic diversity) within the New Zealand Arts Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2018) which would trickle out into arts (including dance) in the community/recreation. Smith (2007) similarly utilized methods underpinned by interpretivist paradigm, including participant observation in the classroom, and interviews with the educators about their perspectives and pedagogy, reflectively revealing layer after layer of insights as they came up.

Alternatively to using a case study methodology as Smith achieved above, the use of an ethnographic lens is due to my direct belonging to the culture under study and my choice to use my 'inside-outside' perspective to write accurately and expressively about the participants. I am a participant in the community/recreational dance culture as an educator, myself. Ethnographic research requires a "commitment to participation with participants" and the community and this relationship is motivated by sharing of values (Barbour, 2013, p.1). As researcher I aim to observe experienced dance educators' lesson planning

and pedagogical style in order to develop understanding of what they teach, why, and the choices made with respect to their values and subsequent reflective process in their unique context (Cohen et al., 2011; Menter et al., 2011). The motivation for this research is not only to gain understanding for my personal development as an educator but also to celebrate the varied approaches of my community. The ethnographic lens enables me to be collaborative, and the research does not depend on my interpretations only (Loytonen, 2011).

### **Engaging Participants**

I invited experienced community/recreational dance educators to participate in this research. I drew upon the suggestions made by my thesis supervisor; my own knowledge of experienced dance educators; and, the use of snowballing technique (drawing on suggestions of educators and the wider dance community).

Recruitment began with a generic email sent out informing possible participants of the purposes of the research and inviting their participation. If interested, each potential participant was sent an information sheet (Appendix A) and answers to any previous questions asked. Those interested in becoming participants were provided with enough information to make an informed decision on whether to participate as appropriate to their students and community. Participants gave written consent (Appendix B) which included declaring their informed understanding of the requirements of the research and right to withdraw from or change any information they had provided at any time during the research project up until analysis has commenced on their data (3 weeks after the transcript has been sent to them). I attempted to provide clarification for the educator participant prior to the research beginning to ensure they were well informed and happy to work observation into their classroom.

As I was aware of the potential risks to their business considering the class members (children), the participants were advised to contact the parents/caregivers and gain consent/assent prior to observation. Where signed consent upon observation day was not possible due to drop offs I attempted to pre-empt this possibility and the teacher was able to send a formal introduction letter out to the parents prior to class (Appendix C). Parents responded unanimously well as my presence would be unobtrusive to avoid child distraction. While there

was the potential for children to feel inhibited with another observer of the class present, this seemed minimal as these dance classes already include parents and/or siblings observing. I was positioned quietly writing observations, did not talk during the lesson unless a participant elicited it, and I did not film or record any part of class. Children will not be identifiable in publication. I do not know who each child was and movement, skill, or behavioural description of any child noted will be generalized to the group and focussed on how they respond to the pedagogy of the educator collectively and used general descriptions so that no child is identified in any publication.

Gaining participants for this study was a significant unexpected challenge. My original design included the idea to interview New Zealand's top community and recreational dance educators. As I looked for participants, it became clear that many of those most experienced teachers no longer taught or had moved away from teaching children's dance in their older age. 'Well known' educators of the younger generation were no easier to connect with. Many were in periods of hiatus putting off teaching to pursue artistic, educational, or performance opportunities. Those educators who were currently teaching in the community/recreational sector for children came from a range of age groups, and levels of experience with teaching and technical training. My expectation for what "expert" meant had to change but also provided a more accurate picture of the context of who is actually teaching in the current context. In addition, several of the educators were connected. As I contacted them I found that they were linked in several ways including professional relationships, past collaborations, and mentor-apprentice relationships. When all five of the participants of this study were selected I was able to see how the participants reflected the greater dance scholarship of New Zealand, as they had been taught by the "expert" dance teachers within our country's past. Therefore, although I could not observe the direct work of key well known educators such as Jan Bolwell, Adrienne Sansom, or Jenny Cossey for example, I realised that I was able to see their values come through in the next generation, the current generation of teachers. These trends in dance education themselves colour the story I will be able to share in the results and discussion chapters.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The research project was approved by the University of Waikato's Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (The University of Waikato, 2018). Risks to participants were identified to include professional and possibly financial risks if parents/caregivers or children were not happy to have an observer in the dance class and elected to not bring their child. Additional professional risk to the participant could arise in the portrayal of their lesson plans and pedagogy. Each participant was given the option to choose a pseudonym in order to retain their anonymity in the thesis and any publication and offered the option to edit their transcript and may choose to read a draft of thesis chapter/s or publications prior to completion in which they feature. I attempted to act with sensitivity to the personal, cultural and contextually values of the participants, being grounded by Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi) throughout the research project to protect the participants, their intellectual property, and the integrity of their pedagogical process by framing my methodology as a method of collaboration. I am personally very grateful for the opportunity to gather knowledge from these experts and in doing so acknowledge their expertise in the field of dance education and hope they will be further acknowledged by the wider New Zealand community through inclusion in this thesis and/or publications I may produce.

## **Methods**

Findings are collected as a means of illuminating understandings of pedagogy in dance education in community/recreational dance for children. The research question was broken down into subquestions including:

1. What are the values of the experienced community/recreational dance educators with regards to dance education?
2. What pedagogical methods do experienced community/recreational dance educators use to teach dance, including how these methods reflect their personal values?



3. How do experienced community/recreational dance educators' reflective practices to support the pedagogical methods?

4. How do experienced community/recreational dance educators' pedagogical methods and reflective practice facilitate positive transformational experiences in children's dance?

The specific ethnographic methods I used in the field to understand the context and portray community dance educators in New Zealand included sampling of teachers' plans, participant observation of the dance classes, and semi-structured interviews with the dance educator. These methods helped me to interpret the teaching behaviours in order to understand and explain values and lived experience of each educator and collectively for the culture. I did not collect information from the children in the class themselves, but rather observed the educator. To collect findings, I sought a copy of the lesson plans used by the educators, recorded my own journal notes from observation of dance classes, and reviewed the interview transcripts and comments as a result of subsequent follow up questions.

***Lesson Plan:*** Prior to observing each educator's dance class, I requested a copy of the lesson plan (intellectual property belonging to the participant). The lesson plan was requested in any form used by the educator and did not need to meet any criteria for content or format. Not all educators used written lesson plans and therefore I did not have these for all classes. However, I noted how the dance educator structured the class and noted down this plan as I observed. However, whether or not the teacher used a lesson plan is an important finding in itself, as I will discuss later.

***Participant Observation:*** Participant observation, the hallmark of ethnographic research, involves the researcher sharing in the "learning] about the activities if the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities" (Kawulich, 2005, p.2). Participant observation is a popular method of data collection for educational research. Participant observation is useful when little is already known of the research topic, where a general problem

can be explored: "participant observation involves more than mere description of events. An ethnographer must always reflect the empirical material against the broader cultural context of the field" (Markula & Silk, 2011, p.166). Reflection involves extensive recording of observations and subsequent meta-reflections in order to develop and prioritize salient issues brought to light in the process (Cohen et al., 2011; Frosch, 1999; Menter et al., 2011). Effective participant observation involves "distinct heightening of awareness. By training ourselves to observe what we many not otherwise note, we may see more of the mundane and the extraordinary" (Frosch, 1999, p.264).

This method is known for being intensive and time consuming. The effort to establish 'rapport' and to act in an appropriate way with the community in order to become accepted help the researcher access natural experiences and the participants that weave cultural meaning; as trust grows more information is accessible (Frosch, 1999; Kawulich, 2005; Sands, 2002). This study was short by necessity for researcher and participants. However, Hammersley (2006) suggests that short term ethnography is workable in contemporary ethnography as it reflects the increasingly segmented nature of society (p. 4). The distance and location of my participants limited me to one observation. However, my participation as a member of the dance education and dancer culture generally legitimizes my role as participant observer, enabling me to speak the language, identify similar experiences to my own and develop 'rapport' quickly, aiding in interpretations of our shared context (Buck, et al. 2011; Rabionet, 2011; Sands, 2002). As a dance educator myself, participant observation had been chosen to immerse myself in a typical class setting that I understood and where I could make insider/dance specific notes about context specific experiences.

However, I also tried to assume a role as learner, interested, and keen to learn from them. "Participant observation is characterized by such actions as having an open, non-judgemental attitude, being interested in learning more about others, being aware of the propensity for feeling culture show and for making mistakes... being a careful observer and a good listener and being open to the unexpected in what is learned" (Kawulich, 2005, p. 1). In preparation for my brief time together with each participant I made a great effort to connect with each person in prior communications, whether by phone or email. I attended one or more dance classes taught by each educator and took written notes about the

environmental, structural, and social occurrences noticed in class. Several participants invited me to introduce myself (as a visiting student and as an instructor myself) to the parents and children. Some included me in parts of the lesson or invited me to dance in their adult offerings after observations were complete. Some educators taught for the whole lesson as I sat watching in silence and others called or came over to comment on aspects of class and two even answered my questions during down time (dancers actively and independently creating) during a lesson.

I used an observation sheet to aid in note-taking on areas of interest predetermined by the lesson plan as I observed in the dance class (Appendix: E). In cases where the educators did not issue/use a lesson plan, I did not use the observation sheet, rather did note taking on anything to record a "variety of viewpoints" I noticed to be indicative of value (Kawulich 2005, p. 10). I found through the field work that the observation sheets were less useful when prepared in accordance to the lesson plan shared in advance. It was quickly apparent that a better approach to recording more than comments about the tasks noted on the lesson plan was rather to record what mattered most. In all cases I ended up taking notes in margins and in my journal about more than just structure and objectives from the lesson plan. I attempted to pay attention to both wide and narrow perspectives, and looked for interactions occurring in the setting, issues of power or decision making that affect pedagogy in each specific context (Kawulich, 2005). I attempted to write down notes according to my impressions on any aspect of the class, including the physical space, and took special note of unplanned interactions as they happened, a journaling approach was best suited for this. From this position I was able to reevaluate my observation notes for personal meaning and meta-analysis as I reflected on these lived experiences (Frosch, 1999). In this way I began to identify the significance of the educator's pedagogical methods and the children's transformative experience.

***Semi-Structured Interview:*** Semi-structured interviews were used to hear from the participants what they do and value, in their own words. This form of interview commonly follows participant observation, as it further illuminates understanding of the participant's actions. Semi-structured interview utilizes the format of opening statement and general questions upon themes from the

literature that are designed to probe the topic and to draw out valuable insights. "A completely unstructured interview has the risk of not eliciting... the topics or themes more closely related to the research questions under consideration" and a completely structured interview or survey, or poorly framed introduction statement or questions would not allow for non-anticipated but important issues, the 'stories' to be brought to light or developed (Rabionet, 2011, p. 564). Semi-structured interviewing is well utilized in dance research exploring expert pedagogy and teacher and learner experiences (Antilla, 2015; Ashley, 2013; Barr, 2013; Buck et. al; Chappell, 2007; Loytonen, 2011; You, 2009), creating room for exploration around the research objectives. The natural, unobtrusive style allows for the participant to openly share their teaching or learning experience. Guided by the interviewer the participant can contribute to the direction of the discussion towards deeper personal and context specific understanding and allowing salient issues to emerge (Cohen et al., 2011; Menter et al., 2011). I interviewed the participants after observing their dance class. I gave an overview of my background, my goals for the research, and practical information about consent, confidentiality, and asked if they were happy to be recorded before bringing out the recorder. Working from a few predetermined starter question, as guided by the overall research question and themes as suggested by the literature, I derived additional questions from each educator's lesson plan and my observations.

Again, in the interviews I aimed to develop rapport to "elicit reflection and truthful comments from the interviewee" (Rabionet, 2011, p. 564). My experience interviewing participants relates to that experienced by Martin (2014) who described "gaining personal anecdotes from strangers [as] not always easy. I found that people generally wanted to share their opinions before their experiences. It took time, patience, trust and sensitivity to allow stories to come forward, to be recalled and described" (p. 17). During the interview I listened carefully to each answer and tried to respond appropriately, asking more specific questions as prompted by their responses to delve deeper into areas important to them that related to the research questions (see Appendix D). For example, I began with general questions about what dance means to them, and why they teach and these general questions which allowed for further depth and context to understand their objectives, methods, and experiences. I found myself sharing my own experiences, ideas, and opinions with the participants in order to make them

feel like this was an open conversation, letting the control of the discussion shift between us (Martin, 2014).

***Follow-Up Questions:*** The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to preserve the record for further re-examination. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and emailed to the participant educators for approval and edits. Transcript were made editable to educators via Google Docs. An original copy of each transcript was also kept and filed for reference. The educators were generally happy with their transcript and there was little editing done with educators simply requesting that I tidy up "elements of expression that might impede the reader's access" to the participants' ideas (Rowe, Buck, & Martin, 2014, p.21). These included ums, ahhs, and repeated words or phrases during periods of thoughtful articulation. This opportunity to view their contribution offers collaboration in the relationship and confidence in the researcher and this "involves bringing the informants into the process at varying levels" (Kawulich, 2005; Loytonen, 2011; Sands, 2002, p.41). I used a comment feature on the word processing program used (Google Docs) to ask to follow up questions. Follow up questions were offered to the educators to clarify misunderstandings so that I could gain deeper understanding into particular topics brought up within the interview. The educators were able to clarify sections that were unclear and answer the follow-up questions noted as comments on the google document. I found that the participants were more than happy to respond to follow up questions when I provided an easy way for them to rearticulate complex ideas and when I showed I was willing to be patient. "Rapport is built over time... cultural members feel secure in sharing sensitive information with the researcher to the extent that they feel assured that the information gathered and reported will be presented accurately and dependably" (Kawulich, 2005, p. 13). As a participant researcher I am aware that I have my own set of biases and values stemming from my training, education, gender, religion, ethnicity, and nationalities and so rigorous note taking during observation, and follow up questioning about observations enabled me to "explicitly position self and biases" (Frosch, 1999, pg. 262). I also accept that if there were themes of the interview or statements that I was not sure I understood, or I was able to clarify in order to truly understand what they were saying more fully. Giving the participants the opportunity to reflect upon their contributions

and edit if wished paid respect to their words and ideas as I seek an honest representation, ensuring their words were tidied up also illustrates this respect (Martin, 2014; Rowe et al., 2014).

## **Analysis of Findings**

The lesson plans, written observation notes, interview recordings, and subsequent typed transcripts were considered the research findings. The data analysis most appropriate for the methods and types of data collected is Qualitative Content Analysis. Qualitative content analysis is described as "a research method for subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278) to systematically classify the "content of communication (Barleson, 1952, p. 18)" into categories of similar meaning (Cho and Lee, 2014, p.3).

Overall, the process of data analysis includes the following core steps: selecting the unit of analysis, creating categories, and establishing themes. Selecting the units of analysis is an important initial step as a means to reduction. Researchers should decide which data will be analysed by focusing on a selected aspect of material depending on the research questions. They may be a part of or all the text data, such as transcripts of interviews, observation, and drawings (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 10).

Qualitative content analysis is a "technique with overtones of other research methods, such as ethnographic and grounded theory" and well used, dominating several English-speaking countries (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 1).

Qualitative content analysis involves a thick comparative analysis of the content that may include deductive and inductive lenses (Cho & Lee, 2014). "In the inductive approach, codes, categories, or themes are directly drawn from the data, whereas the deductive approach starts with preconceived codes or categories derived from prior relevant theory, research, or literature" (Cho & Lee, 2014, p. 4). Mayring (2000) proposed the following differences in category development

via inductive and deductive lens. These reflect the steps I took in my process of data analysis as I used both lenses. Inductive category development consists of the following steps: determining the research question, determination of category and levels of abstraction, development of inductive categories from the material, revision of categories, final working through of text, and the interpretation of results (Mayring, 2000, pp.4-5). Alternatively, in deductive category development, the second and third steps are different beginning with the research question, then the use of theoretical-based definitions of categories formulation of coding rules (Mayring, 2000, pp. 4-5).

For this project I conducted semi-structured interviews (and utilized an observation table in appropriate contexts) noting information about particular areas of interest that were drawn out from the literature during previous study. Therefore, I began with a deductive analysis of the lesson plans, dance class observations, and interview transcripts in order to concentrate coding on these areas of interest.

The Areas of Deductive Focus Included:

1. Dance background: based on the idea found throughout literature about dance experience determining pedagogy.
2. What is Dance?
3. Why Community Dance?
4. Pedagogy/Objectives
5. Transformation
6. Reflective practice
7. Challenges to Values

To initiate deductive analysis, I began by compiling all quotes from all participants relating to an area together. For this process, each quote/block of text was allocated one primary area. "With all analysis, not just qualitative research there is an interpretive selection process with a degree of subjectivity as the researcher examines and highlights themes of interest to the study" (Menter et al., 2011, p. 218). Each area was carefully considered to determine standout themes, with the addition of lesson plan and observations notes being used to further

illuminate themes. The observations and lesson plans were also used to compare, and contrast claims made by the educators, offering triangulation to support interview claims. As standout themes within focal areas became apparent these were noted. If supporting data was found in other focal areas these were then cross referenced with another focal area. However, this was done after each focal area was completed with the text originally assigned. One area of focus was particularly difficult to code in a deductive manner. This area was Pedagogy, Objectives, which focussed on statements and observations about how they teach, and what they do, what they teach. The amount of information for this area was so large that it was difficult to process in this way, as there were so many codes assigned to each person's block of text and observations. It was this focal area that initiated the inductive phase of data analysis.

Inductive Analysis was achieved by open coding of each person's total body of data including interview transcript, followed by observations and lesson plans. Interviews were coded first with a key word being given to each sentence/couple of sentences summing up the meaning of each. After open coding was complete for each transcript, all of the same/similar codes were combined into like groups. These groups were then ordered by prevalence and key themes emerged. These were then triangulated with observational and lesson plan data. Inductively extracted themes for each individual educator then were compared and contrasted to find commonalities and highlight unique differences. This method was a more suitable way to draw pedagogical values and observations out of the data than the deductive method because it allowed for themes to emerge naturally rather than seeking for them and making prior judgements (Rowe et al., 2014). Menter et al. (2011) says,

Do not always assume that the first transcripts you read will provide you with all of the important insights you are hoping for and the all you are effectively doing when you read the later ones is looking for confirmation. Indeed, it is good to be looking for countervailing evidence that seems to contradict your previous judgement or at least represents a very different experience or perspective (p. 216).

Utilizing both deductive and inductive analysis of the data was a great choice.



Themes were then mapped, or rearranged, reflecting their deductive and inductive association on giant poster paper for easy access to relationships that would become results (Menter et al., 2011). I recognise my own placement as interpreter of the findings and therefore valued the multiple approach to findings to ensure I was looking at the educator's words and actions from several angles.

With all analysis, not just qualitative research, there is an interpretative selection process with a degree of subjectivity as the researcher examines and highlights themes of interest to the study. Therefore, we need to make our analysis as systematic and as transparent as possible to allow scrutiny from others, which provides a 'trail of evidence' (Kruger and Casey, 2000). As Rabiee (2004) states: 'The first step in establishing a trail of evidence is a clear procedure of data analysis, so that the process is clearly documented and understood. This step would allow another researcher to verify the findings; it safeguards against selective perception and increases the rigour of the study' (Menter et al., 2011; p. 219).

The use of both observation, and semi-structured interview, lesson plans, and multiple approaches to data analysis demonstrates my attempt to triangulate the research, and in all stages I utilized reflexivity to critically examine my process, as I do want to represent the educators and myself the best I can.

### **Presentation of the Findings**

The research findings will be presented in narrative form. This presentation style was selected because of its potential to help the reader feel more, to understand the values and expression of this group of educators. This is important to me and my concerns echo that of Barbour (2011) who in her own studies said, "I feel that it is important for me to clearly locate my research representations in the lived experiences of the women I interviewed in my dance research" (p.51). Barbour (2011) further discusses the ability of narrative to reveal stories in an organic way, almost transporting the reader to the experience, possible by writing and presenting another way of knowing. I feel that because the research question is

about reflection and transformation, there needs to be an opportunity for the reader to experience the findings themselves, before they are dissected, and laid out. Of course, I do accept that the narrative will be influenced by my own voice as the writer and as a dance educator myself but have utilized footnotes to identify where the educators contributed to this shared meaning. It is now my pleasure to introduce the reader to the voices of this stor. The following chapter will introduce each educator and discuss individually and collectively who we are.



## **Chapter 4: Community Dance Educators in Action**

Aligned with the notion that the personal experiences of the educators will affect their pedagogy it is imperative to introduce each of the dance educators participating in this research. The focus of this chapter is therefore to introduce each person and comment on their reflective practice. Having done this, I will then provide deeper insight into their reflective experiences via narrative, weaving each educators voice and my own together to illustrate the values and stories of this groups of participants. Therefore, the reader will be able to identify who the educators are and how they reflectively teach children's dance. The participants of this study were chosen for their positions as dance educators in the community/recreational dance sector currently teaching classes for children of school age (5-12 years old). The process of selecting multiple participants was difficult as many prominent community dance educators have retired, have moved to mainstream education, or are not teaching currently due to artistic or personal commitments. The resulting group of educators reflect varying lengths of teaching experience and a range of training as compared to all being the very long termed educators I initially set out to find. However, the results gained from studying a cross sectional group of dance educators have greatly enhanced my understanding of the current state and values of the community/recreational dance education community in Auckland/Waikato region of New Zealand. All of the following educators have received training or mentorship from prominent educators of past generations and their reflective learning journey is therefore an excellent snapshot of the passing on of transformational experiences in dance. The following group of dancer educators were appropriate for this research project and their unique contributions illustrate how transformative dance experiences are passed from generation to generation, at differing points of experience.

## Clare Battersby

*I find dance transformative. I think it takes me out of myself, out of my head, tension falls away... that euphoria, joy, and pushing through boundaries... and larger than yourself. You become one. That's what motivates me to keep teaching. Because gosh, if I get that, surely [I've] got to share it around.*

Clare became a trained early childhood teacher at the College of Education (University of Auckland), finding her interest in dance through participation with friend, and professor of dance education, Adrienne Sansom's dance classes. Clare began to integrate dance in her educational practice in Early Childhood Education (ECE), while feeding her interest in dance training by attending technique classes in contemporary dance. Clare eventually left public education to focus on dance education solely as she grew to be in love with dance. *"I just got so much joy from it, and I just thought, oh my, you know there's that thing of everybody's got to know about this, everybody has to know how fantastic this is!"* Clare then completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Dance at the University of Melbourne, and further training nationally and internationally with top dance educators. Clare continues to teach in early childhood by touring her persona 'Fairy Clare' around Auckland. Additionally, Clare has been teaching weekend creative dance classes at TAPAC (The Auckland Performing Arts Centre) for the last thirty years. Clare is treasured in the local and international children's dance community, having presented at recent Dance and the Child International conferences. In addition, she is the recipient of the Kiwibank New Zealander of the Year 'local hero' award, and the Dance Subject Association of New Zealand life member award (2017).

**Reflective Practice:** As an experienced educator, Clare has a vast collection of lesson plans that she can adjust to the specific needs of the location, age and ability of group. Clare bases her classes around the elements of dance, with select skills or movement areas a term focus. Clare reflects during the lesson, including special interest in 3 chosen children (rotated) who she will concentrate further planning on. Clare considers ongoing professional development vital, attending class herself as her discipline, feeding herself in all the arts, maintaining contact with mentors and a thirst for literature. Clare participates in an established deep planning session the night before TAPAC classes, an enjoyable process for her.

## **Patti Mitchley**

*I love dance, and I feel like it's the clearest way for me to communicate myself in the world and my ideas...There's a part of me that has transformed through dance as a slow evolution in my life, with dips and valleys and mountains... And then there's a part of me that's always hitting a wall until bang there's like a breakthrough and there's a sense of release and lightness and of strength or understanding. So transformation's happening in lots of different ways. But... it holds more value for me because it helps me to understand other people better... And then that cultivates more connection and more clarity in my teaching approach.*

Patti began dancing as a young child, training with much success in traditional ballet in rural New Zealand. When city competitions and further training became inaccessible she began to explore other art mediums including theatre, photography, and music as a teenager. It wasn't until visiting artists came to her high school that she discovered contemporary dance and describes this style as a perfect fit, a love that would resurface later in adulthood. When Patti was a young mum she found Waikato Contemporary Dance Projects Trust, through a moving performance by Karen Barbour. At that moment Patti knew she needed to dance again, reconnecting to dance to heal and communicate. Participation with the Trust and University of Waikato dance papers inspired Patti to begin teaching dances classes sixteen years ago in conjunction with the need for dance classes for children (including her own) in her small town. Long term resident of Raglan, Patti teaches community dance for all ages and yoga for adults in the laid-back Waikato surf town. Patti's classes are a well-established creative staple for the people of Raglan, packed full each term with enthusiastic dancers and more on waiting lists.

**Reflective Practice:** With Patti's wealth of experience she no longer plans beyond her general structure which is clearly established in her classes. However, each term dance class is injected with fresh choreography inspired by new music and in response to interests and needs of the children and a substantial creative section where child's voice leads the dance making process. Patti's focus in the reflective process is on responsiveness to the needs of dancers and this is facilitated by her basic structure allowing for dancer's interests and energy to contribute to the direction of class tasks and choreographic works.

## **Helene Burgstaller**

*I've realized...when I was... not doing any dance, that it really left this void in my life... I really, really missed it... So, it is something quite essential to me personally... When I don't get to dance for a little while it doesn't feel right... I need to move my body and it's ingrained in me, it's a part of me.*

Helene studied jazz, ballet, and gymnastics in Singapore and Netherlands under strict traditional training as a child. Helene later found contemporary dance at Universiteit Utrecht (a University in Netherlands) while studying to become a qualified veterinarian. After emigrating to New Zealand and working as a vet here, Helene sensed the need to bring dance back into her life so studied dance for an additional two years where she found an intensely competitive atmosphere, bullying, and limited opportunities to perform. It was when she later moved to the Waikato that she found a supportive community of dancers through Waikato Community Dance Projects Trust. Now, near to her home in the Kaimai ranges, Helene has been running Paeroa Contemporary Dance classes since 2015 to build a dancing community for herself and others to enjoy. These classes are now well established, with multiple age groups filling up with keen dancers from Paeroa and surrounding towns.

**Reflective Practice:** Helene similarly operates under a general structure, leaving class tasks flexible to her responsive pedagogy. She constantly adapts her ideas for tasks as she plans prior to class. She does not write these down, as she is mindful that they might change, and is open to inspiration. She reflects immediately after class and looks for new ideas as the week progresses in areas she has identified as needed by the children. During performance terms, reflection will be more focussed on achieving performance related objectives, otherwise her classes reflect interests and current contextual needs.

## **Harriettanne Embling**

*I love dancing, but my view on how that traditional practice can work or how it can affect people, had a massive effect on me, you know going through watching it and being surrounded by it. So that was my inspiration... to do what I'm doing now.*

Harriettanne began dancing when her mother took her to dance classes at the age of 4. Though she was a very shy child who took several terms to warm up to class, once she started dancing she never stopped, accomplishing a Junior Associates position at the New Zealand School of Dance in ballet and contemporary dance. Having achieved all the possible levels in her training and wanting to pursue a regular career Harriettanne studied primary teaching at the University of Waikato, with additional dance papers providing her opportunities to learn about community dance. While at University she discovered ballroom dance as a way to keep dancing, achieving success nationally and internationally, moving to Australia and performing all over the world. Since stepping out of those elite dance circles Harriettanne has had the opportunity to deeply reflect on her experiences in dance and now, Harriettanne is back home in Matangi, New Zealand teaching community dance. Her classes at Soulful Contemporary Dance are a way for her to challenge the negative aspects of the dance world and provide positive opportunities for dancers of all ages.

**Reflective Practice:** As a trained school teacher reflective practice is engrained in Harriettanne. She writes down her reflections immediately after class, processing meaning making and producing ideas for solutions during the week before planning the next lesson. Harriettanne's lesson plan gave detailed descriptions of what will be taught, and a general structure of tasks. Harriettanne also shows responsiveness to the interests of dancers and is flexible in plans, including music choice and provides ample support for her children to create their own choreography and contribute voice to her dance tasks.



## Joanna Sylvester

*I just loved dance. I always wanted to do it when I was a kid... desperately... We had a record of Swan Lake that I used to listen to and imagine what it would be like to be, you know, dancing in a dance class and I'd dance at home. And I finally got to a ballet class when I was about 13. And it was like this revelation... it sort-of shattered that idea that I had about what happened in a dance class but at the same time I was hooked.*

Aucklander Joanna began dance training at 13, much later than she would have liked! She attended ballet school for three years and then began the study of contemporary dance participating with Limbs dance company in Auckland. Additionally, she worked for several years as a publicist for various dance projects, companies, and choreographers in New Zealand. Professional opportunities took her to Australia where injury, maltreatment by choreographers, and an inspiring Bachelor of Arts (Dance) degree from the Queensland University of Technology rerouted her dance goals. She returned to New Zealand where she continued to dance, practicing 5 Rhythms for a more organic approach to movement. In 2011 Joanna began teaching community dance classes in West Auckland as a response to the need for her own children to dance and to provide accessible opportunities for others. She is now a qualified secondary school teacher having recently completed a Graduate Diploma in Teaching (Dance) from University of Auckland but continues to maintain her community classes as she is a champion for accessible community dance.

**Reflective Practice:** Joanna keeps hundreds of exercise books full of reflections and plans from the past seven years of teaching. She reflects immediately after class, recording what happened in class and from there coming up with further steps to meet her objectives. She goes on a deep learning journey exploring the interests of the dancers and seeks out information to improve technique. Her written plan gave a structure with planned tasks, and then illustrated responsiveness by changing course with tasks when children's needs led the lesson in different way.

## **Participant Considerations**

All educators have received traditional dance training, but one out of five did not receive this as a child/young person (Clare who found dance as an adult).

Contemporary dance is the dance style that these educators identify with most strongly however their training included several others including ballet, tap dance, ballroom, jazz and these styles were evidence in the the educators' movement style, excercies, and choreography. All of these educators who noted participation in dance as a child/young person note positive and negative experiences in dance class/dance circles. These educators discussed that the ability to continue dancing into adulthood was a challenge, as the world of dance becomes restricted to a small professional dance community, an all or nothing type of experience. All five dance educators noted experiences within dance that acted as 'revelations' or turnings points within their journey that caused them to make a change to their participation in dance or beliefs on dance. For all five educators, higher education and mentors within the dance field affected these changes, including school teacher training for three out of five educators.

Additionally, with the understanding that as an ethnographic researcher and member of the same cultural group, as a dance educator myself, I would like to introduce myself, as my voice plays an obvious role in the following narrative.

## **Liahona Walus**

*Dance relates to most of my most vivid and sacred memories. My participation in dance has certainly contributed to who I am and continues to propel me as I aim to become my best self.*

I was born to an international family, with the opportunity to live in New Zealand (my birthplace) and the United States of America almost evenly, about half my life in each country. I began dancing as cultural expression (Polynesian/Māori) as early as I can remember, and formally began dance classes (dance training) in the United States at age six. When our family returned to New Zealand as a ten-year-old I stopped receiving training due to financial constraints. However, I continued to dance in every way possible as an intermediate and high school student, performing across the country several times in school groups. When I was finally old enough to pay for my own classes I began attending ballet again as a teenager with a dream to study dance at University and was blessed to be accepted to major in Dance at Brigham Young University in Utah, United States of America. There I was able to train in ballet, ballroom, contemporary, and several world dance styles, as well as receive a dance education in all areas of dance scholarship including dance teaching. I am now teaching mixed genre dance classes for preschool through primary aged children at the YMCA in Hamilton, and writing this thesis as completion of my Master's degree in order to elevate my practice.

**Reflective Practice:** My Reflective process is currently a mix of all of the educators I have had the fabulous time observing and talking to. Their ideas have inspired me to record my reflections after class and return to them during the week and before I write up each week's lesson plans. While I always reflected, and did so prior to this research, I now reflect on more important things beyond that of mere technical acquisition or whether a task managed behaviour well. Now I try to critically examine what is going on and why and how I can reach different kids and meet the needs of each week's context. To the participants of this project, thank you for this incredible gift.

## **Reflection in Community Dance Education: A Narrative Tale**

The findings of the research will be here presented in a narrative format, illustrating the reflective process described generally by the participants. Each narrative will include contributions from each educator, creatively intertwining each individual voice to illustrate the unique and collective ideas and values of this community made up of a diverse group of dance educators in the Auckland/Waikato region. The narrative will follow the process of planning and experiencing a dance class and the subsequent reflection that will culminate in the planning of the next class, one week later. This will be represented by a lesson plan, narrative of the concrete experience of the dance class, journal entries and thought bubbles as reflections are happening during re-planning, and a second class plan. Footnotes will be used to cite the educators where an idea, thought or quote is directly represented. Because all the educators teach a variety of ages and age combinations within the target age range of five to twelve years old (primary school aged), the narratives will be written to reflect experiences for all of these age groups. Rather than portraying what each educator does at one age/mixed age group I have chosen to use age specific examples as I saw them to give vivid colour to the reader, paying respect to the fabulous age specific pedagogical moments I observed. This means that the narrative may illustrate a variety of age appropriate classroom skill objectives, management methods, and communication styles/language ordered one after the other, and in no particular age progression. I will attempt to tell this story in a way that any jump from say, five-year-olds to twelve-year-olds is not distracting to the reader.

## Pre-planned Lesson Plan: 1 hour (mixed age)

**Welcome Circle Time:** greetings and catching up. Taking roll. (2 mins)

**Game: Here, There, Where (5 mins)**

The middle is here, one side is there, the other where. Call out here, there, or where and the last one to get there is out.<sup>1</sup>

**Warm Up: Choreographed Warm Up Dance (3 mins)**

Teacher directed choreography, taught beginning of term and revisited weekly. Large gross motor movement, cardio, joint mobilization for safe full range of movement.<sup>2</sup>

**Teacher Directed Tasks:**

**Floorwork: (5 mins)** Working on the floor through dance shapes ball, pin, wall, spiral with focus on arm strength up and out of floor.<sup>3</sup>

**Across the floor: (7 mins) Dynamic Cones** Gross motor skills through the space. Working on attention to locomotive patterns, alignment, and directness.<sup>4</sup>

**Sequence: (10 mins)** Pre-Choreographed and revisited.<sup>5</sup> *Beat it*<sup>6</sup>, *Crazy*<sup>7</sup>

**Creative tasks/Explore movement: (5 mins)** Explore elements: *Speed cones*<sup>8</sup>

**Child led tasks:**

**Creative Choreography: (10 mins)**

Group Work: Children create group of 4 choreography inspired by prompt: *Today's word of the day "Speed"*<sup>9</sup>

**Performance and Feedback: (10 mins)** Each group performs their choreography for the audience of peers.<sup>10</sup>

**Cool down and stretch: (3 mins)** Circle up to stretch and condition, with focus on alignment.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Patti's opening game.

<sup>2</sup> Patti and Harrietanne. From observations, Patti used a circle for her warm up dance. It provided a clear line of travel for dancers to move swiftly with large sweeping motions. At regular intervals the dancers would face and or/move in towards the centre, creating a connection between dancers and teacher.

<sup>3</sup> All educators utilized floor work. Joanna seeking arm strength.

<sup>4</sup> All educators. Clare set out a diamond with cones, including one cone in the centre. Children moved from one cone to the next following Clare, who would switch the step/footwork pattern every few cones. This encouraged direct pathways, switching in direction and dodging skills.)

<sup>5</sup> All educators included exercises, combinations and longer choreographies built through the term.

<sup>6</sup> Helene

<sup>7</sup> Harrietanne

<sup>8</sup> Helene uses a word (theme or skill) of the day

<sup>9</sup> All educators encourage children to make their own dances

<sup>10</sup> Most educators included time for dance showing

## The Lesson

I walk into the community hall and the air is cold as it's the middle of winter. It's always like this in the town hall but nevertheless my excitement keeps me warm. I've got plans for a great class. I've got to make sure they are hyped up too, it's so cold, I know they will be tired and freezing when they arrive at the door. I know that it's up to me to set the tone, so smiles on, bright voice, it's time to get into gear.

I set up my stereo, pull out the music and start pumping some 'warming' sounds. This should welcome them. In come a couple dancers, parents in tow. One looks ready to dance the other looks a bit tired; a long day at school perhaps.

Mum approaches, commenting to me, "Georgia's a bit unwell, still got a cough that we just can't kick."

"Noted! Come sit down in the circle, hun," I say gently.

I welcome them all with enthusiasm, beckoning them to take off their shoes and come into the circle<sup>12</sup>. As more dancers come in and parents buzz with chatter, the noise level in the room rises to the point where I can't hear them very well and there's multiple children begging for my attention to listen to their story about what happened today at school. I turn my music off, so I can hear them, eager to hear how they are doing. Now parents know that it's time to start and they hush, and the straggling dancers circle up. Stories come flying toward the centre of the circle, as they share with me what's on their mind. Finding time to listen to them is quite important to me, I gain so much insight into their interest and needs this way.

"Everyone feeling good? Anyone sick? How was everyone's week?"

Some children nod, some sign 'thumbs up' and others begin telling me a play by play of their week since our last class.

"Awesome, those sound-like great weeks! What about you Alice?" One shy little girl sits in our circle, thumbs tightly hidden under her legs crossed, barely moving.

"Did you have anything exciting happen at school today?"

"No... nothing much," she says. Alice is tricky to get much out of, she prefers to follow teacher led activities and hasn't found the confidence to use her voice (movement or speaking wise) much yet.

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<sup>11</sup> Clare and Liahona

<sup>12</sup> "We start with a circle, we usually touch base with 'how are you doing,' 'what's been happening?' They get to talk about whatever's on their mind, to say something, whatever, or nothing if they don't want to. So, we do include talking. Talking's important. Communicating verbally about what we're doing and what we're interested in." (Joanna)

I take the roll, making sure to ask about those who aren't here today... "Has anyone seen Gabby at school today? I hope she's is ok," I ask the children? It's important to me that these relationships exist where possible outside of class. It builds our crew, our community.

"Well dancers, it's FREEZING so we need to get warm and energized. Here, there, where. Everyone up," I encourage.

They know this game well. The middle of the room is 'here', the end of the hall with the stage is 'there', and the other end is 'where'. My voice booms across the hall, as children run to reach the desired location first, not last! Games really get the children connecting with the space and others, what it is to move in those four walls... they've got to think quickly and trust their decisions with each other.<sup>13</sup> The children are laughing and smiling as they dodge one another, alert and ready for learning to begin.

"Ultimate champion is Bruno! Nice work!"

Bruno is pleased with himself.

"Warm up!" I call. They all race to me holding the props box, it's like an avalanche of hands crashing down... and they select two fabric scarves each. Beautiful, a real rainbow of colours and hues. The sequined ones always go first, then the mermaid tail fabric... it's unfortunate for those dancers who come in late or dawdle, they won't get to choose, rather take what's left and this time it's caused a few disappointed mermaids.

"I wanted that one."

"It's ok, next time, but if you'd really like to use it perhaps ask to swap." No one wants to swap.

The music starts, familiar to the dancers we begin sitting in a circle on the floor. We mobilize our neck, fingers, wrists, hips, ankles, and stretch our feet, all the necessary techniques for the kids to move safely today. There is less focus on technique in my classes and getting it exactly right, but it's still there to prepare the body safely to move, and I focus on other things to increase their skills further than just technique.<sup>14</sup> We're moving with the accents in the music, standing now ready to swing, and slide, skip and chasse around the circle. The scarves look magical as the dancer's spin in our 3 step turns around the circle! I taught them this dance on week one of the term and each lesson we'll begin with it. It's working out great. I smile big and bust out across the circle at my dancers, trying

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<sup>13</sup> "I ... start with a game. Just so that they can be in the space and feel what it is to move in those four walls... [they've] got to think really quickly and trust their decision[s] and change direction. I reckon just a little bit of panic is really good... just gets the adrenaline going a little bit. And then they're more alert." (Patti)

<sup>14</sup> "In my classes there's less focus on technique and getting it exactly right. That doesn't mean that I don't encourage them to learn safe dance practice, but I focus on other things to increase their skills than just technique." (Helene)

to go all the way to them, where they are, and make sure that the space between us is robust enough for them to gather something, they are loving it and so am I<sup>15</sup>. Miss 'didn't get a mermaid scarf' is still sulking so I've put myself near her hoping my energy will re-engage her somehow.

They are doing so well today with the steps, in and out we suspend and collapse our circle in and out. Third time we repeat the sequences I step back to see who can remember it and yeah, it's not perfect because I've taken away the need for it to be perfect. I'm more interested in them embodying what they're doing and being in the movement than doing it perfectly.<sup>16</sup> They are so dynamic. I'm feeling so proud and excited for them, they are really feeling the music well, reaching in with a scarf gently then exploding outward with a leap.

As the music ends we find ourselves on the floor. The dancers knew what to do, because class structure is reliable. They've put back their scarves and are waiting in a ball on the floor. We breath in and out, stretching, rolling, swinging and spiralling on the floor, connecting with the earth, hopefully feeling where they are in space. The floor's a really good thing for agility and strength, it automatically engages core and all of that so I attempt to have them find correct alignment.<sup>17</sup> When you are down low, you can do similar things to what you would do if you were standing up but you've got the support of the floor. It can be a good way of learning through that tactile connection.<sup>18</sup> We try leg swings, and the floor removes the distraction of balance and most of the kids can do this well. It's giving me hope for progressions as I'd love to have them progress to standing, but I'm noticing some struggle with the necessary arm strength to push up and out of the floor. Some days I am in that mode where I do stop and give more corrections and some classes I just want them not to worry about whether they get it right or wrong I just want to move through it.<sup>19</sup> Today the dancers are seeming pretty focussed, so I move over to my music and turn it off to aid correction. Perhaps if they will focus on their floorwork if they aren't trying to keep up with the music?

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<sup>15</sup> "I try to be me plus fill the space between the learner and me. That's my pedagogy. It's understanding where they are, trying to go all the way to them, where they are, and make sure that the space between us is robust enough for them to gather something." (Patti)

<sup>16</sup> "I've taken away the need for it to be perfect. I'm more interested in them embodying what they're doing and being in the movement than doing the movement correctly." (Patti)

<sup>17</sup> "Just a connection to the earth and feeling where they are in space is good I reckon. The floors' a really good thing and agility and strength, and it automatically engages core and all of that." (Patti)

<sup>18</sup> "When you are down low, you can do similar things to what you would do if you were standing up but you've got the support of the floor. It's a different way of tactile, you know what parts of your body are in contact with the floor. It can be a good way of learning through that connection with the floor. And balance, you know you can do things on the floor where balance isn't the issue. Like a leg swing that you can do on the floor, you can also do a leg swing standing up but if you're doing it standing up its a balance thing." (Joanna)

<sup>19</sup> "Some classes I am in that mode where I do take it slowly and I do give them corrections. Some classes I just want them not to worry about whether they get it right or wrong I just want to move through it." (Joanna)



I'm curious about why this is happening and need to have a think about how to improve this.

After a couple of retries, the music is back on and I've got to move on. The kids are happy to be up out of the floor. I like to utilize dynamics, pick up energy, then bring it close and quiet, then back to big energy, fronts over here, now the front's over here, let's go to this corner, now we're over here... Underpinning it all is the concept of play theory. You know, very much playing with the joy of movement.<sup>20</sup>

An upbeat rhythm turns on as I say, "line up dancers! Put your hands on your knees please, bees!" Rhyming always gets their attention and today I tell them we will follow the queen bee around the hive. The dancers file behind me.

"Shadow me, opposite me, follow me!"

I lead the line over to one of the cones I've set up in a diamond.

"Every child will get a turn to lead! But, I'll go first so you will see."

They copy me, as I made a big star shape then touch my toes, "opposite me...", they make a ball when I make a star this time, I go up, they bob down.

"Amazing shapes, dancers." Then I'm off as the music vamps up. Galloping to the next cone, skipping on to another, running to the wall, I place my hand on the wall "tendus for 8, then degage, 5, 6, 7, 8" on to the closest cone again. The children are responding well to the language I'm using, I'll always make sure I'm saying what I'm doing, giving it a name, that way they are learning terminology as we go, in the moment as the body feels it.

I scan the group, adapting what I do to what I'm seeing, I always tell the children we're thinking on our feet!<sup>21</sup> I spot a child who I think will benefit from going next and I select the next queen bee.

"Tama's turn to lead!"

Tama leads the group. Jumping, jumping he goes. A bit timid he is, to be facing the group of dancers, staring at him to copy, his movements become smaller and a bit more confined. But I've got to give the children the chance to share their ideas and bring their own voice into the studio.<sup>22</sup> I see the kids interests, backgrounds, and diversity as valuable contributions to the dance space and so I don't treat them

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<sup>20</sup> "Pick up energy, then [be] close, intimate and quiet, big up energy, fronts over here, now the front's over here, let's go to this corner, now we're over here... Underpinning it all is the concept of play theory. You know, very much playing with the joy of movement." (Clare)

<sup>21</sup> "I'm adapting what I do to whoever's in front of me. I keep telling the children we are thinking on our feet." (Clare)

<sup>22</sup> "Which is what I'm all about, is bringing the voice into the studio." (Clare)

like passive vessels, rather as citizens full of potential.<sup>23</sup> Tama has lots of potential! When it's time to follow him, he can't resist the need for speed. He runs to the next cone, then hops to the following. He literally closes his eyes and he's dancing virtually in the air. And you can see his whole being is the dance, and the joy.<sup>24</sup>

"Look how wonderful, Tama is leaping!"

Isla is next, leading with a very skilled skip! Some of the children struggle, Ben's just jumping, and Alice finds it hard to hop! Before I comment I am conscious of the fact that they hear and take in everything I say. I try to create an inclusive environment I have to verbalise each person's contribution, progress.<sup>25</sup>

"Alice, you are trying so hard to hop, one, two, three, four... Ben your jumps are brilliant, isn't it interesting that Amy is doing something else!"

I glance over to Alice's mum watching the group intently. Mums often get worried about this sort of thing.

"And, Alice, she's building up to a very skilled hop too. Hopping is so important... you'll be skipping in no time!" I exclaim loudly, so that Mum can hear.

I know it's just a developmental thing. She'd probably love it if I broke that down more often. Should I? Community dance is unique, there are so many expectations coming in!<sup>26</sup>

As the last leader finishes they are all puffed but 'jazzed' too. Giving them a chance to lead is really energizing for those kids. Ready to reign them in again I ask them which of our repertoire dances they want to do.

"MONEY" they all boom.

"Alright, lines, two sides, go!"

This dance gets cycled term after term because they just love it. This dance, it's chill, perfect for the vibe of class today, a day when I've got some sick and tired dancers. However, I don't always know how much energy the kids will bring to

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<sup>23</sup> "How you view the child... as a passive empty vessel to be filled... they're not cute, they are a citizen who is full of potential." (Clare)

<sup>24</sup> "He literally closes his eyes and he's dancing virtually in the air. And you can see his whole being is the dance, and the joy." (Clare)

<sup>25</sup> "They hear everything you say so if you say somebody's name, they say, "she said their name and not my name," so you sort of... to make it an inclusive environment I have to say, "look [name] you are skipping, isn't it interesting you are galloping [name], and isn't it interesting [name] is doing something else." So, they are going ok, it's open to interpretation, there isn't one right way." (Clare)

<sup>26</sup> "The tension for me is that there is very many expectations coming in, in that one room." (Clare)

class, so whether we'll do a cardio, or one of my longer dances until I can feel what they need, so I always provide options.<sup>27</sup> As they dance I'm impressed by their confidence and artistry, their vibes are adding something organic to the piece. Some of these dancers are really making it their own. They're having a great time, really trying to embody that 'cool.'

There're a few things in this dance I'm seeing are done unsafely though.

"Can we do it again! Can we do it again!"

I'm as massive advocate for teaching correct technique to avoid injury and to allow for improvement, I really want them to make sense of the movement in their body.<sup>28</sup>

"Let's review first. Two lines, thanks!" The dancers line up facing me, I turn my back to them for this one and demonstrate a correct and safe shoulder roll. Then describe what the neck is doing, where the chin should be for safety. I watch as the dancers try it with a smile and facials intent of show the girls I'm proud of their efforts. A few are clearly struggling, so I move closer to that end of the room and attempt to help that group of kids without trying to single anyone out.<sup>29</sup> I repeat for demonstration, describe what I'm doing. Definite improvement. So, we dance the sequence again. This time around there's more focus on technique, for some that's really helping and for others their embodiment has dropped a bit, because their focussing on doing it right, perhaps comparing themselves to their neighbour.

"Yessssss! You got it, everyone. If you still need help, lets go again."  
Polish shoulder roll, check.

"Alright dancers let's do Crazy" I say.

"No!!!! That one's hard," yell a couple dancers.

What? My thoughts go back to my own dance training, and this is certainly not that hard. I think my traditional background has created high expectations in me. My combinations present an element of challenge and expectation so that they are gaining knowledge that they can take with them in whatever ideas of life they may need it, but at the same time the main thing is for them to have a positive

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<sup>27</sup> "I'm not going to know if [this] class is going to have a cardio or a longer cardio until I get the energy of the group." (Patti)

<sup>28</sup> "I am a massive advocate for teaching correct technique, at any age, it is vital to avoid injury and to allow for improvement. It also supports students to feel success and to let the movement make sense with the body." (Harrietanne)

<sup>29</sup> "Sometimes one kid needs special help, yes, I'll give that to them but I wouldn't be singling them out in class to correct them. So it's more like general correction." (Helene)

experience so I'm careful I keep it that way.<sup>30</sup> We do alignment, core stability, footwork and strength in their feet to prepare them to move safely and we use energy concepts so they will really feel freedom to dance, feel what I feel, feel some success.<sup>31</sup> I really think it's important for the dancers to understand the relevance of what they are doing, any corrections I give, why we have to work so hard.<sup>32</sup>

"We need to practice it dancers because the more comfortable we get with it the more confident we'll become when we create and perform. Let's go. You can do it," I say warmly.

We mark the movement out to the music, just like the last sequence. Then the music is on and we are moving up and down and across the floor to this sequence that's made up of slides, hops, and turns towards the left side and then right. The first go was pretty good I think.

"Dancers, you can freestyle when the music gets to the line 'crazy,'" I suggest. The second go was even better: I see they like the opportunity to improvise.

"What if we did it to this song we are learning at school? I think it will go well. Can we try it?" Paige asks, she's a confident one, a real critical thinker.

"Ok... what's the song. Let's use it to inspire our choreography time soon," I offer.

I'm always interested in the children's ideas, their voice often changes my plan, the course of the class.<sup>33</sup> We move on, with my promise to Paige that I'll play her song soon.

"You all did a great job! Would you say that that crazy dance was fast or slow?"

"Fast!" shout the class at in agreement.

"Let's explore speed today!" I proclaim, excited to introduce a dance element. The dance elements really frame my class. They provide a frame that can take any dance technique and give it a springboard into working creatively and

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<sup>30</sup> "I think my traditional background makes me, in a way, have quite high expectations [for work ethic]... giving an element of challenge and expectation so that they are actually gaining some knowledge, some information that they could take with them, in whatever areas of life they may need it. But, at the same time, the main thing is for them to have a positive experience... that would never overtake someone's well being." (Harrietanne)

<sup>31</sup> "I do alignment, core stability, the concept of gravitational energy, and trying to introduce energy...I also do a bit of...footwork and the strength of feet... giving them that freedom to do that safely... giving them knowledge so that they can progress... allowing them to feel success." (Harrietanne)

<sup>32</sup> "I also think it's important for students to understand the relevance of my corrections." (Harrietanne)

<sup>33</sup> "Always interested in child's voice. In a creative class that voice can change the course of the class." (Joanna)

choreographically. I feel excited as I am hoping this exploration of speed will be the perfect scaffold for the learning I'm after, and their choreography coming up!<sup>34</sup>

"Look at the cones again, they are different colours... What speeds do you think they represent?"

"The red one is STOP!"

"Green is the fastest!"

"What about yellow and blue then?" I ask.

"I think blue is like medium, like flowing water!"

"Oh yeah I like that!" I encourage.

"Yellow is slow."

"Excellent. I'm going to put some music on and we are going to visit each of these cones and dance that speed. So, green is super go speed fast, blue is flowing water fast, yellow is slow, and red, that's still... a full stop. We can only stay there for like 30 seconds and then you must move to a new cone. Ready. Go!"

We move around the cones. They shadow me the first time, too shy to bust out their own interpretations of the speeds without seeing me do it first. I try to bust out more! Slowly they start showing their confidence to move to another cone on their own, making their own choice about where their movement is taking them. I find improvisational tasks so important, I can see their vocabulary expand and their minds opening to new possibilities!<sup>35</sup>

I notice Alice, the shyest dancer of the group is avoiding the blue and green cones, she likes to move slowly and in a small kinesphere. I go to her and invite her to follow me to the blue cone, and then the green cone.

"Let it go girl" I say!

I bust out next to her trying to encourage her to open and let her body move as I can tell she is feeling self-conscious. I know that if they're happy and relaxed they'll feel less inhibited, ready to push themselves into the unknown, try out new

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<sup>34</sup> *[The dance elements] "frame my planning. They provide a frame that can take any dance technique or style and give it a springboard into working creatively and choreographically. As the theorist Vygotsky would say the dance elements help scaffold dance planning into management idea of exploration." (Clare)*

<sup>35</sup> *"Improv tasks, yeah, I find those really important as well because they expand vocabulary and make them move in ways that they don't usually move in, and open up their mind set a little bit about what's possible." (Helene)*

things that might be slightly weird for them.<sup>36</sup> I am aware not to push too hard and leave her to explore with an encouraging smile.

"How did you like moving best today?"

"Fast!!!!!!!"

"Slow because I'm sick remember," says Georgia with a cough!

We chat about how sometimes we feel full of energy and other times we feel sluggish or just calm and that it's ok to feel that way.

"We're going to put our speeds into our dances today! Alright, let's create! Get into groups of 3 today."

"Did you bring the cards?" the children ask.

"Yes, cards are here. Come and get them if you need them. But I want to see an entrance, exit and using different speeds! You have 10 minutes."

The dancers split off. Some know exactly who they want to dance with, again the boys have stuck together and another few stand sheepishly waiting to be chosen so I help them find a group. Alice is one of them. I know if I put her with another quiet dancer they won't get very far, but then if I put her with a leader then she won't have a voice either. So, I quickly scan the room, ok yes, this group of lovely, pretty equally opinionated dancers will work.

"Ok groups of four now please. Alice how about you join with these 3."

Alice shows me she is pleased, this group is easy-going and inviting, I can see a tiny smile appear. Each group finds their own spot in the room and begin working. Working together is a great opportunity to gain skills that apply everywhere in life. They learn so much from each other! If they work individually they only have their own ideas, but book, put them in pairs or groups and boom your creativity is magnified!<sup>37</sup> A part of me hangs on to slight fear this will be a mismatched group.

Another straggler is Georgia, with her cough. "Alright you can join Tama and Ben."

"Awe, missssss..."

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<sup>36</sup> *"If they're happy and relaxed, they'll open up more in their dancing and feel less inhibited. Ready to push themselves into unknown territories and try out new things that might be slightly weird for them but gets them to increase their movement vocabulary and skill set."* (Helene)

<sup>37</sup> *"Working together gives them a lot of skills that they can also use outside of dance because you know in all of life we have to work together with... all sorts of people... They can learn so much from each other as well. If they work individually you just have your own ideas to draw on. If you work in duos... depending on what age they are sometimes you can work in bigger groups as well... boom your creativity is like twice the amount as what you'd normally have!"* (Helene)

"It's ok. You'll find a way," I reassure.

Some dancers come to me to grab a prompt card, reaching down and taking the luck of the draw, some are keen for a 'chance dance' while others search the pile for their favourite poses, and favourite elements. I wonder if they know what they want to do why they need to come get a card? This reminds me to search for Paige's song. Searching... got it.

"Paige's group... here's the song."

I watch the groups as they create. Paige gets excited, leading her group in the crazy choreography she so wanted to try with her song. There are some bits that don't go, it's not perfect but they are working it out. I think I can leave them happily. What an opportunity for critical thinking.<sup>38</sup>

Next, Alice's group captures my attention. I chose the right group for her, and I know this because she is talking and sharing some ideas! I can't believe it! The girls in this group are inviting her to share ideas and they are fairly good at taking turns showing and adding actions to their dance. The acceptance is really important to Alice I can tell. To be included is transforming for her, so I'll be trying to make sure that the whole group knows how much of a difference they are making... when they are aware of why these breakthroughs happen in connection to the world or other people, it releases a part of you!<sup>39</sup> I go over and verbalise how impressed I am with this group.

"This group is working so well together, listening to everyone's ideas and sharing so bravely. You create magic together."

I'm absolutely stoked for her, but my fuzz moment is disturbed quickly...

"No, I don't want to!" I hear shouted above the buzz of cooperative creating.

My vision diverts to my 'power' team. "What's up team?"

"They want to do this big move, but I don't feel up to it, and they are making me do it and not doing my slow moves. You said it could be any speed."

"Alright. So, can we do both speeds... a variety just like we tried out with the cones? How can we respect the fact that your friend is feeling slow and still put in those fast bits, " I petition? My mind is immediately drawn to an experience I

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<sup>38</sup> "I just think the intense approach that strives for perfection and accuracy does not work for all children. I understand its place, but I don't believe we should have a one size fits all approach to the arts. I'm just talking about the strict structured power dominated nature of traditional teaching pedagogy." (Harriettanne)

<sup>39</sup> "To be included by other people, that's transforming for her. So... [i'll be] trying to make sure that the kids that included her realize how much of a difference that makes to her.... You have transformations within yourself but understanding the context of why that happened, why those breakthroughs happen and how your connection to the world or other people, or environment, or to the group, or to the music, helps to release that part of you..." (Patti)

recently had in dance class where a person in my group completely dominated team improvisation with his matchless energy, and at least I felt annoyed. So I totally understand where the kids are coming from.<sup>40</sup>

"Maybe solos?"

"Yes, possibly. You guys might like to try out one of the element cards, see if it inspires you."

The group moves to the pile of cards and selects the word **cannon**. Tama reads the card and says, "Oh, I know what about if we do cannon but each person down the line slows down until it gets to Georgia and she does it really slow."

"Well, you got to try it!" I say.<sup>41</sup>

"One minute left, dancers, have your last few practices and then we will share!"

As the last practice song ends the dancers know it's time to come sit down.

"Can we go first?" yell essentially all the groups at once!

"Ok, Ok, group 1, group 2, group 3."

"Awwww," disappointed voices murmur.

"Up group 1."

The groups perform one by one. The first group is Paige's group, a very dancey-dance, set in a line with steps and formations, facing the audience. They've used some of Crazy sequence and edited it to fit their new music choice, Thunder. The dancers are confident, showing off their choreography that includes some more technical steps from our dance, and some tricks I know they've brought from home, tv or the latest Justin Bieber video perhaps. The whole class watches, 'ahhing' at their interpretation of our term dance.

"Wow! Awesome work team. How did that go applying Thunder to Crazy? Was it easy? Hard?" I ask.

"No, it was cool. Some bits didn't fit so we changed it, stretched some parts longer and other we replaced with something better," offers a dancer.

After each performance ends, the audience claps and hands go up. They already knew to be looking for something to comment on. The dancers perform, and their

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<sup>40</sup> "If you see that there's an issue... and you know what it feels like, then you've kind of got to remember that when you're teaching." (Joanna)

<sup>41</sup> "We have a rule in our creative dance making and it is "ok, lets try it." And you won't know if it's going to work or not until you actually move... If no is part of the onceration you can't create." (Patti)



friends reinforce the dance language by commenting on what they saw; essentially connecting the dance experience with critical thinking straight away. Because they've just danced they know how it feels and then they can talk about it. Their bodies are still vibing from the experience and it's totally alive for them to feel!<sup>42</sup>

"Anyone identify what dance elements they used?"

Hands flutter to be chosen. The comments are great, identifying speed (the goal of the day), energy qualities, pathways, shapes and more.

Another group stand, this is Alice's group who share some unison moments and break off into duets and solos free from performing to the audience. This group is telling a story. I can see cats, sadness, and a climax that's possibly good or bad. I'm not sure? It doesn't matter because in this activity I can see their total engagement.<sup>43</sup>

"What story do you think they are tell here, dancers?"

"I think there are a family of cats that get separated. Is that it?", Tama asks.

"Kind of, it was more like the cats were all friends but then a new cat came to town and broke up the group," pipes up Emma, one of the cats.

Ok, now I'm seeing it. Yes, perhaps this has happened at school, the group seems to have engaged to a level where they all relate. The dance they've made is speaking volumes about how they think that situation should be resolved. So interesting! And I am so proud of Alice, who communicated effortlessly, reminding me of myself.<sup>44</sup>

"I thought their story was interesting," comments a child.

"Yes, I agree," I nod.

The last group, the one that had some struggles deciding what to do display their canon structure, decreasing speed as they go. The dynamics are impressive even if some of the movements are unpolished. It doesn't matter, the sequence is so interesting. There was a clear leader, while the others followed his lead and my tired and sick friend hung on.

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<sup>42</sup> "Just connecting the experience with the critical thinking. Make it happen straight away, so they, like they've just danced so they know how that feels and then they can talk about it. You know they can see it and feel it in other bodies by watching, you know what I mean, and then talk about it. Because their dance, their bodies are still vibing from the experience of it. It's more alive." (Patti)

<sup>43</sup> "I just provide children the chance to express, an outlet where they can either step away from or let out any negative emotions or thoughts they are dealing with. Lifting this weight to allow creative expression and happiness." (Harriettanne)

<sup>44</sup> "I definitely think that children can experience transformation through dance. I would say it is one of the best ways! I was very shy, and it was dance where I was able to feel confident. It allowed me to be free from any anxiety or worry." (Harriettanne)

Comments continue as the dancers feed off the energy of each performance.

"I loved how they were all in unison, like they were trying to work together, and their formations were really good how they passed each other and did the same step but some went forward and some went backward. But then adding the cannon and switching the speed came up and it was like major dynamics!"

"I loved how they did the splits at the end!"

"I liked how they all looked happy and smiled because they were confident."

"I thought the cannon was really cool, it was like the first ones jump, got slower but it went from bouncy to suspended, from collapsed to melty."

This part of class is so exciting for me, I always see and hear learning. Sharing and reflection is my favourite part of class. I have a desire to create a community of movers that learn to enjoy dance but more importantly to learn life skills here and develop their creativity, so I love to hear any little nuggets of growth they feel to share. For me dance is not just another physical activity but woven into life itself.<sup>45</sup>

"Haere mai," I gesture to the children to come to a circle. "You all did so well today. I know that some of you didn't feel tops, but you tried your best and I'm really proud of you. I also want to say I noticed how well you guys included the members of your groups and found ways to respect the needs of your friends. So great!"

I chat as I stretch, and the dancers copy me. I'm scanning the room, noting faces, engagement, who is still with me, and who walked out the door ten minutes ago (in spirit anyway): they are all physically here, stretching with me. While I am happy with some skills gained, citizenship increased and magical creativity moments I notice some tightness. Perhaps this needs to be worked a bit more next week?

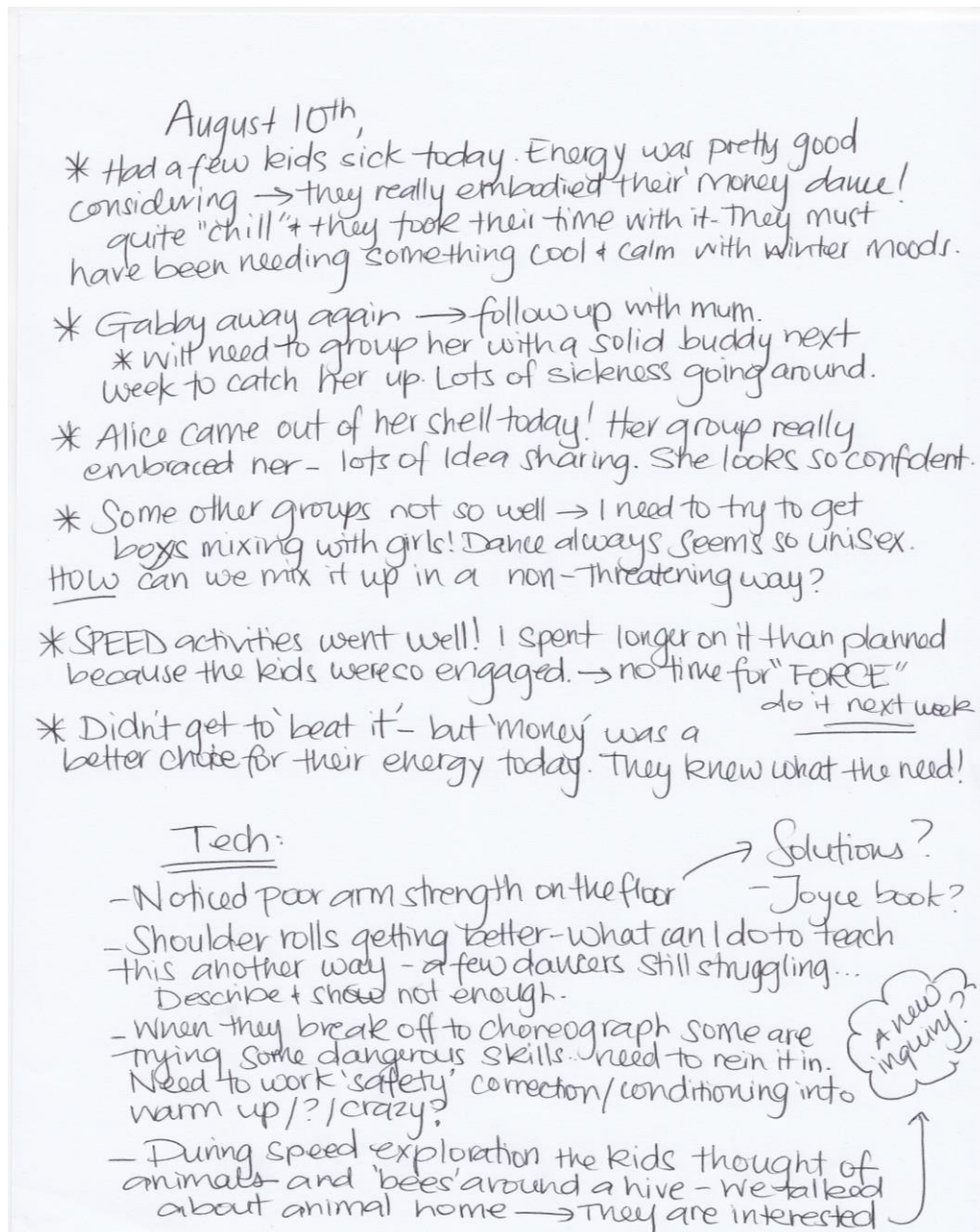
Once we have finished stretching we say goodbyes and with that, class is over! I feel a feeling I often do, a bit uncertain about whether I am completely happy with that class or if those few hang ups should cause me too much concern. It's a feeling I know results from the expectations I hold for myself, the dancers, and the class each week that tells me there's more to do, another path to find, more developments to make.

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<sup>45</sup> *"It's a desire to create a community of movers that learn to enjoy dance as well as learning life skills like working together and developing their creativity. For me dance is not just another physical activity but woven into life itself." (Helene)*

## Reflections on Dance Class

As soon as I've had a chance I reach for my notebook and jot down some reflections about the lesson, commenting on how the vibe of the class was and what tasks the kids enjoyed the most, and seemed to grow from, any concerns and some immediate goals for next week before I forget them.<sup>46</sup> This always makes me feel better, as if I was completely honest about my experience and this liberates me as I can now attempt to solve them.<sup>47</sup>



<sup>46</sup> Harriettane and Joanna write reflections immediately.

<sup>47</sup> Liahona

I close the book and feel a bit better. First things first, I contact Gabby's mum, about the dancer who's been away for 2 weeks to see if she is ok, or away, and returning? And then I go straight to thinking about options for **improving arm strength**. I open my technique book and read. This book is amazing, I was told about it years ago by a mentor.<sup>48</sup> As I read I happen upon some exercises that will help with arm strength, so get down on the floor and practice, yes, I can feel it. That will be helpful I think to myself!

**August 12th:** Today I attended technique class with Karen<sup>49</sup>. We did shoulder rolls, and she did a lovely exercise to lead into the roll progressively rather than just going for one, as a one off. I think I can use this for the dancers! We also did a neat stretch that I think I will simplify for the kids, so we can get some more stretch and conditioning in. I really enjoyed class today, it reminded me how much hard work all the conditioning is... it's been a while since I attended this advanced class and I felt how the kids feel sometimes when I tell them to give something a go. Yeah, I might think it's easy, but they most probably feel how I did today! But, I got through it, and so will they!

**August 13th:** Was in the car today<sup>50</sup> when a perfect song for our Crazy combo came on. It's got a completely different feel because it used a mix of fast and slow. I'm inspired! Can we do this next week, get them working their speed next week with this new song? I'm pumped! I think the boys will prefer this song too, it's really going to appeal to their need for direct, punchy, movement.<sup>51</sup>

**August 14:** Took some time today to go searching about animal homes, as per the kids' interest<sup>52</sup>. The one the kids were talking about was the possum living in the tree having babies and it got me thinking animal families and I'm thinking this would be cool way to bring from stronger more interesting shapes in group choreo. I google searched this and found a whole list of animals with interesting shaped homes, all sorts of levels too. I was thinking about it and I could use this animal home exploration as a play way to get that arm strength if I say that we need to be off balance and use the arms as base. I did want to get them in mixed groups this week but if we are making nests or shapes touching, the boys and girls might not be keen, it might affect their creativity? How could I make this super fun and maybe a competition? Hmmmmmm...

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<sup>48</sup> Educators research solutions for dance class in the literature and seek mentors.

<sup>49</sup> Clare and Joanna mention attending class as vital to their pedagogy.

<sup>50</sup> Helene mentions getting inspiration everywhere, even the car.

<sup>51</sup> Clare

<sup>52</sup> Joanna

The night before the next class I sit down to plan my lesson. I decide that I will use the interest the kids expressed about animal homes as the focal theme for the lesson. Hopefully it will make the learning of the shoulder rolls and the floor conditioning (arm strength) fun and playful so they won't lose interest too much. I am going to take the risk of insisting that boys and girls mix for this creative work. They can work out what to do to make that work. I need them to be relatable to everyone!

## Follow Up Lesson Plan: 1 hour (mixed age)

**Welcome Circle Time:** greetings and catching up. Taking roll. (2 mins)

**Game: Drawing & Sharing Time (5 mins)**

Kids draw animals and their homes, show us how your animal moves, make its sound to lead into the animal homes activity today.<sup>53</sup>

**Warm Up: Choreographed Warm Up Dance (3 mins)**

Teacher directed choreography, taught beginning of term and revisited weekly. Large gross motor movement, cardio, joint mobilization for safe full range of movement.

**Teacher Directed Tasks:**

**Floorwork/Creative Task: (5 mins)** Groups of boys and girls (mixed) let them know it's a competition for added incentive. Give them prompts for each animal, and they create the home and the animal living inside. Incorporate the new floor exercise from book, with focus on arm strength, into the animal home shapes. One shape... move through floor exercise and then move to another "home." Children who are holding the home shapes, then switch to animals and they will do the floor exercise to travel between homes.

Working on the floor through dance shapes ball, pin, wall, spiral. Shoulder roll sequence from Karen's class (simplified). Give imagery, the possum is rolling off the tree branch?

**Across the floor: (7 mins)** Gross motor skills through the space. Working on attention to locomotive patterns, alignment, and direct. Each child gets to be a leader, chooses the step and leads the group across the floor.<sup>54</sup>

**Creative tasks/Explore movement: (5 mins)** Explore elements: Force

**Sequence: (10 mins)** Pre-Choreographed and revisited throughout the term.

*Crazy with NEW SONG.*<sup>55</sup> Review 1 time with original song, 1 time with new song, circle up, dancers each take a turn interpreting the speed we should do to the new music. Set new interpretation as we go around the circle (add on).

**Creative Choreography: (10 mins)** Group work: Children create group of 4 choreography inspired by prompt: *Today's word of the day "Animal Homes"*<sup>56</sup>

**Performance and Feedback: (10 mins)** Each group performs their choreography for the audience of peers.

**Cool down and stretch: (3 mins)**

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<sup>53</sup> Joanna uses drawing and manipulatives to support learning. Animal homes was a current theme.

<sup>54</sup> Helene gave each child a voice to choose their next skill across the floor.

<sup>55</sup> Harriettanne supported a dancer to use their own song to set a combination to, came prepared with that song and helped the dancers interpret the necessary changes.

<sup>56</sup> Joanna

I pack my dance bag and slip the plan just inside at the top, ready to go for tomorrow. Feeling prepared I go about my evening, feeling calm and ready to take my learning to the kids tomorrow, prepared but ready to throw it all away if necessary, wondering what the kids will bring with them to class this time!

In summary, Chapter Four has introduced the five dance educator participants and me to you, the reader as it is our collective voice that is represented in the narrative you have just read. The narrative then, represents the observations I experienced while visiting each educators dance class and the ideas brought to light by interviews with the educators, and my own experiences as a dance educator. I have used my own voice to tell this collective story, however I have referenced each educator as their ideas of experiences were highlighted. The first lesson plan represents dance tasks taken from observations, individual tasks derived from all the educators in order to showcase a variety of elements that make up these community dance classes for children ages 5-12. The activities were, in context, tailored to particular age groups within that wide age bracket but were combined to tell a story that covers all age group in a way that hopefully does not distract from the single narrative. The narrative of the dance class illustrates to the reader what happens in a dance class and possible thoughts and dialogue that would result in such as social and fluctuating context such as dance education for children. Then, the journaling and thought bubble expression of reflective planning for the next lesson illustrate further possibilities for reflective process as described by the educators and my own personal experience. Finally, the second lesson plan represents a potential outcome for this fictional process. In conclusion, it is my hope that you will construct a picture of dance education with all of the senses that an ethnographical narrative can illustrate in order to begin to form your own conclusions about the research question: *How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance*, by my attempt to show who these dance educators are and how they use reflective process to teach children's dance. This reflective process will be further deconstructed in the following chapter.

## Chapter 5: Reflective Practice in Children's Dance

The focus of this chapter is to discuss how these experienced community and recreational dance educators use reflective practice to teach children's dance relating to the research question: *How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance.* This chapter will compare the literature regarding reflective practice to the processes described by the educators and presented in the narrative. This chapter will also identify the objectives and values that inform them out of the educator's pedagogy as observed, or taken from interviews, and as represented in the narrative. This progression to identify objectives and values is essential to the transformative element of the research question, as we know from the literature review that transformation relates to values. As reflection is discussed as a method for transformational pedagogy, illustrating the educator's placement within a reflective approach in this chapter will provide greater illumination toward answering the research question in further discussions.

### How do the Participants Reflect?

The reflective process which was generally described by the participant educators and that I have attempted to illustrate in the previous narrative can be broken into 4 steps:

1. Experience in class time: general structure or lesson plan, modified as is needed (responsive)
2. Reflect immediately after class: what happened, why? (Written down or not).
3. Idea generation: during the week, research and further reflection on reflection for solutions
4. Class planning: next steps, new plan, ideas in place for next week. (Written plan or not).

Comparing the participants collective reflective process with the literature there are similarities. Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984) as mentioned in



the literature review is a simple cycle that generally supports the process described by the participants for class to class planning. Here the educators have a "concrete experience", being present and conscious to the goings ons in class as related to the lesson plan, structure, experiences prepared for and experience during class (Bright, 2013; Kolb, 1984). After class educators participate in "reflective observation" as they carefully observe what happened to make judgements (Bright, 2013; Kolb, 1984). In dance class this would include appraisal of how their objectives were met, why or why not, looking inward for meaning. "Abstract conceptualization" means for them, the process of mulling over issues or questions that have arose during the concrete experience and identified in subsequent reflection (Bright, 2013; Kolb, 1984). This would include "logical analysis, systematic planning and deductive thinking" (Bright, 2013, p.12), being able to articulate meaning and values that they may have discovered because of reflections, seeking further understanding of concepts concerned in order to better meet objectives and teach values intentionally. "Active experimentation" then reflects the actions taken to test new understanding or values, or in other words to make decisions possible risks, to solve issues and meet objectives (Bright, 2013; Kolb, 1984). This would be the next lesson plan.

However, this cyclic model is limited as it is missing a key aspect identified by participants: responsiveness during the concrete experience. Figure 1 is a mixed cycle created by (Bright, 2013, p. 22) merging Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, 1984) and Schon's Four Phases of Learning (Schon, 1983). This model may better support the experiences of dance educators because it captures this key element common in teaching, that of Schon's (1983) "reflection in action."

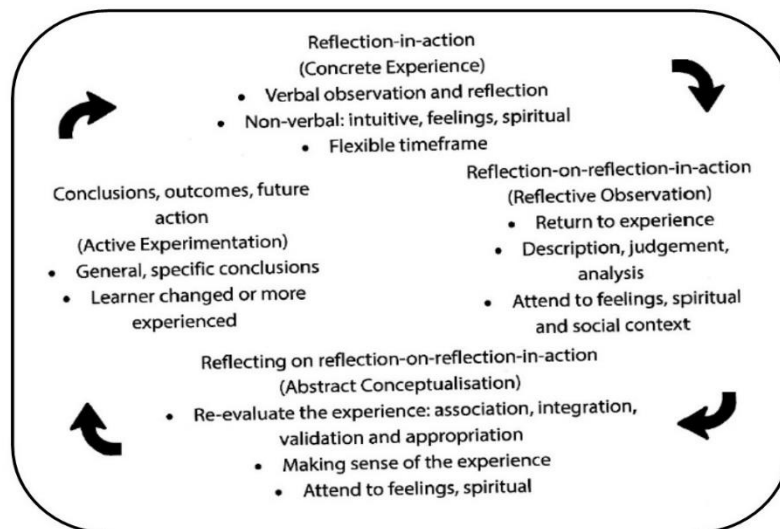


Figure 3: A Four Phase Approach to Reflective Learning (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission.

The top section of Figure 1 is "Reflection in action" which occurs when educators are forced to reflect and adjust concrete plans on the spot to "cope with the unexpected" (Bright, 2013, p. 19; Miles, 2011), as it happens, a regular occurrence in the dance classes I observed. Schon describes this element as "professional artistry" (Schon cited in Bright, 2013, p.20) and the success educators have in reflecting and adjusting, the better the learning experience. This model offers more understanding than Kolb's model that is more basically suited to class to class planning after the concrete experience. Reflection in action acknowledges the many potential spontaneous cycles of reflection during the class experience itself, possibly challenging the concrete plan produced during the week of class planning, and this represents the educators collective focus on reflection as an active process ongoing and keeping them busy throughout dance class. Each interview illuminated that class time, while prepared for, is full of moments that challenge that preparation. The following figure (Figure 2) reflects the prevalence of the reflection in action cycle, at the centre of the experience shared by these educators. Figure 2 highlights the reflective cycles continuously going on during the Practice/Reflection in Action phase, also extending the reflection process beyond one week (from one class to another) but to more extended time frames, for example accumulative learning after months of years of dance teaching. The inner cycle could represent one week, or the longer years of teaching, learning, and transforming personally as a teacher as becoming a reflective teacher requires "continual self-analysis" (Graham et al., 2013, p.54).

This is supported by Dewey's (1933) reflective model where active reflection embodies "persistent, careful, considerat[e]" efforts to improve teaching (as cited in Tembrioti and Tsangaridou, 2014, p.6).

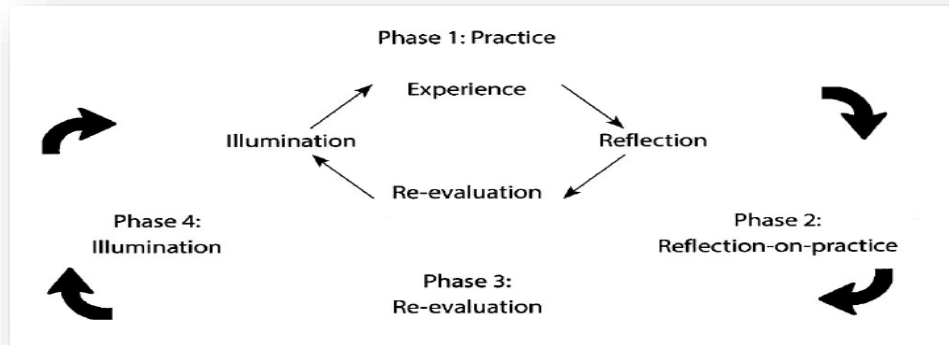


Figure 4: Bright Approach to Reflective Practice (Source: Bright, 2013). Used with permission.

## Values in Reflection

In order to illustrate the general reflective process as described by the participants, the previous chapter narrative was structured as a hypothetical reflective cycle, following the pattern described by Figure 1: A Four Phase Approach to Reflective Learning (Bright, 2013, p.22) and Figure 2: Bright Approach to Reflective Practice (Bright, 2013, p.27). These models were chosen because they best represent the educators collectively; Figure 1 because of the level of detail for each phase in a week processes and the Figure 2 as it illustrates the predominance of "reflection in action" cycles operating ongoingly during the concrete experience, which are most relevant to the educator's reflective process.

The reflective narrative was structured to representing each phase in the cycle:

1. *Practice + Reflection in Action/Concrete Experience*
2. *Reflection-on-Practice/Reflective Observation*
3. *Re-evaluation/Abstract Conceptualization*
4. *Illumination/Active Experimentation*

While each educator reflects with different emphasis, the general process of reflection can fit into the above phases. Differing emphasis brings variation to the generalized process, illuminating individual values and pedagogy further while similarities are telling of the cultural space they inhabit as a community dance educator. These difference and similarities will be noted. Additionally, in the following section I will illustrate how the educators utilize each phase helping the reader deconstruct the narrative and make meaning as to how educator objects and values can be extracted from that phase.

### **Phase 1: Practice/Concrete Experience + Reflection in Action.**

In Figures 1 and 2, Practice/Reflection in Action describes attending to observation and reflections that could be intuitive, based on feelings, or spiritual sensing, adjusting almost improvisationally while experiencing the teaching moment (Bright, 2013). The freedom to act upon these responsive reflections is a key element utilized by these teachers found in the community/recreational sector as they are able to be flexible with their lesson plan, with no restrictions set by syllabus or curriculum to act in a particular way, or under particular time constraints. In some cases when nearing performance time constraints arise but even in these cases the educators expressed that responsiveness to the most important aspect of dance class would still be there. These aspects will soon be discussed. These dance educators all have a heavy focus on this phase of the reflective cycle due to values and objectives that drive the need for flexibility, in the moment assessment, and responsiveness to children's needs. Patti voiced a particularly strong aim of responsiveness that was similarly echoed by the other educators:

*I just try to be as responsive as I can. If I make too many decisions about what they need I might miss something...Where my teaching is going now is really developing presence and looking for opportunities to build ideas... to build experiences for their bodies. And I try to let those things happen really in the moment. They're already halfway to that experience, so what can I say or what can I suggest to get them a bit further into a new possibility. (Patti)*

Responsiveness to the needs of the children often develops the lesson in directions unforeseen by the instructor who must be open to opportunities resulting in elements of the lesson plan needing to change. New directions may mean that planned exercises, dance tasks, or technique be restructured, taught differently, or omitted from the lesson, which proposes a difficulty for traditional teachers who teach to a list of objectives. However, there are benefits to flexibility.

*I love new directions led by the students. It makes the learning rich and appropriate and engaging for the students. As teacher it is my job to include my information/expectations and technique in an environment that supports and fosters the students' needs and interests. (Harriettanne).*

This quote suggests that learning objectives including skills may remain a goal, but teachers should offer them according to the needs of the dancers. Given that dancers, particularly children, are all diverse in personality and experience, it is obvious that class would need to be flexible to meet a variety of needs. This results in the need for reflection in action and immediate responsiveness to children's needs in dance class. The narrative revealed two objectives dance educators aim to meet utilizing reflection in action while remaining responsive are: Socio/emotional experience and dance related skills/technique.

***Objective: Socio/Emotional Wellbeing/Creating a Safe Environment.***

All of the five educators are primarily interested in the wellbeing of the dancers in their care.

*I do reflect. But a lot of it is around how the group dynamic is. Are the kids happy? Are they... is does somebody need extra support to feel like they can express themselves more freely? Um, are the dynamics ok? What are the kids kinda going through at that time? You know! (Patti).*

The educators' number one area of reflection in action or immediate responsiveness and subsequent reflection in action was upon the **socio/emotional experience** of the dancers which they do by attending to their own feelings and

intuitions as an adult, teacher, dancer, past child, past child dancer. Described by some as ‘classroom vibes,’ others used terms such as engagement, embodiment, enjoyment, confidence to describe the dancer's general emotional response to tasks, movement, music, and group dynamics. This is illustrated in the narrative as the instructor noticing and responding to emotional dynamics experienced in real time by children individually and as a group, and respecting the voice of the child literally and figuratively. All educators were quite sensitive to the potential for a dance class to present risks for negative emotional experience, as all of these instructors have personal experience with examples of negative situations including extreme exclusion, shyness, comparison, unsafe practice, injury, and bullying in dance. All educators exhibited sensitivity to the individual needs and socio/emotional experience of dancers in observation and discussed pedagogy in support of this in the interview process. Areas that were highlighted as focal points for responsiveness were **group work primarily, as well as reduction of comparisons, and response to changing/potentially adverse moods, and lack of engagement** (not in any order).

The five dancer educators make a conscious effort to maintain open communication allowing dancers to utilize spoken and kinaesthetic voice: to ask questions about the correct technique, steps, or sequence, and embody the movement their own way, sharing and owning it. Several educators asked their class for opinions on the direction of the class, responding to the voice of the children. In this manner they are illustrating awareness of the hidden curriculum, and a goal to minimize negative learning.

*If I didn't ask them things, what am I saying to them? (Clare)*

Educators keep constant watch for reactions to pedagogy as identification markers for engaged learning moments or transformations. Educators are committed to getting to know the children in order to better recognise these indicators, though they do admit that watching everything during class is a challenge.

*Yeah, I just watch them. I just watch them because I know their personalities as well. Like Coco wasn't feeling very well yesterday and um, yeah, it's because I know them really well. (Patti)*

*I think I gauge it off their individual and collective response to the content of the class. I think it comes from teaching a long time. I watch their level of enthusiasm, motivation, focus, willingness to give it a go. When they say yes, physically, emotionally, intellectually. Shyer children are harder to read but I am very motivated to meet the child so to speak, see what makes them tick. See what brings about personal transformation for them (Clare).*

Educators are aware of moods and accept them as part of dance class, as is life, and are willing to support dancers by facilitating open communication, and support dance making when the creative juices are not flowing. Educators expressed verbally, and I observed in action that they have an ability to 'read the energy' of the class and change tasks around or come armed with alternative options to better suit the needs and energy of the dancers, to either boost energy, or provide necessary calm.

*They have to know that I consider what their interests are. Anyway, it's just something. I often do what inspires me, but I'll often check in with them, ok are you in a mood for the fast music, or do you need a quiet now (Clare).*

*They're just these moving, growing entities. Sometimes it's... they're on form and there's more clarity in their movement, more clarity in their idea sharing, and then there's a windy day and there's too much going on and the focus is out, and they are not creating well together, and the group dynamic doesn't work. I just let them let it go. I just let them sit down and watch the other kids and just say well sometimes that's how it is. Ideas can't flow. (Patti)*

Awareness and support of challenging moods comes from the self-reflection of educators about their own creative practice and life experience and applying empathy in the situation.

*If you see that there's an issue with that... and you know what it feels like, then you've kind of got to remember that when you're teaching.*  
(Joanna)

Group work, though excellent practice for life skills and citizenship, was noted by several educators as an area of possible contention. Some teachers noted bullying tendencies between some children or exclusive behaviour when creating group choreography resulting in the need for immediate adjustments to task or group make-up. Attendance to these issues quickly and kindly supported dancers in developing what Patti called clarity:

*...like confidence and capacity, resilience. Being able to clearly share ideas with others, understand the group dynamic better or be more able to cope... like feeling more resilient, to maybe have to let stuff go – so things can flow within the group. Or understanding that it's an off day and not getting upset with yourself if you stuff things up or find it difficult.... just being able to keep going. (Patti)*

*They are encouraged to work together in groups at the end of class. This teaches them useful skills of how to deal with each other, how to make compromises, how to prevent people being excluded from the decision-making process and how to work through tough situations. Sometimes they end up in groups that don't work well together but they somehow have to find their way through it. This is in some classes a continuous work in progress and a challenge for them, but I do expect all dancers to be able to work with everyone in class. Inclusion is important. And hopefully this attitude will filter through to their life out of class and help them when they grow up. (Helene)*



Dance educators noted responsiveness to the wellbeing of the children, with regard to self-confidence and comparisons to other dancers during the lesson. It was clear in observations that diversity was celebrated, with Clare and Helene offering opportunities for each dancer to lead the whole group across the floor with their 'own' step. Additionally, I observed the positive power of verbal praise and recognition of all children at their own stage of learning throughout all of the classes I visited, illuminating the educators' awareness of the negative power of poorly delivered corrections. All children were included as leaders, and as an important part of the class. Clare discussed the use of props as a mechanism to connect dancers of all skill ranges.

*Things like using lycra... somebody may be holding it and full body responding to make the lycra dance, or somebody who hasn't got those skills could still be holding on to it, but because all the group are holding onto the piece of fabric they are working together, all contributing. So, you are celebrating where they are at, rather than feeling like they can't be like everybody else. Especially with dance I think, whatever age people perceive that people can do it better. (Clare)*

The influence of props, studio, mirrors was also discussed, illustrating educator awareness of the pedagogical effects of the physical space. While only one educator had a mirror in the dance space, four did not, with Patti saying:

*So, if you contextualize dance as a freedom to express and then you put mirrors in front of kids, where they can see themselves in comparison to everybody else, that takes away that freedom. A little bit. More for some kids and less for other kids. There's no space... unless you're super confident and know exactly what you are doing, there's no space for you to dance in that situation. (Patti)*

This quote strongly describes the collective objective of socio/emotional wellbeing and creating a safe environment in order to facilitate freedom to dance. Further, other than when corrected for safety all educators were more interested in the origin of movement deriving from engaged exploration from the body rather

than the aesthetic of prescribed movement put on the body and therefore there is a great need for a supportive space for such freedom.

***Objective: Technical/Dance Specific Objectives.***

Secondary to the wellbeing response of the dancers, the dance educators discussed the **technical objectives of dance tasks planned** for the class. Generally, the extent of **technical correction related to safety** including attention to the basic principles of alignment, core stability, mobility in joint, strength in feet, and basic coordination for **safe expression** and **communication through dance**. This was observed and discussed as *open communication between educator and learner, multiple styles of teaching, and responsive feedback*.

Dance skills are an important part of class in all the classes I observed with solid technical skills being taught in several teacher-led exercises.

*Dance skills are of course very important part of class. Incorporating play is a way to keep the focus and attention on the group while doing the more mundane aspects of learning dance skills... I think that it's the energy and rhythm of class. Pick up energy, then close, intimate and quiet, big up energy, front's over here, now front's over here, now let's go to this corner, now we're over here. Underpinning it all is the concept of play theory. (Clare)*

Teachers utilized multiple styles of teaching in order to pass on technical understanding including demonstration facing and backing the dancers, manual corrections, and verbal descriptions to provide clarity in different ways.

*I suppose I model, you know, I give them multiple information, I show it, I say it, the music supports it, there's a prop to emphasize it so that they're lots of tools to support, grasping and mastering a skill. (Clare)*

Educators discussed the use of set dances and rotated exercises performed throughout the term to build upon movement knowledge. These teacher-directed elements are taught to "encourage mastery, but not to the point of them losing interest" (Clare). There were special exceptions to this by some educators when

preparing for a performance however they taught in a manner as to not lose the engagement and emotional connectedness with dance tasks as prioritized above.

Open communication between educator and learners was apparent for all educators. Technique and teacher-led tasks were present in all classes, but the educator often asked students for input creatively, and probed engagement and provided choices for further direction of the lesson, depending on mood/energy levels and interest of the class. Dancers were able to talk, ask questions about how to do a particular action and their interpretations if safe were praised, and if dangerous were encouragingly corrected.

*With the techniques that's teacher led so I say this is what we're doing and then I will open that up into um, they can make offers along those lines, in that format and show me some things... I'm interested in their ideas and the way that they move. And, working with them, alongside them. (Joanna)*

*We'll talk about exactly what we are doing, so I'll break it down while I teach it to them, and then I let it go for a couple of weeks, so they get it into their bodies and then I will visit some new, what I've already said, and then plus add a couple of new things into it. Yeah just watch, kind of where they are taking it, and see if that can be something that I can add into it. (Patti)*

*For me dance is about a conversation. Rather than me talking at, I'm talking with the children; we're sharing. I'm offering provocation to them and they're responding to them, and then we take that somewhere else. So, I think the community feels purposeful, and satisfying and it mean that it's not about me being the technical 'you come and learn from me all the steps, the way, the pathway, I'm creating an environment, I'm like the guide on the side, the facilitator of the sharing the knowledge of dance. So, I think community creates, I think in that way it's inclusive, and I'd adapting what I do to whoever's in front of me. (Clare)*

Correctional feedback was only undertaken where necessary and the amount of repetitions of an activity was decided in response to the age and engagement level of the dancers "*in response to what I'm seeing is missing, or lacking, (bad technique or lack of dynamic or embodiment or effort) or dangerous*" (Patti). Joanna described her level of corrections variable depending on her own mood, where she is in the process of reflections on the classes progress, and in response to the children. Clare described this context with specific corrections with a more hands on approach to younger dancers and newer dancers who need more guidance to create and confidence to move.

*For that age group (younger children) when they ask a question, you give a very precise answer, very specific and not too long that they get turned off by it. Just capture the learning moment, and the interest. And I always do things in opposition. Like the dynamic leap and then all close together, some footwork on the floor. Because, if they were all at the same skill level then I would spend more time on it. But because there's some children who, one of them was puffing, I just read the group. I think that's one of my skills is that I can read the group, and I go that's enough. If they were all at the same skill level I would just keep doing it.*  
(Clare)

Similarly, several educators noted that the delivery of corrections is just as impactful as the corrections themselves, demonstrating in class encouraging name specific praise for personal achievement, effort and teamwork (Coe, 2003; Duda & Quedstedt, 2011; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). All educators were clearly not after perfection, and therefore more relaxed in their feedback style in order to maintain the enjoyment of the dance experience and self-worth of the dancer.

*I do not expect perfection in one go, moving on at the appropriate time is very important. And if the delivery of corrections and information is positive and focused around the dancing instead of the individual, happiness should not be affected in any way... Contemporary allows for a huge range of ability within each individual movement. One example is encouraging students to put their own interpretation into the movement*

*allows for timing/musicality and performance development at individual levels. (Harrietanne)*

## **Phase 2: Reflection on Practice/Reflective Observation**

Bright (2013) describes this stage as where the educator will "describe, analyse, judge, and interpret her completed work(s), perhaps with the use of an appropriate tool for analysis." She also reviews her journal in order to "draw out other areas of learning" (p. 28). According to Schon, the second phase of his reflective cycle must be written, symbolized, verbalized in order to be an intellectual process that articulates values. Once again, this is an opportunity to "return to the experience," and "attend to feelings, spiritual and social context" of the past class in order to make detailed descriptions and articulate judgements that can be further acted upon (Figure 1, Bright, 2013, p. 22). Analyzing their pedagogy enables the educator to "determine how you are actually in interacting with the children and whether your teaching is effective" (Graham et al., 2013, p. 53).

All educators **reflect after class** with some noting an immediate reflection (within hours) after class. Some educators write down reflections in notebooks as a visual record, or tool for further analysis. Joanna described a strong presence in this step in the cycle.

*I try to come home and write after class, just want we did, at least as a record. So, it might be a little different to what I thought we'd do, any notes about what I want to do next time or things that I need to follow up on... and then I do though quite a planning process with it. I'm probably repeating myself over and over again! (Joanna).*

The action of writing reflective records/journaling/notes may be significantly influenced by 'school teacher' training as the educators who indicate written aspects are trained school teachers. This suggests that training as a public-school teacher engrains a particular method of planning and reflection. However, not all educators in this study write reflections. According to Schon's reflective cycle phase two requires the articulation written or verbal of reflections to learn from them. Helene noted a never-ending mental capacity for reflection that comes in and out of thought throughout the week, without a perceived need to record. Patti

noted such a strong focus on the first step of the cycle with particular emphasis on responsiveness during class, it was unclear if she spent much time utilizing reflections outside of class time. However, she articulated her values and reflections verbally to me in the interview clearly leading me to suspect she has found ways to reflect through embodiment. She particularly noted participation in yoga.

I note that this process of interviewing was an opportunity to articulate values and respond to questions about specific pedagogical methods I observed and general questions. All educators were quite articulate in voicing their methods and experiences. Some mentioned periods of prior reflection after seasons of difficulty, and as all have studied dance at higher education level it is highly likely reflective writing assignments would have caused them to participate in appraisal of values for dance making. So even if some educators do not focus on writing down journaled reflections after each class, there is evidence that phase two has occurred, with many mentioning participations in educational courses that would have caused them to reflect and appraise values more generally. This relates to the more long-term use of the reflective cycle for learning. It is interesting to consider whether the educators who do not write would benefit from participating in this step each week.

Reflection enables the educators a change to go back to the class experience and rethink what occurred and make judgements upon the results of their reflections in action. The 'vibe' of the class remains a top reflective point as well as how well the dances are achieving objectives (remembering that not all objectives are skill based). These are the same as reflection in action, though reflected on differently in this subsequent phase, in which educators have time to look back with a sharper lens with sufficient time to make judgements on what happened and why, what they did in response and evaluating choices made in class.

Educators take the time to identify needs with regards to class learning objectives initiating a trail of enquiry for the educator to judge what that means, and why that happened, and look for ways to solve issues and challenges meeting those objectives.

*I reflect in relation to my goals. So, whether I reflect in relation to their attitudes and their vibes within the room, within the space... or if they're not getting the technique how can I put that into an exercise that will focus on that more... make that objective more apparent. (Harrietanne)*

*Some of the stuff that I'm used to teaching I'm looking at them doing it and they are collapsing all over the place and they are complaining and stuff. So, I think that's physically making me think a lot more about changing what I'm doing with them. So today instead of putting on music with one of the exercises that we've done... because that the other problem that happens is that you put on music and they're trying to keep up with the music and they lose all their alignment" (Joanna) that's a thing that I'm, I constantly think about with them. And how to teach them technique and what technique I should be teaching them. Based on what I'm seeing them, how they're coping or reacting to things. (Joanna)*

Children's interests and questions arising during the lesson also initiate a trail of enquiry as educators recognise the need to use their interests as a platform for further learning of skill objectives.

*Home was one of the things that one child said that they were interested in. One said animals... Yeah, and so it's sort of like animal homes is their contribution. So, then that takes me off on an interesting enquiry myself about animals and movements and homes and how can we develop that creatively. I'll feed things back to them, they feed back to me their ideas, they get incorporated. Things develop in a, sort of, collaborative way where I'm looking to them. I'm offering them things, they're offering me things. (Joanna)*

Educators then, armed with knowledge of what the children like and what they need (awareness of illness, busy periods at school, changes to family dynamics or situation), can begin to craft pedagogy that intentionally meets those needs and the dance class objectives most needed by the children.

### **Phase 3: Re-evaluation/Abstract Conceptualization**

At this stage Schon's model states that we "revaluate the experience: association, integration, validation and appropriation," making sense of the experience via your feelings (Figure 1). "Abstract conceptualization" means for them, the process of mulling over issues or questions that have arose during the concrete experience and were identified in subsequent reflection. To think would include "logical analysis, systematic planning and deductive thinking" (Bright, 2013, p.12), being able to articulate meaning and values that they may have discovered as a result of reflections, seeking further understanding of concepts concerned in order to better meet objectives and teach values intentionally. Educators described a process of "*percolation*" (Clare), thinking about the dance teaching process throughout the week. Educators drew on several sources to meet their objectives and successfully teach to their intentional values. These include **following prompts from class from children, including researching ways to facilitate interests and needs** and increasing their discipline, and professionalism by **participating in professional development** and **attending to past experience/challenges to values** in order to keep week to week classes responsive to current contextual needs and remain inspired and adequately able/trained to do so. Educators search for solutions to issues in the following phase, and in the process conceptualize their values for use in the planning phase.

Educators are open to engaging with enquiry into the interests of the dancers as this supports the objectives of wellbeing and voice. They search for solutions to meet their own objectives and that the children will find personally relevant. Teachers critically search for methods that achieve objectives in a way that supports their intentional values, allowing children to maintain voice and develop skills relevant to their life.

*I'm doing a bit with um, drawing and writing... puzzles or things to manipulate. Like we've taken in games so that we can look at formations and they can move the little pegs around and then we'll go make up the formation or draw pathways, because they quite like to draw. They're also really good storytellers, this bunch of kids. They can tell amazing stories and write stories. So, I like to use that a bit more. (Joanna)*



This example illustrates that the educator recognises the learning needs and interests of the group of children she teaches and the solutions she found in response. She found a way to teach formations that facilitated those needs and interests. In this way her values of inclusion and valuing of the children's voice are maintained as children inductively explore.

Educators also want to ensure their dancers continue to grow in the art form. Speaking of her younger students creating choreography Helene described.

*They love putting animals in there. They're cats and they're dogs and sometimes it's really hard to get away from those and I'm like trying to find ways of getting them out... because it's all what they're comfortable with... if I see that there has been a lot of cats and dogs the week before, I try to make it into a task to avoid that the next time. (Helene)*

Teachers sometimes need to push harder and challenge the dancer for them to progress. Therefore, educators deal with challenges to their values and reconcile conflicting values in response to reflection.

*I think I am quite adaptable as I love learning and challenging what I'm doing as it keeps me motivated and enthusiastic. So, I'm happy responding to what is being requested at the time. I have what one might describe as an organic approach. I always turn back to the text books for new approaches, new ideas, new techniques to improve my teaching. I do think if I'm enjoying the experience it translates back to the children being inspired as well. (Clare)*

*Going to class is my discipline...Professional development for me is reading a lot from all of these different dance mentors and going to contemporary dance class myself and feeding myself on lots of different ways in the arts. So, my practice is always changing. (Clare)*

Educators seek further clarity from the literature. Several educators use literature as a source for inspiration to solve issues identified in their reflection at any. Remaining a student and feeding themselves in all of the arts and various other

creative endeavours is important. This includes maintaining their own discipline by attending dance classes. Patti noted several creative hobbies including photography, theatre, and music, and yoga as significant influences on her pedagogy. Educators expressed an awareness that everything (in normal life) can and does inform their dance teaching practice. These educators were significantly influenced by mentors and try to maintain a community of other creatives and dance makers. Several educators discussed conversations, collaborations, or workshops with other dancers, artists or educators of various mediums illustrating an interest in community, connecting to the wider dance world and increasing personal understanding of values.

Lastly, participation in reflection on judgements made about the previous lesson and the needs in future class planning means educators may appraise past personal experiences. Harriettanne discussed how she could look back at her own experiences as a learner, where comparisons may help appraise how her own class was going,

*If I was reflecting, [and] felt the atmosphere in the... class was not right then maybe I would explicitly move back to what I'd learned from teachers or studios in the past as to how maybe I'm acting in a similar or different way. (Harriettanne)*

Identification of similar experiences enables the teachers to gain empathy and understand their dancers better, helping them make further choices about needs and then to make necessary changes. Personal experiences remind Joanna:

*...not to do things, or to do things. I think that's incredibly important to use your experience as a student as a teacher. To remember what you experienced and continue to be a student. Continuing to have experiences being in people's dance classes and to reflect on that when you're teaching. (Joanna)*

Awareness of an educator's past enables them to understand why they value particular objectives in dance class as well.

*I did more dancing in ballet. So, I did a huge amount of ballet training which obviously supports contemporary and every other form of dance. Which is why I have things like your core and your feet because these are just ingrained in my mind as important. (Harrietanne)*

This was apparent in observation of Harrietanne's classes. Dance training and technique from genres learned becomes a part of the educator and was apparent in the observed movement styles, choreography, and exercises taught in class. Additionally, educators past traditional training was somewhat visible in their teaching style to some extent as all utilized teacher led exercises, even if minimally. It was clear educators had an awareness of the relevance of teacher led exercises to their current community context. Moreover, observations showed these educators critically examining when such pedagogy was necessary, and why, maintaining a safe environment. Surely overcoming how they were taught must be a significant challenge and therefore careful and thoughtful reflection is key to ensuring further plans are intentional.

#### **Phase 4: Illumination/Active Experimentation**

In this stage of the cycle next steps are chosen as the next lesson is planned. Next steps are derived as meaning has been made and the educator has determined what can be applied as beneficial further action (Graham, et al., 2013). Decisions are made as to what the educator will present to the dancers. Some educators write this down and some do not, like reflective notes after class, the trained school teachers were the ones who also produced a written plan, illustrating the attention to scaffolding, and recording habits of teacher training. Teacher training seemed to matter more in this case than experience. Length in years does not seem to influence detail of class plans. Clare, Joanna, and Harrietanne (notably the trained school teachers) who represent twenty-five, seven, and one years teaching experience respectively described a written, more detailed class plan, with Clare (the most experienced) producing the most detailed plan. Clare, the longest teaching educator of twenty-five years, described her process and its weight in her week,

*Because I've been doing TAPAC for so many years my partner knows that this is part of the evening, that mum is doing her planning, and my son and him will go out. I actually do quite a deep immersion, because I want to. I like enjoying it myself. (Clare)*

This notion that she values and enjoys this process is indicative of the personal learning going on because of the reflective cycle.

Educators select appropriate activities for the next class that they determine will help actualize their objectives and meet the specific needs of their dancers. In this way they are aiming to teach intentionally. Trying new activities out can be a risk, but a calculated one, undertaken with the knowledge that they have further opportunities and can remain open to new "reflections in action." Joanna described a current challenge, balancing technique and creativity in her classes.

*I just keep trying new things because of the reflection that I reflect on. Oh, then you know if I see that something's not working... If I can see that I'm not achieving the objectives. (Joanna)*

When risks are taken then the process of reflection restarts.

Acknowledging risk, flexibility is planned for by these educators. Patti and Helene plan a general structure only, allowing for responsiveness to dancers so that changes in task order, length of time spent of an activity can be lengthened or shortened, or tasks omitted. Those who plan a detailed plan, also allow for the above edits to class tasks in response to children's engagement. In addition, the dance educators demonstrated the ability to improvise themselves, maintaining a variety of exercises and dance tasks to pull out of the bag when needed, and a wide skill set of pedagogical methods when what they planned to do was not working effectively.

In summary, observations of the five educators dance classes and subsequent interviews exposed the general use of a four-phase reflective process that is supported by the literature, particularly the Four Phase Approach to Reflective Learning (Figure 1) and the Bright Approach to Reflective Practice (Figure 2) presented earlier in this chapter (Bright, 2013, p.22/27). The educators participated in this four-phase reflective cycle with varying degrees of focus on

particular phases relative to their experiences, values, and notably teacher training. However, each teacher still participated in each step including: teaching the class (a concrete experience where they utilize "reflection in action" and notably the most valued phase across all educators), "reflection on practice/reflective observation" after class, "re-evaluation and abstract conceptualization" of meaning making for planning, and "illumination" where value informed learning is applied to "active experimentation," or the class plan (Bright, 2013; Kolb, 1984; Schon, 1983).

As illustrated in the narrative (Chapter Four) and this results section (Chapter Five) the participation of the dance educators in each phase draws out the objectives and values that inform them. "Reflection in action" is a heavily utilized phase and the prioritization and enthusiastic use during class by the educators supports their objectives (both observed and articulated by interview). Active responsiveness to the socio/emotional experience the children are having is illustrated by the creation of a safe, open environment by awareness of needs of the children (physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual) when participating in group work, dance making, performance, and learning technique all of which have risks to wellbeing associated with dance. The flexibility educators demonstrate and ability to adjust lessons appropriately on the spot and tailor teaching style or feedback/corrections to the needs of the children improve the learning opportunities in the diverse community dance class.

Subsequent phases demonstrate a difference between trained teachers and non-trained teachers in 'writing' of reflection and further plans, however (Bright, 2013) notes that phases can be embodied as well, and this seems to be what is happening. Otherwise the following three phases are used by all five educators to critically examine their concrete class experience, and search for solutions informed by self-understanding and meaning. Educators seek professional development in dance, and research the needs and interests of their given context in literature and from mentors, and by comparing and appraising their own personal experience. This results in greater understanding and creating possibilities for further action, as illuminated in the class plan. This process enables the educators to teach intentionally and remain aware of their actions as they go making it possible to teach for positive transformations, and this will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6: Reflective Practice for Transformation

*"All education involved the teaching of a moral and political point of view. So, the search begins with self: What do I believe in? What kind of world should this be? What do I value in human existence?" (Shapiro, 1998, p. 14).*

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of this research as relating to the research question: *How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance?* Where previously Chapter Five illustrated how the educators use reflection in teaching their classes, and how that reflection illuminated objectives and values, this chapter will focus on how the educators' reflective process, objectives, and values relate to transformative pedagogy. I will draw on the literature to support my interpretations. The findings from my observations of dance classes and semi-structured interviews with the five dance educators shows that reflection is a self-engaged learning process that provides a platform for educators to intentionally teach from their values to bring about transformation in their students. These findings will be discussed with respect to the literature on reflection and transformation in dance education, general education, and considering the wider implications for society. This discussion will also highlight the valuable insights arising from this research. To structure this discussion, I focus on the main themes of: transformative experiences are passed on; objectives reflect understandings of transformation; values inform pedagogy; and, transformative dance pedagogy for cultural change.

### **Transformative Experiences Are Passed On**

The first theme to discuss is that the dancer educators' own transformative experiences inform pedagogy and are passed on in their own teaching.

Engagement with art often fuels transformative processes. The catalyst behind many dance educator's deep commitment to their work may lie in their personal experiences of transformation through dance. A desire to share and lead others towards similar process motivates many of us, including myself. These experiences seem to be fundamental in the sense

that they amplify the embodied nature of our existence as human beings.  
(Antilla, 2015, p. 79)

This quote certainly resonates with my experience as my motivation for teaching is largely influenced by the need to share the benefits of dance, according to what I value from my participation with the art form. The educators in this study illustrate a similar motivation to share aspects of dance and protect children from other negative experiences, a motive similarly described by several scholars (Antilla, 2015; Coe, 2003; Ririe, 2010; Sansom, 2011; Stinson, 2016). The aspects they value, their class objectives and pedagogical approaches are rooted in unique experiences from which they have felt transformations of their own (Antilla, 2015). Transformative moments, good and bad, experienced by the educators in this study contribute to understanding, critical thinking, and change in their values and actions which guide their intentional pedagogy and class objectives (Freire, 1970; Shapiro, 1998, 2008).

Teachers of dance typically teach as they were taught (Ashley, 2013; Coe, 2003; Dragon, 2015; Posey, 2002; Smith, 2007; Snook & Buck, 2014b; Stinson, 2016; Warburton, 2008) even if how they were taught was disagreeable to them, and hold onto values they do not know they have but that nevertheless continue to appear in their teaching. In other words, many unknowingly reinforce a hidden curriculum which can result in positive or negative experiences, depending on which values are held. That it is possible to facilitate negative transformations as well as positive is an essential consideration. Consequently, educators must be wide awake to their values to teach intentionally and in alignment with positive values, and they must act upon that awareness (Freire, 1970; Frichtel, 2017; Graham et al., 2013; Risner, 2009, 2017; Stinson, 2016). The literature richly describes an ever growing understanding of what values and objectives facilitate positive transformations in dance. These will be further discussed in this chapter. The educators in this study represent those who teach for positive transformations, as described in the literature. But, teachers need more than the desire to facilitate transformation; they must utilize methods to ensure what they are ‘walking the talk’.

The findings of this study suggest that the four phased reflective practice cycle illustrated in the narrative and discussed in Chapter Five was utilized by the

five educator participants to support teaching with intentionally value driven pedagogy. Their pedagogy developed over time and effort learning through reflecting. Reflective practice is suggested by several dance educator scholars as a vehicle for intentional pedagogy (Antilla, 2009; Barbour, 2011; Bolwell, 1998; Buck, 2015; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Dyer, 2009; Graham et al., 2013; Sansom, 2011, 2015; Shaprio, 1998; Stinson, 2016; Tembrioti & Tsangaridou, 2014; Warburton, 2008).

Learning to reflect involves asking challenging questions about ordinary moments in our lives, both past and present. By understanding our actions and the meanings that result from these actions, we gain greater insight, grapple with our intentions, wrestle with our own practice and raise further questions (Risner, 2017, p.89).

A question that I asked all the educators was whether they had always held their current values. If their values had changed, I was interested to explore how these were developed, understood and articulated to tease out what possible transformative experiences affected their values within dance education. I asked this question to compare their process to the experiences of those found in the literature. Like several scholars, the participants described experiences that may be transformative including life changing performances danced by themselves, watched, or watching growth in their student dancers (Graham, 2002).

Alternatively, some spoke of the destructive belittlement they experienced within the power dynamics of the dance culture. The educators discussed the resulting connections and insight gained via reflection on these experiences and the effect these had on their current practice. What might be called revelatory personal experiences often exposed areas of participation in dance as negative or harmful, and prompted subsequent changes to the path they are on artistically and as a teacher; an experience found in scholars as well (Buck, 2015; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Dyer, 2009; Risner, 2017; Stinson, 2016; Turpeinen, 2015; Warburton, 2008). Risner (2009) mentioned tertiary dance education as first opportunities for many to critically examine pedagogy, reflected in the educators' experiences. The process of this research also offered an opportunity to dance educators to reflect on their values as they are given a space to articulate them, an important phase



(phase 2) of meaning making in Schon's (1983) reflective cycle (Bright, 2013). This includes their part learning in dance. "Examining and reflecting on the successful teaching and learning that you experienced can greatly enhance your own teaching" (Ambrosio, 2015, p. 11). Patti reflected that her values have always come from a "point of view" but have developed,

*Because it's one thing to say well I've got these values... you have to live it, you have to be it, you have to create a platform for that to develop.*  
(Patti)

Therefore, something is needed to help bring values out in action, to create that platform for intentional pedagogy that transforms the teachers values from ideas into action and facilitates their goals.

All five participants have described acting by making a change in their own pathway, leading to the classes they teach now and their subsequent pedagogy. Higher dance education and life experiences, including revelatory experiences followed by personal reflection, awakened educators to their values (Barr, 2013; Risner, 2009). In all five cases, each educator made a choice to alter her pathway within dance, due to revelatory experiences. This choice may be considered a result of transformational experiences within participation in dance (Antilla, 2015). Harriettanne and Joanna, who both danced professionally in Australia, made a choice to quit dancing professionally and teach community dance as informed by their experiences as a professional dancer and through higher education. Of Joanna's experience she said:

*I didn't want to do any more technique. I didn't wanna be given steps... I [had a] clear feeling that I didn't want to be doing any more of that... after the BA in dance. I had a bad experience with a choreographer and an injury and stuff and I just turned away from it and I just wanted to do this improvisational dancing. Where I could do what I wanted to do, move the way I wanted to move. (Joanna)*

This led her to improvisation and further on to teaching community dance where she could find her 'own way of teaching' as well. Helene and Patti were both

trained dancers who returned to dance as adults. Helene, a veterinarian, found a community of dancers in Hamilton who provided her with dance opportunities and connection she missed, that which she did not find in her dance training program. Negative experiences in training developed in her strong values surrounding inclusion and community central to her current practice. In contrast, Clare discovered dance as a possibility to enhance traditional/general education and this revelation of values surrounding dance participation transformed her pedagogy.

The dance educators made it clear to me that values that stem from past experiences that affect their dance pedagogy come from beyond dance training, dance education or dance background as well, including "life histories" (Antilla, 2009, p. 202). Several educators gave detailed examples of non-dance mediums that frame their dance teaching. General education teaching qualifications create a particular world-view for three of the five educators (Clare, Harriettanne, and Joanna). In observing and talking with all of these educators there was a clear difference between the trained school teachers and solely community practitioners (Patti and Helene). Patti and Helene illustrated key differences in pedagogy from their school teacher colleagues, a scholarly noted and valued difference; the combining of both types of teachers, Schoone (2017) says, contributes to development of education so it is great to have this variety, particularly within opportunities to work together or collaborate. And several of these educators do. Thus, both voices are valued. Harriettanne described family and morality as an important factor in her upbringing and consequently, her approach to dance. Likewise, Joanna discussed her position as a 'Playcentre' mother as contributing to her values. Patti discussed her jobs working in management and hospitality, and several other creative fields including photography, film, music and yoga, that inform her teaching. To Patti, the creative process in these areas provided meaning making in her life and direction in her creative approach to dance class, saying:

*I am really into creative process... I trust creativity implicitly. It's the way, It's the one! I believe in creative spirit for change making. That's the way forward for me in my life... Life training is my teacher training!*  
(Patti)

Antilla (2015) said dance educators must ask "under what conditions can dance be transformative" and "is change always a positive phenomenon" (p. 79). Most of these educators had not heard of the term 'transformation' in relation to dance pedagogy but in discussion a shared understanding of transformation arose. Positive transformations are powerful **experiences for self-learning**. The educator participants described transformation as:

*I definitely think that children can experience transformations through dance. I would say it is one of the best ways! I was very shy, and it was dance where I was able to feel confident. It allowed me to be free from anxiety or worry. I'm not sure that I could say I have seen it already in my classes, but I hope to be able to provide dance in a way that allows that sort of influence on the children that I teach. To be happy with who we are and to bring the focus back to what's on the inside, being true to oneself. Reflecting and being thankful for the life we have. I want to bring pure happiness which in turn could lead to transformation down the line. (Harrietanne)*

*Becoming confident as well in myself... the way I feel while I'm dancing, I take that away... into my life, aware of my body and know where my body is. (Helene)*

*There's definitely a journey element to it. For me that's involving the imagination and physical, the physical body as well. So, I think that's really important with kids in creative classes is that they love to tell a story through dance. They like to be in the story they like to know why they are doing that they are doing. It's not just abstract movements is just like there's more to it for them when they really own the things that they make. It's because they know who they are, where they are, and why they're doing what they're doing. (Joanna)*

*Self-realization, self-kind of development and growth and also, I think about transformation as in the space sharing, an experience sharing so maybe more in the sense of bringing good and creative energy into a space, or a place, to help it grow and see things in a different way, or even just in a spotlight way. So, transformation in the sense of looking at what is and seeing how it could be different or better. (Patti)*

*Yes, it is transformative when the child takes the dance exercise into their body and makes it their own...I think transformation is when everything is in the same movement, in time and space, and you feel that transformational moment. As skip or a leap, when your body is with you, it's sort of a spiritual thing isn't it. When your whole being is in that moment with that movement, and you're present to it, witnessing it, can be transformation... We did a duet. And I felt a feeling where...I've had it a couple of times... you're moving in unison and you actually feel like you lose a sense of your edge and you actually like, just felt a very strong connection in time and space. That's why I remember... the kinaesthetic memory of that moment. And larger than yourself-you become one. (Clare)*

To the educators, transformation involves moments of kinaesthetic mastery, in which they felt as one with their body, mind, the space and others, creating moments of self-realized learning. This aligns with descriptions of transformative dance in the literature (Antilla, 2015; Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001; Graham, 2002; Shapiro, 1998, Stinson, 2016). Educators have felt these moments over time and acutely, with descriptions of growing confidence, physical mastery over time and 'stand out moments' in time where the participant felt transformed in an instant (Antilla, 2015). The educators' descriptions of their own personal transformational experiences and those they have observed in others are spoken with passion and energy, almost as if their kinaesthetic memory has taken them right back to the experience. This illustrates the bodily connection to learning and 'place' in the world, as participation with this movement medium has built confidence and joy, exhilaration and connection in these dancers (Shapiro, 1998; 1999).

Understanding these connections are foundational to transformation because

connections are often shared, where meaning is constructed for the dancer with others, and such experiences propel them to make changes within themselves to fulfil their needs (Antilla, 2015; Graham, 2002; Green, 2007; Novak, 2012; Shapiro, 2008). Pedagogy that 'shares' makes space for dialogue with the students, when the dancers have a voice, when they know who they are and what they are dancing for, and communicate this with another person, space, or environment to connect (Antilla, 2015). Positive engagement with dance to this level is what brings change, growth, development, motivation, individually and collectively and dancers who continue to dance (Coe, 2003).

### **Objectives Reflect Dance Educators' transformation**

The participants in this study had diverse experiences, unique to them, and personally valuable. However, in relation to those experiences described in the literature there are significant resemblances, and these support the interpretation of these experiences as transformative. The learning and actions made by these educators aligns with the literature on pedagogy to facilitate transformation. These dance educators made bold choices to teach in the community and articulate innovative aims and objectives for their classes. A significant illustration of this responsibility is demonstrated in where they choose to teach and position themselves with the dance culture in New Zealand, the aspects of dance taught (i.e. performance, training, dance composition, conditioning/health knowledge, dance history), the technique included, and pedagogy. In some senses, these educators are breaking from the traditional dance culture, positioning their pedagogy around alternative objectives, and I suggest they do this because of the values they want to pass on (Burnidge, 2012; Dyer, 2009). Their objectives represent the skills and experiences they believe dancers should have to experience positive transformation.

The educators importantly represent a diverse range of experiences and all teach in a different context. Therefore, their diversity informs different objectives as each respond with their own point of view in their community context and to their students' needs. Below are the objectives drawn from each educator within this research process. The objectives represent those observed in classes and discussed with the educators in interviews, as well as some implicit in their

classes, as I interpreted them.

Helene's objectives for her children's (5-12 year olds I observed) contemporary dance class include skills for life (physical skills and life skills such as cooperation with others), joy, and confidence. Helene hopes her dancers will expand their ideas of what is acceptable as dance to increase their movement vocabulary, creativity, and express their (child's) voice. Helene includes simple technique (gross motor, safety, spatial awareness) to facilitate safe exploration of movement to achieve this.

Harriettes's objectives for her 8-12 year old contemporary dance class include dance as expression and communication. She prioritizes creating a safe environment for dancers to increase their self worth, confidence, and happiness. Harriette teaches simple but appropriately challenging contemporary and ballet technique as influenced by her own training (core stability, alignment, floorwork, footwork) to facilitate expansion of movement vocabulary, dance making, and sense of success.

Patti's objectives for her children's (2 classes for classes 4-12 year olds, one younger and one older group, were observed) dance class includes dance as expression and communication. To facilitate expression Patti includes safe dance practices (alignment, body mobilization, floorwork) in order to prepare the body to move. Patti attempts to develop the whole person in her dancers. Her objective of self-realization prioritizes the child's voice, embodiment, dynamics and creativity above prescribed technique. Patti considers creativity as a possibility for the greater objective of change making.

Clare's objectives for her two children's (spanning 4-7 year old) creative dance classes include dance as expression of self and for connection. Clare prioritizes the child's voice within her anti-fascist and organic framework of dance as 'education'. Clare teaches appropriate contemporary technique (alignment, floorwork), motor skill development, locomotor patterns, and the elements of dance to facilitate safe exploration of movement and for expressive dance making.

Joanna's objectives for her 4-6 year old creative dance class include accessibility and respect for childrens voices through collaboration. Joanna teaches simple contemporary technique (alignment, floorwork, locomotor patterns, and coordination), and included improvisation for exploration of

movement and dance making.

As demonstrated in Chapter Five, the first generalized objective is to create a safe environment for **socio/emotional wellbeing** aligned with the literature's increasing awareness of student wellbeing and development (Antilla, 2009; Graham, 2002; Stinson, 2015). This is reflected in the literature by those aware of the 'hidden curriculum' and the impressionable power dance has on the body, for the body is "culturally constructed and tied up in power" (Green, 2007, p.1124). Shapiro (1998) further commented that, "our bodies provide an emotional mapping of who we are and how we have been shaped by the dominant society" and this leads to analysis and action (p. 12). Scholars have noted numerous unintentional negatively transforming outcomes of dominant societies. In traditional dance pedagogy, the objective to achieve perfection as indicated by dancers being told what to wear, what to do, and how to do it by force to meet another's ideal may result in injury, passivity or a docile body, objectification, self-obsession, and lack of artistry (Clark & Markula, 2017; Green, 2007; Shapiro, 1999; Stinson, 2016; Wagonner, 2004, Warburton, 2008). Militant and unsafe dance training often leaves participants unhappy, shamed, competitive, and marginalized as they experience the power unbalance working with teacher directors (Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010).

In contrast, objectives to combat these negative experiences include facilitating community and connection by working together rather than self-obsession and competition; voice and balance of power instead of objectification of a docile body and artistry where dancers express their voice (Burnidge, 2012). Open communication to understand and responsiveness to the mood, interests, and needs of the diverse make up of children in a community dance class is utilized to foster positive socio/emotional experience via positive engagement. The "reflection in action" to socio/emotional experience of dancers above and beyond technical skills described in Chapter Five relates to the objective for dance class to increase a child's **self-worth and confidence**, which were both identified by each educator, resulting from personal transformations both positive and negative experienced by educators themselves (Graham, 2002). The objective of creativity and dance making, plus the learning of dance elements and dynamic qualities prioritised over aesthetic technique, balances that power a little more and equalizes the children as this pedagogy increases accessibility to diverse dancers

found in these contexts and increases self-worth (Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). Attention to hints the children provide about engagement and whether the tasks and vibe of the class are working well or not, was mentioned by all and they noted this is a skill that develops with experience in teaching.

The second generalized objective expressed by these teachers were the technical or dance skill objectives. Technique in traditional pedagogy (or dance training) is used to shape the body for performance and the issues discussed in the last paragraph represent the need for a change (injury, passivity, objectification, self-obsession, and lack of artistry). Technique or skills in child-centred dance education have a place in dance class for safety, sense of accomplishment, and function including an expressive vocabulary (Ashley, 2002; Bucek, 1992; Joyce, 1984; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010; Sansom, 2011; Stinson, 2016). Safety is an essential consideration, particularly for children. However, a wide range of movement benefits dancers as it improves efficiency and options for expression. Expression is also enhanced with technique as there is wider and safer range of movement, and the body has freer range of motion. Technique included in these educators' classes represents the points identified in the literature in terms of alignment, coordination, strength and control, flexibility, energy and dynamics: all key for safe and efficient movement (Ashley, 2002; Barbour, 2016; Joyce, 1984). Educators' inclusion of dance skills, particularly the dance elements in addition to simpler motor steps/skills is essential for expression, and so acting reflectively to assess the dynamic and embodiment of a movement, sequence, or child-choreographed dance enables the educators to facilitate expression rather than rote learning of physical actions. Providing physical challenge provides an opportunity for personal satisfaction to be experienced in dance and affects engagement (Barbour, 2016; Bond & Stinson, 2007). Therefore, educators must be attuned to the skills-based needs and interests of the dancers and must allow open communication, emotionally responsive feedback/corrections, and use multiple styles of teaching (Garber, 2010; Gilbert, 2005; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). They must also attend to interests by following up on trends, interests, and current music even to remain relevant in the lives of the children.

When the needs and interests of children were noticed, and attended to in an appropriate manner, learning occurred, mastery was facilitated, and engagement followed, and this is supported in the literature as essential for



transformation (Bond & Stinson, 2007). Additionally, to maintain safe practice, and remain knowledgeable to teach skills, techniques, and expression effectively, the educators participate in reflective patterns and research solutions to issues such as learning about anatomical, expressive, or social dynamics encountered by dancing children. Educators utilize the second and third phase of the reflection cycle (Figures 1 and 2) to develop their own understanding by taking technique class, reading the literature, remaining "*fed in the arts*" (Clare), and delving back into their own past for insight into what is happening regarding meeting their objectives.

## **Values Inform Pedagogy**

### **Dance for life development.**

While objectives of the dance educators in classes varied slightly, reflecting personal values and experiences or transformations, there were several common values that aligned together, offering a clear picture of the similarities and difference (for reference look back to Chapter Five). The dance educators' values aligned in several areas, as was evident in Chapter Five (results). Questions surrounding who should dance, and what it means to dance are areas the participants strongly agreed on.

Educators recognise dance education as a vehicle for **personal development in and for all aspects of life**, to "educate the whole student physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially" (Werbrouck, 2004, p. 66). This purpose is in contrast from the social construction of dance as training, or dance in a curriculum to be assessed supported by current cultural and political forces (Antilla, 2009; Stinson, 2015). This is not a new concept, for the origins of dance supported life for cultures and peoples all over the world in the recent past and history. Of sport and physical education Pope (2013) discussed social and political change as inevitable but worrisome when it changes the nature of a subject and this sentiment can be applied to dance. "While it is inevitable that change will always occur on social and political fronts, perhaps a greater concern is the extent to which change becomes so rampant that something like the nature and meaning of a subject no longer resembles its intended objective" (Pope, 2014, p. 506). The educators in this study share in this great concern that the purposes for dance have

become something far from its origin. To those concerned dancing is more than the aesthetic recreation of beautiful shapes or physical mastery supported by social and political modernization and this is evident in the literature leaning away from aesthetic perfection and toward citizenship and critical action. Meaningful life education is valued in the literature and plays a central role in the current dance offering produced by the educators (Antilla, 2015; Barbour, 2016; Buck, 2015; Coe, 2003; Dyer, 2009; Frichtel, 2017; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Greene, 1995; Joyce, 1984; Shapiro, 2008; Stinson, 2015, 2016).

*I made the choice to teach this way, before I started up the classes. In this decision I was hugely inspired by Karen Barbour, and Patti Mitchley, by their approach in their teaching. It's a desire to create a community of movers that learn to enjoy dance as well as learning life skills like working together and developing their creativity. For me dance is not just another physical activity but woven into life itself. (Helene)*

*Through dance we can aim to develop curiosity, and interest and focus in students, not just as personal qualities but as an approach to life. (Joanna)*

These teachers are aware of the role the body plays in learning and meaning making for life long values and affect culture. Educators understand that the body is susceptible to becoming "culturally constructed" (Green, 2007, p. 1124). Therefore, when you affect the body, you affect the child's approach to life, not merely their approach to dance class (Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2016).

Being increasingly aware of the many shades of feelings and meanings that dance may generate can be considered an element of conscious and socially just dance pedagogy. It is crucial that we as dance educators, take responsibility for our own actions in facilitating these processes and ask: under what conditions can dance be transformative? Is change always a positive phenomenon? What kinds of ethical issues are connected to embodied, potentially transformative activities like dance? (Antilla, 2015, p.79).

Educators responsiveness to areas within dance (including body image, technique, skills, and power dynamics in setting choreography, comparisons and group work) that pose a risk to socio/emotional experience of children particularly requires they practice reflection-in-action (Bright, 2013; Schon, 1983) to be aware of hidden curriculum and to minimize damage to the children's lives. Reflecting on her experience in elite training in ballet and contemporary dance, Harriette describes her inability to truly see the effects on life beyond dance class of traditional pedagogy on herself, friends, and the dance culture when she was 'in it' as a young person. However, she developed more awareness later in adulthood in response to further experiences at university and as a professional dancer. Her experience is a testament that it is the educator's responsibility to be aware for the children. One action taken by the educators illustrating this responsibility is that all the participant educators in this study have chosen to work in the community, an avenue that provides the flexibility and time to practice reflection-in-action for a safe socio-emotional environment during class without the pressures of performativity. While some have significant and prestigious dance training qualifications and potential freedom to teach anywhere they want, none have chosen to teach traditionally in a dance training studio. Reflecting on why she chooses to teach dance in the community context, Harriette said:

*I think the fact that that I have had [a traditional] background has made me more interested in community dance because my end goal is to create a studio or a community where it's not like that... to basically go against a lot of the things that I experienced as I danced. (Harriette)*

With learning about citizenship appears to be dwindling in society, these trained educators choose to challenge the dominant norm and create a community where their expertise and personal awareness is really needed (Bolwell, 1998; O'Sullivan, 1999). Educators also note changes in children today and acknowledge children will continue to change. Part of this shift, as described by Schoone (2017) is "a shift from community to individual orientations" (p. 817). Patti observes a shift in *how they see themselves, and how they communicate to each other. And, how their family dynamics are* even in the last sixteen years. This

illustrates the belief that dance pedagogy may be a vehicle to support children in the changing world and the critical reflection needed to get children connecting beyond learning steps and making meaning relevant to life outside the dance studio too (Barbour, 2016; Giguere, 2011; Shapiro, 1998).

### **Dance for community, accessibility, and inclusion.**

These dance educators have chosen to place themselves in a dance space that is accessible to all, allowing dancers and community to accept a wider view of who should and can dance to remain respectful of the values they pass on to children.

*Dance is for everybody. Dance is part of being a human being, citizenship, agency, reciprocity. (Clare)*

Dance should be accessible to many more people than dance in private studios and therefore is value in community and school-based dance (Amans, 2008; Antilla, 2009, 2015; Barr, 2013; Green, 2000). Dance began as an inherent trait of all peoples, an act of sharing and communicating. Sadly, in the modern era those who have limited money, talent or the wrong body shape for dance settings where exams, competition, and choreography dominate seem to be excluded (Antilla, 2015; H'Doubler, 1940; Wagonner, 2004). Joanna, speaking about the place of community dance said:

*I feel quite strongly about [teaching community dance] because I feel like it's often in community dance that kids get to try dance. Kids like me, whose families wouldn't want a bar of dance school. Because there's too many things that go along with a dance school or a studio for some people. Whereas dance in a community hall feel a little bit less of, um, they're entering the world that they might not know much about or that they might not want to be entering, because of the competition, the exams, the paraphernalia that goes along with dance studios and dance schools. Community classes don't have that. (Joanna)*

The choice to teach in the community brings and offers dance access and illustrates an understanding of the context-specificity of community dance

offerings. Here classes are less controlled for age group, ability, or levels of experience because 'everyone can dance' (Amans, 2008; Barr, 2013; Green, 2000). Students come from all backgrounds and accepting all these diverse needs shows a strong value that is rarely found in elite dance circles (Antilla, 2009). Building a sense of acceptance in community can be modelled to the children as participants in a democratic dance class where group opportunities to dance with and value others with different skill, strength, or ability facilitates life skills such as respect, contribution, collaboration, and awareness of their wider community (Amans, 2008; Antilla, 2015; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Frichtel, 2017). Group work and the use of peer feedback contributes positively to learning and community in a diverse dance class (Chian, 2015; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010).

*They are encouraged to work together in groups at the end of class. This teaches them useful skills how to deal with each other, how to make compromises, how to prevent people being excluded from the decision process and how to work through tough situations. Sometimes they end up in groups that don't work well together but they somehow have to find their way through it. This is in some classes a continuous work in progress and a challenge for them, but I do expect all dancers to be able to work with everyone in class. Inclusion is important. And hopefully this attitude will filter through to their life out of class and help them when they grow up. (Helene)*

Teaching dance for community and inclusivity is an alternative idea to pedagogy in dance training but suggestions from the literature identify that this is key to transformative meaning making on an individual and shared level (Antilla, 2015). "Dance instils self-discipline and focus to achieve a personal best, as well as encourage communication, creativity, and collaboration. Dance is both inclusive of all in the community, as well as a location for personal excellence" (Koff, 2015, p.7). Therefore, dancing for community does not take away from the possibility for physical performance and excellence (Green, 2000). However, dancers need not and should not feel they must reach technical success if that is not their desire, and community values of respect and inclusion need not be forgotten (Amans, 2008; Green, 2000).

Reflection would be necessary to deal with the inclusiveness of such classes, with dancers from many walks of life and contexts who attend (Graham et al., 2013). In my personal experience, community dance participants are often transient, and this means a syllabus or set skill-based curriculum would not be appropriate and would exclude dancers coming in or at various ages and abilities (Schoone, 2017) Thus, maintaining inclusiveness is no easy task, the literature describing the pedagogical skills needed to achieve this, and several highlight higher education as a pathway for this discovery (Barr, 2013). Teachers...

need knowledge and skills if they are truly to have the freedom to create and construct beyond the most superficial levels. Dance education students [in higher education] need to develop their own skills as dancers and choreographers in order to *appreciate the sense of personal power that comes with competence*, and they need to develop the pedagogical skills to help others find their own power (Stinson, 2016/first published in 1991, p. 27).

Further, "engaging tertiary dance teaching students in critical reflection fosters positive self-perception, professional identity, and self-efficacy and promotes in them the development of curiosity, creativity and innovation, enabling them to respond to a range of teaching contexts" (Huddy & Stevens, 2016, p. 69). To teach responsively to diversity in the classroom, dance educators need to be well educated and trained in dance beyond technique, able to see issues relating to anatomy, child development, dance psychology have a wide vocabulary and knowledge of dance elements for creativity, choreography, history, and culture (Gilbert, 2005; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010).

In this research, several participants have completed teacher training which enables their class management skills to help with accommodating an inclusive dance class. The dance educators also utilize professional development including tertiary education, attending technique class, utilizing mentors, and reading as a way to feed themselves in the arts in order to keep their skills up and research interests they might use to meet diverse children's needs, and professional development (Werbouck, 2004). This professional development maintains awareness of current trends in dance within their chosen genre, and

additional genres they can create within. It must be noted that contexts are not the same between these educators as some teach rurally, some in inner cities, and attract different communities of New Zealanders, with each group made up of different economic, cultural, or age groups. Therefore, just as the values of the community of dancers vary from context to context, and the needs and expectations of the dance educator also vary. Reflective practice then enables the educators to teach to their specific context (Graham et al., 2013).

*It's just totally in response to the kids that walk through that door. (Patti)*

### **Voice of the child.**

To teach critically for life development, challenging the hidden curriculum and the power relations of passive students with an authoritative teacher, and being aware of subsequent experiences of exclusion, means considering the voice of the child, as is discussed by the dance educators in this research and in the literature (Bucek, 1992; Coe, 2003; Giguere, 2011; Melchior, 2015; Sansom, 2011; Stinson, 2016).

*Image of the child is another one of those things, so how you view the child... as a passive empty vessel to be filled... they're not cute, they are a citizen who is full of potential and you really need to find a way to bring that potential forward. So that's my key value is how to draw out the person and respect the value of that person. (Clare)*

Reflection-in-action (Bright, 2013; Schon, 1983) is utilized to offer opportunities to bring out the child's voice. While some teacher led tasks, exercises and choreographies were present in all classes I observed the educators also responded to the unique needs of individuals by changing prompts of tasks to meet the interests, moods, and energy levels of the dancers. Educators started each class with circle time for welcoming introductions and most children felt comfortable to talk. From the start of class their voice is welcomed in to the space. Students were able to choose their groups, character, music (in several cases), or the prop, or prompt for dance making. Engaging in dialogue, the willingness to be responsive to children's input sometimes ahead of teachers' assumptions of needs illustrates

that the children are seen as "competent experts in issues related to their own lives" and are provided the space to share what they need in order to make the class content relevant to their lives (Barbour, 2011, 2016; Battersby & Battersby, 2018; Giguere, 2011, p. 87; Melchior, 2015). Several educators inserted improvisational moments within a teacher led choreography to allow for the child to insert their voice, and all educators allowed for child-led dance making. "Critical judgements based entirely on the teacher's criteria undercut the dancers' opportunity to take agency or control over the work and make it an expression of their own experience" (Giguere, 2011, p. 86). The educators I spoke with and observed had several moments where the plan was ditched to allow for the children to use their voices (literal and figuratively). Helene included a verbal activity with her six-seven-year olds, combining movement and vocalization, an uncommon move in dance class that was met with trepidation from some dancers not used to make loud sounds. However, after a short while the dancers opened to the idea. Surely, this exercise will contribute to the empowerment of the child's voice in the classroom, balancing the power dynamic typical in a 'silent' dance class. The educators "let go of preconceived notions about dance- share[d] the power [and] let them say "I am a dancer" (Battersby & Battersby, 2018, np.).

Additionally, they utilized a variety of teaching strategies that support diverse learning styles and a variety of styles of movement to suit diverse children, challenging the standardized nature of traditional pedagogy (Garber, 2010; Graham et al., 2013; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). This also included the use of play and exploration rather than mere repetition that Joyce (1984) says, does not work for intrinsic and meaningful learning of dance skills.

Teachers need to avoid methods that emphasize rote imitation. Instead they should use methods that encourage exploring and understanding underlying concepts of dance movement, choreography, and teaching. Even dance technique should be taught as a way to empower students, allowing them to accomplish the artistic challenges they choose rather than training them to become obedient, unquestioning followers (Stinson, 2016/first published in 1991, p. 27).

The educators used manual feedback/correction, demonstration, imagery,



partnering, props, space, music, and verbal description to aid in teaching in response to the children's age appropriate needs (Battersby & Battersby, 2018; Joyce, 1984; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). Using exploration and play and several opportunities for creative dance making, the educators in this study all enabled the children to voice their own themes, reflections, and dreams through their own way of moving. Giguere (2011) discusses the voice of the child as constructed by children's culture: their own culture that they create as they play without limits imposed by adults. "When children are given the authority to make decisions in the creative process, they readily construct embodied narratives, meaning dances containing plots and characters, as well as abstract expressions of meaning" (Giguere, 2011, p. 86). When teachers afford children this authority they are free to try new ideas, take risks, experiment, and rebel in a safe place to explore feelings. This is a vital social process of meaning making for self-power, problem-solving, resilience, and identity (Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001; Giguere, 2011). Barbour (2011) states further that "as a dancer, I attempt to understand my world through embodied exploration" (p.29). Exploration included dance making which Barbour & Mitchley (2005) describe as a process that facilitates "embodied knowing, or a way of analysing, understanding, and resolving personal experiences when embodied through movement" (p.8). This voice is further cultivated with opportunities for performance and subsequent group feedback at the end of class where dancers develop a sense of ownership and belonging as their expressive offering is accepted and enjoyed by their peers, a communication vital for human need (Amans, 2008).

### **Safe skills for communication and expression.**

The overarching value of dance education for 'community' enables teachers to teach dance as a vehicle for **communication** and **expression** of the child's voice (Amans, 2008; Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001, 2007; Bucek, 1992; Giguere, 2011; Koff, 2000; Sansom, 2011; Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2015).

Dance education does not have complex mastery as its goal. Rather, it enables every child, regardless of physical capabilities, to be expressive in a non-verbal manner-- to explore and incorporate the physical self as a functioning part of the whole social being (Koff, 2000, p.27).

This value is shared between all five educators who all used these words in discussion. My observations similarly supported that communication and expression were prioritized as objectives in their classes.

*Dance is embodied expression of self. It's not going through the motions of movement. It must connect with the person. Senses must be involved, spirit must be sparked. A sense of connection to self, others, and environment... I'm always interested in how dance influences human condition and helps us be the best version of ourselves. (Clare)*

*If they are learning just to move dynamically and expressively, then the movement is in a garden where it can grow, where it can come from them. (Patti)*

All educators see value in providing some teacher-led instruction and functional technique that allows for safe expression, seeing the need for balancing skills-based progress and embodied artistry (Ambrosio, 2015; Barbour, 2011, 2016; Burnidge, 2012; Chen & Cone, 2015; Dyer, 2009; Stinson, 2016). Motor skills and technique with additional attention to dynamics and dance elements remain strong values. Skills and technique, "the ability to use physical movements effectively" (Joyce, 1984, p. 1), are not thrown out just because the focus is on dancing for expression and communication to support a good life as a citizen of a community. However, the approach to learning and using technique is changed.

Technique for children relates to dance elements and fundamental skills rather than detailed and stylized techniques and this foundation is essential to transformative experiences as dancers can use skills and movement vocabulary to increase creativity and expression (Joyce, 1984; Koff, 2000). Educators in this instance address technique from a different perspective because of the risks to self-worth and voice when the aesthetic alone is the focus (Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010).

*In my classes there's less focus on technique and getting it exactly right. That doesn't mean that I don't encourage them to learn safe dance*

*practice, but I focus on other things to increase their skills than just technique. So less time to go over and over the same exercise to get it right. For young ones I find it more important to enjoy dance and learn little snippets of technique in a more playful way. (Helene).*

*I just think the technique comes anyway. And it's just if I am telling them to do things a certain way, then I'm objectifying them. And I'm, in a sense controlling their experience of how they are in their bodies. The way that I prefer to approach it is to be in your body, understand how it feels to move and once you have clarity about what you are doing then you can start to focus more on technique. (Patti)*

Of course, educators admit that some dancers enjoy technique and feel safer being told what to do rather than being vulnerable in creating and communicating, as this is what they have grown accustomed to (Barbour, 2011; Barr, 2013; Burnidge, 2012; Dyer, 2009). Many enjoy competition and revel in the challenge of physical mastery and meeting the expectations of the teacher's gaze, therefore gaining satisfaction from following a teacher (Giguere, 2011). This creates a "peculiar paradox-- feelings of liberation within an oppressive context" (Shapiro, 1999, p. 130), where dancers may want what is not best for them, and here it is the educator's responsibility to maintain intentional values to support dancer's development, and this requires more effort in teaching dancers how to think beyond the steps. Ambrosio (2015) states "some students have a natural curiosity, an active imagination, and a strong intuitive sense, whereas other students need to be taught how to think" (p.11). Regarding the particular challenge of teaching children who really want to be technically successful in professional dance (perhaps beyond recreational dance), Harriettanne discussed how she would proceed to teach. In response to me asking Harriettanne if she would need to use traditional methods, she stated:

*My approach might be slightly different but that wouldn't change the values or the general feeling. I still think that no matter how good you want to be or no matter how hard you work you still have to be happy so I'd still have the same [values]. (Harriettanne)*

Harriettanne would still aim to teach for self-worth and artistry and the confidence to express, while utilizing her experience and technical expertise to develop a 'skilled dancer' (Dyer, 2009; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). She believes this can be done, contrary to the beliefs of some, and uses reflection to help it happen. Teachers value play and exploration to facilitate intrinsic interest in the basic elements and technique of dance learning. Technique then serves as a method of body control, with teachers teaching safe dance practices, functional movement, alignment, and coordination (Ashley, 2002; Joyce, 1984; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). "Once students have become comfortable with these basic elements, they can combine the elements to express and explore more complex ideas, as this curriculum is developed and experienced, the possibilities of movements for each individual student become broader. Once freedom of movement exploration has been established, dance education may branch off into dance training as the student refines his or her expression" (Koff, 2000, p28). Educators provide opportunities for elemental movement gained through exploration to grow into more detailed work. "Technical development need not be hampered by using this approach. Skills work in technical can naturally result from children inventing movements that need refining for performance" (Giguere, 2011, p. 88). Bond & Stinson (2007) say that "confidence is enhanced when students experience a sense of mastery" (p. 171). My observations illuminated the honing and polishing of the dancer's movement for greater physical clarity and dynamic for expressive emotional clarity; outcomes that support meaningful transformations for building a good life. Clare commented that she aims for:

*A competent expressive communicator through movement. An ability to move with skill and agility, expressing their inner world on the dance floor. As well as problem solving with others, to create movement story that communicates the groups individual and collective ideas... (Clare)*

*A pedestrian person does not have the range that a trained dancer has. The chances for a trained dancer to transform physically, emotionally, mentally is much greater like because of their technique, than a person, or children without much technical training who have just a pedestrian*

*range of movement or a natural range of movement... So I think that to develop their consciousness... the way of using their body as much as you can gives them more range and more ability. (Joanna)*

*I think the motor skills mean the child is incorporating the use of different senses, different ways of moving and thinking with their muscles and bones, mind and spirit. This in itself is transformation. The more senses involved the more meaningful and magical the experience. The more the body remembers and is transformed. (Clare)*

Remembering the strong impression kinaesthetic memory has on the whole being, participation in dance then is a gateway to embodied meaning making (Antilla, 2015; Nielsen, 2015; Shapiro, 1998). While each dance educator prioritised skills differently, the body and what it is doing is an important part of transformation. The motives for engagement in learning are not just technical mastery, but life skills and joy (Greene, 1995; Schoone, 2017). "Underlying all that is one other hope, that the performance imparts the kinaesthetic delight--the joy that dancers all experience" (Kauffman, 2010, p.100). Engaging children's voices in the classroom recognises that "aiming at the totality of body, mind, and spirit keeps a technique class a dance class," as the children already know how to dance, "the technical details are filled in as they progress" (Joyce, 1984, p. 15).

### **Engagement for intrinsically motivated learning.**

Reflection-in-action requires educators to be skilled at assessing the needs of the dancers, including physical and emotional needs. "What happens in a dance class must relate immediately to the child's life. The activity must involve the child fully, mentally and spiritually as well as physically" (Joyce, 1984, p. 2). Awareness by educators of mood and human nature in groups and competition that naturally arises as bodies are visually compared, enables teachers to manage emotions and mediate situations to minimize risk of negative self-image or crushing of child's voice and self-worth. Educator responsiveness to the socio/emotional well-being of the children keeps the children **happy and engaged in learning**. Engagement then motivates the dancers to learn technique and the confidence to use it to communicate their voice (Bond & Stinson, 2007).

Expressing their voices enables dancers to feel validated and alive, growing confidence and empowerment (Giguere, 2011).

Finally, in an education environment that increasingly equates educational achievement with qualification completion, tutors remind us that achievement encompasses a broad range of social, physical and cultural attainments that cannot be codified to a qualification credit... in contrast, achievement in alternative education centres includes students present and engaged in learning, becoming physically healthy and developing prosocial attitudes (Schoone, 2017, p.817).

The steps of the reflective cycle support the educator's development of their capacity for responsiveness which can then be utilized during reflection in action. Within their dance classes educators can identify issues, work out solutions, and plan or facilitate tasks that make sure group work and technical learning is passed on in safe environment that supports confidence and self-worth through appropriate challenges (Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). Additionally, responsiveness to diverse needs of the children, including asking questions and developing children's interests, enables educators to facilitate engaging task-based activities with relevant prompts the children can understand and take ownership of, ensuring they know why they are dancing and how they are learning (Ambrosio, 2015; Graham et al., 2013; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010). The child dancer's awareness of why they dance involves critical thinking skills, "purposeful, self-regulatory judgement, which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference," moving participation in dance beyond mimicry, and this supports not only meaningful expression but helps dancers better grasp skills (Ambrosio, 2015, p.8). Harriettanne gave small prompts in the form of non-leading questions or by trying their actions on herself and 'freezing' for further instruction in order to motivate her dancers to critically examine their choreography in form and expression themselves rather than rely solely upon her interpretations, facilitating decision making (Antilla, 2015). This was not only an observededly useful teaching skill but create a sense of fun and play between the teacher and students.

Using play to teach technique is an alternative approach to the traditional

dance training model and allows children to engage differently (Battersby & Battersby, 2018; Coe, 2003, Joyce, 1984; Sansom, 2011). The literature acknowledges that it takes a long time to train the body to achieve skills (Joyce, 1984). However, these educators' values do not require the traditionalist need for the trained body to develop fast, rather supporting the notion that skills should come intrinsically. Confident, intrinsic efforts enhance technique, maybe slower than rote, repetitive, and command style technique but benefit the dancer's artistry, expression, and interest to remain in dance (Ashley, 2013; Green, 2007).

*If they're enjoying themselves, they'll want to come back and learn more skills. If they are happy and relaxed, they'll open up more in their dancing and feel less inhibited, ready to push themselves into unknown territories and try out new things that might be slightly weird for them but gets them to increase their movement vocabularies. (Helene)*

The dance educators used themes, games (physical and board), drawing, props, characters, storytelling, music, and verbal tricks (such as alliteration, rhyming, themeing) to bring play to the classroom. Helene used imagery and alliteration of the letter 's' to engage her youngest dancers to move, and Clare used flowers, buzzings sounds, and rhymes ("*bend your knees please bees*") to draw children into her imaginative world of bees, facilitating the teaching of leadership and direct and indirect pathways. Joanna encouraged her dancers to explore movement with large sheets of paper, illiciting excitement and play from most children.

In my observations of the dance classes and from personal experience, joyful engagement is seen through the smiles and friendship in the classroom, confidence and vulnerability to explore something new or challenging. Children have fewer behavioural filters and therefore often clearly express when dance class is not engaging enough for them. The ability to recognize these signs requires awareness of as much of the class as possible, (admittedly a multitasking challenge) and ability to follow the children's cues. To fully get to know the children's responses becomes an art (Battersby and Battersby, 2018). Dance educators utilize responsive reflection-in-action and draw on professional technical experience and skills to assess dancers' needs and use a variety of methods to accommodate them.

*My yoga teacher training helped to develop this as a teaching tool and because of my experience in dance teaching I find I am able to read bodies pretty well. Some days it's a focus on flexibility sometimes release, sometimes dynamic expression...I try to mix it up so the self-inquiry is stimulated. So, the dancer is looking for something new in something they think they might know and understand fully – but there's always something new to discover. (Patti)*

Responsiveness/reflection in action is utilized here as a method of assessment of the capabilities of each child and educators can teach a variety of dance skills and offer experiences that are appropriate for the age and ability level. Not only is this vital for safety but also important for the success of the dancer in terms of enabling them to be challenged enough to be engaged with new discoveries, and further transformations. Appropriately scaffolded learning experiences, given at the right time and with appropriate progression, challenge the dancer with the probability for success, enough to not become frustrated with feelings of failure (Bond & Stinson, 2007; Duda & Quested, 2011; Mainwaring & Krasnow, 2010).

*If they get joy out of dance, have the feeling that they learn something and are being encouraged. Being given challenges that they can cope with so they feel they've achieved something. (Helene)*

This is a challenge in diverse community dance classes, but educators feel confident in their skills and reflection to meet the challenge, trusting in the child's voice, and their ability to 'tell them' what is needed. The educators demonstrated adjusting their class activities during class observations in response to the needs and engagement levels of the children, moving on to another task when children seemed bored, distant, or energy levels were dropping (or escalating in a negative way).

*If I see stop signs or pauses or people drawing back or whatever that's just another indication to me to adjust, you know. Try another way that's*



*better for now. In this time in this place, now. (Patti)*

Adjustments facilitate better opportunities for engagement, and therefore transformation. Helene sees transformation as increased confidence in her dancers, doing things they wouldn't normally do, and the outcome is better behaviour in her class, almost as if the children have caught on to the reason why they dance. They work happily together and feel confident to do what they are asked to do for their own intrinsic reasons (Duda & Quested, 2011). Her dancers particularly impressed me with their passion for storytelling, where their process of collaborative group choreography and their performance demonstrated deep engagement with their peers, characters, emotions, narrative and audience (these kids were as young as six years old). Giguere (2011) discusses creativity and dance making as an opportunity for children to be most engaged when they feel that intrinsic ownership. Joanna, too describes intrinsic motivations, movement as a positive sign post:

*I've definitely seen amazing things that kids have done and usually there is... It is them when things are coming together for them, on their body, their way... I find setting up those improvisational structures that's when I see this sort of thing. Because I can step back a bit. I've given them a world that they're in, or something that their mind is occupied with, with movement and I've seen amazing things. (Joanna)*

## **Transformative Dance Pedagogy for Cultural Change**

Dance educators in this research see themselves as torch carriers for value systems often less common in the dance world. The "purpose of education is not simply to understand the world but to change it"... that the "intent of the learning shifts from one of learning movement vocabulary for the sake of creating dance to gaining an understanding of the self, others, and the larger world for the possibility of change" (Shapiro, 1998, p.14-15). The choice to teach dance for education and consider objectives beyond traditional dance training challenges the cultural values of society, maintained by those who are not aware of the opportunities of dance education, and the pitfalls associated with extreme

traditional training (particularly for children) or of the hidden curriculum in dance education (Stinson, 2016; Shapiro, 1998). According to H'Doubler (1940) dance is vital to fulfil purposes of education. "The misunderstanding of dance education derives from a cultural prejudice suffered by all of the fine arts, in which the visual and performing arts are perceived as purely performance and entertainment. Their contributions to all other aspects of learning and education are excluded" (Koff, 2000, p.27). The dominant culture (propelled by political forces, markets, and stakeholders) forces the assimilation of new generations to existing values and to participate in traditional ways bringing about learning that affects a whole new generation, and this unfortunately further maintains these values and beliefs in society (Burnidge, 2012; Dewey, 1916; Dyer, 2009; Freire, 1970; Mason, 2017; O'Sullivan, 1999; Tinning, 2008). The educators' positioning within community dance shows their awareness of the value of education for all, beyond the culturally valued expectation of dance training or the idea that dance is just for entertainment (Amans, 2008; Barr, 2013; Green, 2000; Koff, 2000).

Community dance practitioners are often questioned about the legitimacy their practice as there is no regulatory body, syllabus, or curriculum to prove dance is being taught in the 'right' way. Challenges include the expectations of the general cultural context surrounding dance, and the perceived legitimacy of community/recreational dance due to its process of product nature (Barr, 2013). "Parents associate students' ethnic diversity (or social class, on the part of privileged middle-class factions amongst them, in the UK) and radical pedagogies with lower quality education and withdraw their support, leaving the school" (Evans & Davies, 2015, p.4). Even in the New Zealand context, several educators admitted to feeling conscious of the expectations of parents and even children themselves, bringing multiple conflicting voices to the dance room. Some have experienced negative comments and requests from parents to meet cultural ideals. Three out of five particularly seemed to articulate an effect on them, and these were the trained school teachers. Educators seem happy to listen to and consider the needs and suggestions of parents and children, giving them a voice. However, all defended their value system, stating that they know why they teach intentionally and therefore, even when not meeting a parent's expectations they remain strong in what they know to be good for the children. "The pedagogues' roles include looking after children (emotionally, physically, and showing interest

and commitment in what interests the child), creating frameworks for active and challenging communities for children (to assist with their socialisation), contributing to children's development and learning processes and creating frameworks for them to become democratic citizens" (Schoone, 2017, p.818). The dance educators are aware of traditional expectations producing unbalanced power and authority relationships that stifle child's voice (Bucek, 1992; Coe, 2003; Frichtel, 2017; Giguere, 2011; Green, 2007; Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2016). This reflects Werbrouck's (2004) reminder that "the majority of parents have had little or no education in dance themselves... We teach parents that the art of dance is both physical and mental..." (p. 67). Recounting one such experience Harriettanne said:

*I have had that in relation to that way in which the classes are run not being enough, I guess, traditional... I just think that the intense approach that strives for perfection and accuracy does not work for all children. I understand its place, but I don't believe we should have a one size fits all approach to the arts. I'm just talking about the strict structured power dominated nature of traditional teaching pedagogy. (Harriettanne)*

Harriettanne continued to describe her past reflection as influencing her values in support of validating her pedagogy.

*I think I'm a very value orientated person. Even in my life and in my morals and things like that and I'm... they are what they are and that's the way that I plan to run it. And I just think that if at that time I'm happy to discuss it and put forward my point of view as to why I operate the way I do... I've reflected on that... I strongly believe in what we are doing. I don't have any doubt that this is what I believe in so... a parent with pressure is not going to influence that. (Harriettanne)*

Despite the challenges, community dance provides access to dance education, a radical move which New Zealand is in need of (Bolwell, 2014). Community dance education is relatively rare in New Zealand, uncommon in traditional studios, and of low priority with financial and skill aims more

commonplace in studios. Alternatively, due to similar beliefs that the arts are dispensable niceties, schools are not delivering dance education, or it is not taught well (or at all) and often by non-specialist school teachers who lack training in dance (Bolwell, 2014; Cadzow, 2008; Cheeseman, 2009; Koff, 2015; Minton, 2010). In quality community dance education settings there is a trained individual teaching who is freed from policy-driven curriculum, or examination-focused syllabus, who is more able to challenge traditional pedagogy. Intentionally teaching to the objectives they believe in, informed by strong values articulated through reflection, self-awareness enables the educators to attempt to stimulate positive transformation and keep dancers aware of negative ones, in order for them to adapt or change their pedagogy (Ashley, 2013; Barbour, 2011, 2016; Buck, 2015; Burnidge, 2012; Graham et al., 2013; Sansom, 2015; Stinson, 2016; Turpeinen, 2015; Warburton, 2008).

I suggest that different teachers are teaching for transformation in slightly different ways. This premise assumes that there is no one right way to engage the child dancer in transformation. However, as noted in the literature review, there is research to support the negative and positive aspects of any dance pedagogy with wide discussion on values that pervade each one (Coe, 2003; Stinson, 2016). In the interpretivist paradigm that I am working under there can be no single truth but many realities that are context-specific, and the diverse responses of this group illustrate that (Krauss, 2005; Markula and Silk, 2011). The dance educators in this study respond to the demands of teaching dance that is aligned with current research by attending technique class, taking dance papers at university, keeping up with the literature, and maintaining mentored relationships. These educators are thus professionally trained and educated with qualifications, continually seeking knowledge for informed teaching (Graham et al., 2013).

Reflection is essential in meeting challenges in this alternative, child-centred pedagogy (Antilla, 2009; Barbour, 2011; Bolwell, 1998; Buck, 2015; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Dyer, 2009; Graham et al., 2013; Sansom, 2015; Shaprio, 1998; Stinson, 2016; Tembrioti & Tsangaridou, 2014; Warburton, 2008). These educators attempt to resist or challenge the negative impact of the dance world and increase positive influences according to their values. I would thus argue their objectives are aimed towards transformation. This does not mean that they will succeed with every child. The reflective process described by the

participants paints a picture of community dance educators continually trying to improve, re-examining values repeatedly to better serve their students and in turn make a better world, individually and collectively (Buck, 2015; Risner, 2017). What serving their students looks like may include: giving them the space to gain self-confidence and body awareness that they can use elsewhere in life; encouraging dancers to speak and act with an authentic voice and feeling they have rights to the power to do so (Freire, 1970; Shapiro, 1999); creating and innovating rather than simply copying and conforming (Coe, 2012; Clark & Markula, 2017); cooperating and celebrating others rather than focusing only inward on their own abilities; becoming citizens, and motivators of change (Antilla, 2015; Barbour, 2016; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Shapiro, 2016; O'Sullivan, 1999). Perhaps these experiences will create a generation of people who once again use movement as a medium to tell stories, communicate difficult experiences, and connect for self-understanding (Stinson, 2016). Perhaps this will allow dance genres that have long been dismissed in favour of Western dance becoming valued, again, and cultural dance forms being considered fine arts, and dance belonging to all again, not just those with training (H'Doubler, 1940; Shapiro, 2008)? Perhaps this will allow for equal opportunities, and parents who support their sons as well as their daughters to dance?

As more children are given these opportunities to experience the transformative benefits of dance education, the traditional cycle of pedagogy and hidden curriculum may erode, and so cultural values have the potential to change. Moments of humiliation, abuse, or injury that affect the way the dancer sees herself or himself and the world, could be minimized. Positive values might then cycle through the generations and support change in the cultural beliefs held around dance, particularly in Westernized dance (Shapiro, 1998, 2008).

These dance educators are hopeful. Their resolve and strength in their values comes because of their own transformations, reflection and subsequent strong value systems that inform their pedagogy. The experiences children have as participants in dance classes of any kind will be diverse, as diverse as the individuals that experience them, but using reflection brings awareness to cycles of teaching that can minimize negative outcomes. The hidden curriculum (Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2016) can also be brought to light. These educators represent a small group within the dance world. I suggest their efforts offer our

communities another way to see and participate in dance, a way that is positively going to help the next generation, and perhaps the world. "Ultimately, a transformative pedagogy through dance is sought where children and adults work collaboratively toward a more just and equitable society" (Sansom, 2011, p. 112).

In summary, the five dance educators observed and interviewed in this research project utilized reflective practice in order to teach intentionally their class objectives which were informed by values that originated from personal transformative experiences (good or bad). In response to the research question: *How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance*, I have discussed how reflective practice supports transformational experiences in their classes when educators' objectives and values are in line with those suggested by the literature as facilitating transformation. The following chapter will offer conclusions from the findings of this research project.



## Chapter 7: Conclusions

### General Conclusion

In response to the research question: How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate transformative experiences in children's dance, I firstly confirm that each educator who participated in this research project demonstrated reflective practice as an essential part of their pedagogy. Based on the findings of this research I conclude that this participation in reflection enables these educators to remain responsive in action as they teach, to critically examine their practice, and to construct meaning and understanding of themselves and develop solutions to issues relating to class objectives in order to teach intentionally (Buck, 2015; Burnidge, 2012; Coe, 2003; Dyer, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2017; Graham et al., 2013; Miles, 2011; Risner, 2009, 2017; Stevens & Huddy, 2017; Sansom, 2015; Shapiro, 1998; Stinson, 2016; Tembrioti & Tsangaridou, 2014; Warburton, 2008). This project drew out strong personal and cultural values that relate to the literature discussion insisting that embodied values are what guide pedagogy, and subsequently revealed that values related to the hidden curriculum tend to cycle through generations (Dragon, 2015; Frichtel, 2017; Shapiro, 1998, 1999; Stinson, 2016). In linking their personal transformative experiences shared with me in interviews with dance class outcomes, the dance educators own transformative experiences clearly had a profound effect on their values, life path, and current pedagogy; some of which so personally ground breaking they could be considered life revelations (Antilla, 2015; Stinson, 2016). Therefore, the values and subsequent class objectives they inform hold the power to what type of experiences dancers will have in dance class and what they will learn (Buck, 2015; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Stinson, 2016). Values determine whether there will be positive or negative experiences and how balance will be facilitated. Therefore, to conclude I must edit the original research question... to critically ask: How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand utilize reflective practice to facilitate positive transformative experiences in children's dance? Of course, what positive transformation is is complex. However, the suggestions in the literature are very clear and have been discussed in this thesis.



A shared understanding between the educators of the meaning of the term 'transformation' facilitated an enquiry into how educators taught for transformation, based on this shared understanding of positive transformation as those *shared moments of kinesthetic memory, where the dancer is one with their body, mind, the space, and others and leading to change or meaningful growth*. To facilitate these moments, the educators' objectives supported positive socio/emotional wellbeing and technical skills for safety and expression (Antilla, 2009; Coe, 2003; Graham, 2002). These objectives were informed by several values including dance for citizenship, the idea of dance affecting the whole life, community and inclusion, valuing the child's voice, dance for communication and expression, and facilitating engaging pedagogy for life-long lovers of dance. These objectives and values are in line with positive transformation in the literature (Antilla, 2015; Bond & Stinson, 2000/2001; Coe, 2003; Graham, 2002; Shapiro, 1998). Therefore, I can conclude that these educators aim for positive transformation through their pedagogy.

These dance educators utilize reflection to critically examine what they are teaching, why and how these choices affect the dancers' learning experience, with care to teach for a personal development to support a good life. Reflection enables them to conscientiously and carefully assess what messages they are sending children as they teach through the objectives they set and the pedagogy they use, including the environment they create (Coe, 2003; Stinson, 2016). The most influential part of the reflective process according to the educators is the reflection in action process where timely, context dependent needs are identified and actioned. As children are impressionable, the participants are conscious of this fact and negotiate the hidden curriculum through participation in phases two through three of the reflective cycle (Figure 1 and 2), by appraising their teaching, and their own personal experiences in dance, life, education, and by seeking further knowledge and understanding of self from further university study, the literature, mentors, the arts, technique class, creativity, and culture. Participation in reflection helps educators appraise and articulate their values and teach intentionally what they mean to teach, and in doing so increases the chance that children will experience positive transformation (Coe, 2003).

Pedagogy of this nature contrasts with traditional pedagogy which is still common in dance training and education due to cultural and political forces such

as westernization, globalization, and neoliberalism (Antilla, 2009; Garrett & Meiners, 2015; Shapiro, 2008). Such forces create continuing cultural ideas and systems that maintain traditional pedagogy in studios and relegate a wonderful but underused dance curriculum into the shadows of New Zealand schools (Bolwell, 2014; Cheeseman, 2009; Sansom, 2011; Snook & Buck, 2014a, 2014b). The educators of this study illustrate their place in a growing movement to challenge the traditional cycles of learning, teaching, and citizenship (Frichtel, 2017; Green, 2007; Greene, 1995; Shapiro, 2016; Stinson, 2016). Participation in this movement is exemplified by the change in pathway of all these educators to teaching in a community context and to remain teaching in the community amidst other opportunities that may have provided more money or prestige in the dance world. Community dance classes offer flexibility, an opportunity for educators to be responsive to the needs of their particular context and this element greatly enhances their ability to utilize reflection so responsively, particularly "reflection in action," and to prioritize critically aware objectives over traditionally valued objectives (Amans, 2008). Therefore, the community context represents a key element in the function of transformative pedagogy. But more so, the values of these likeminded dance educators are driving change: change in the lives of children, change in the lives of society, one dance class at a time.

## **Limitations**

The limitations of this study include that the research was undertaken with a small group of educators who were mostly from the same region and studied with similar educators themselves. Therefore, similar values passed on from generation to generation are likely. I would have liked to have a more diverse group of educators, from other parts of New Zealand outside this regional group. However, this is indicative of the current context in New Zealand where the circle is quite small, particularly with community dance.

An additional limitation was the time spent in classes observing. Observations were shorter than I would have liked. For participant observation I would have liked to delve into the class culture more with additional visits to each educator's classes. Due to travel and distance this was not possible. However, to ameliorate this I was able to contact educators via email to ask questions. The participants were very helpful and willing to share with me. The process of

communication remained ongoing and educators continued the conversation via follow up questions, and with more follow up questions as time went on.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Findings from this research project would be greater supported by a wider pool of educators that cover wider and more varying contexts within New Zealand, with a focus on increased opportunities for participant observations and the ability to see further details of reflective practice by looking at reflective notes, journals, and embodied experiences during the reflective phases between classes. Additionally, exploration of reflective process and learning for both teacher and children over time would be a valuable area of exploration from this research.

Additionally, the challenge to find dance educators to participate in this study has interested me since it happened.

Further study into the choices of dance educators to teach in any context (including studio dance and school teaching) would be an interesting and valuable insight to the state of dance education and dance values in New Zealand. Several, non-patriating educators who had moved contexts, disclosed reasons that are quite telling of the cultural values held around dance and the opportunities for educators. A study into this would be helpful in illuminating those cultural values and challenging them, a catalyst for change. It would also be interesting to see how dance educators (particularly those who confess to teach child-centered pedagogy) in studio or school settings are able to utilize reflection to facilitate transformation in a similar manner to the community context, and how much negotiating of values goes on in comparison.

### **Implications**

It was always my hope to challenge dance educators within reach of this thesis to think about their own values and encourage them to critically weigh up what they are sharing with their students (intentionally or unintentionally) as a result of pedagogy. It is my hope that this research can contribute to a growing awareness of the hidden curriculum and motivate educators, participants, and supporters

(parents and community) of dance to consider the worth of alternative pedagogies, and to practice reflection in order to question what they know, what they value, and whether what they are sharing lines up with those ideals. This research represents a platform for the voices of five exemplary dance educators to voice their experiences highlighting reflexivity for transformational pedagogy in practice. It is my hope that others will appreciate their expert voice and consider their place in the community as valuable to dance in all contexts. While it has already been suggested, community dance provides an appropriate avenue for flexibility and reflection in action. Reflective practice can and should be applied to all dance offerings as far as they can be implemented.

Regarding social change, the current cultural expectations and understandings that surround dance, what it is and how it should be taught in New Zealand could be influenced by research such as this. Perhaps this research will add confidence to educators elsewhere and in New Zealand to teach intentionally to facilitate transformations in learners and subsequently in society.

### **Personal reflections.**

As a by-product of participation in this research project I have been given ample opportunity to appraise my own dance and life experiences and subsequent values, heeding Antilla's (2009) call for dance educators to research the meanings of dance experience to improve practice (p. 201). As I have taught dance classes myself I have spent significant time attempting to negotiate my values with my actions and have made changes in order to better walk the talk. I have also felt at times that I needed to reconsider, weighing up seemingly conflicting values and having to come to a compromise, as I know I can not achieve everything at once. In this way, in my pursuit to improve my practice, I believe I have gained great insight. In reflection myself I see how my own unique journey as a participant in dance has developed me and nurtured my voice.

My fortune to experience dance organically through my own ethnic dance in a community and whanau setting enabled me to understand dance was a part of me, us, something that we do together. Perhaps this is why I view dance as a language, a history to be passed down, a service, and gifts to share. I am certain that this contributes to my love for folk/ethnic and social dance and my desire to teach in the community where movement is accessible to all, in a way they feel

dance belongs to them, and where whanau can participate. Perhaps this is why I include cultural dances in my classes with a healthy dose of rhythm to connect us to the earth and each other in unison. My years in the studio as a child were brief and six-year-old me would be surprised that one day ballet would speak to my soul and that I would one day discover great talent for rhythmic footwork, later to be packaged as American clog, Irish dance, and Spanish flamenco (one of my favourite styles of dance). Perhaps this is why I insist that all children are dancers even at beginner levels, that all children should participate no matter how talented, in a variety of styles and not just the culturally expected ones. I do believe there is a way to move to suit anyone at any stage, and that this can change! I suggest these values have motivated me to base my dance classes around several genres, including the basics of ballet and contemporary, but involving hip hop, world styles, and lots of footwork.

I realise that my experience with dance in public school is more positive than most, possibly affording more opportunities in the early 2000's than current children have due to curriculum changes in the recent past. These experiences, particularly with performance and creative dance making taught me how to be a leader, how to have a voice and impact others where normally I was quite shy. I can see that leadership is a strong objective for me and so I aim to inject each one of my dance classes with opportunities to lead by performing confidently and sharing their creations and lead by encouraging others to do so as well.

Lastly, I realize that I value skills as I acknowledge that I would not have had the experiences within dance to perform or participate in companies. Perhaps these moments are what lead me to help create a future in dance for children so that they can experience life changing moments in their own “Croatia.” Therefore, I want to instil in my dancers enough skill to support them to advance, of course at their own pace and with enough engagement to want to continue dancing.

Most importantly I want to share this with children, to help them experience dance in a way that connects them to a life of embodied knowing. I hope that this research will improve the opportunities for our people to dance and our teachers to better support their children with intentional pedagogy that will result in transformations. I desire positive transformations for children and for

society as expectations and possibilities of dance are widened. Because why else do we teach?

*He tangata, he tangata, he tangata...*  
*it is the people, it is the people, it is the people.*



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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

### Research Information Sheet

**Researchers:** Liahona Walus

(Candidate for Master of Sport, Health and Human Performance)

**Contact Details:** [liawalus@gmail.com](mailto:liawalus@gmail.com) or 02108447500

**Research Title:** Reflective practice for transformational learning in children's community/recreational dance.

**Supervisor:** Associate Professor Dr. Karen Barbour

*Kia Ora, I am a community/recreational dance educator located in Hamilton. I am in the process of study to deepen my understanding of quality pedagogy for children's dance. I am interested in learning from experienced dance educators to observe first-hand the pedagogy for transformational learning of motor skills in dance. In my research I have developed a keen interest in reflective practice and how our values drive a process for planning that determines pedagogy. As you are one of these educators, I would like to learn about your values, process, and pedagogy!*

**Participant Involvement:** As a participant you will likely spend 2-3 hours actively involved in the research project. You will need to:

1. Provide signed consent.
2. Gain prior assent/consent for children to be present in an observed class and prepare children for the visiting researcher.
3. Provide one lesson plan for the specific class I will attend. The lesson plan can be in the form you choose, there is no required format.
4. Teach your dance class as normal with the addition of myself observing inconspicuously in order to minimize distraction to the children.
5. Participate in a semi-structured interview (I will ask you open ended questions about your lesson plan and observations on pedagogy in action) after the lesson. Focus topics will include dance education values, community/recreational dance, motor skill pedagogy, transformative pedagogy, and reflective practice.
6. You will receive a typed transcript of the interview and the opportunity to edit information within 3 weeks. This transcript may include follow-up questions as brought to light through the interview in order to further illuminate upon your pedagogical process.

**The Research Question/Outcomes:** How do experienced community/recreational dance educators in Aotearoa New Zealand use reflective practice to facilitate positive transformative learning while teaching motor dance skills to children?

We will discuss pedagogical approaches in children's dance and discuss whether transformational learning occurs in these dance classes with emphasis on motor skill learning. We will also investigate reflective practice and how this is used in pedagogy.

NOTE: Findings will be published as a Masters Thesis made available to the public domain via University online and in hard copy at Student Commons. In addition, the researcher may publish findings in an academic journal or as a conference presentation in the fields surrounding sport, art, dance education.

**Confidentiality/Anonymity:** You may choose to be identified by name in the research findings or remain anonymous via pseudonym. Children present in the dance class will remain anonymous to the researcher and in the presented findings. I, the researcher, will not disclose any identifiable features of the children in publication. Raw findings and intellectual property including lesson plans, observation notes and interview, transcripts will be kept confidential, however the analysis of this data will be presented in the research findings.

**Data Storage:** I, the researcher, will store raw data (including lesson plans, observation notes, interview transcripts, and email correspondence) for 5 years on my password protected computer, accessible to the researcher and supervisor only under the conditions of analysing data and publishing findings. After this 5 year period, the data will be deleted from the computer storage.

**Access of Findings/Publication:** Participants will be provided access to findings/publications if requested on the written consent form.

**Participant Rights:** Participants have the right to ask any further questions about the research that occur to them during their participation. Participants may decline to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the project up until 2 weeks after the interview when data analysis begins.

*"This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Secretary of the Committee, email [fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:fass-ethics@waikato.ac.nz), postal address, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Te Kura Kete Aronui, University of Waikato, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton 3240."*

## Appendix B: Participant consent form

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

[A completed copy of this form should be retained by both the researcher and the participant]

**Name of participant:**

\_\_\_\_\_

I have received a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research project, Reflective practice for transformational learning in children community/recreational dance. Any questions that I have, relating to the research, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can ask further questions about the research at any time during my participation, and that I can withdraw my participation or change/withdraw any information I have provided at any time during the research project up until analysis has commenced on my data (3 weeks after the transcript has been sent to me).

When I sign this consent form, I retain ownership of data including my lesson plan and interview transcript, but I give consent for the researcher to use these for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet. I am aware this data will be stored on the researcher's password protected computer for 5 years and then deleted.

During observation, I understand that I can stop participation at any time. During the interview, I understand that I do not have to answer questions unless I am happy to talk about the topic. I can stop the interview at any time, and I can ask to have the recording device turned off at any time. I am aware that I am able to edit the transcript interview that will be sent to me after the interview.

I am aware that this data will contribute to a published masters thesis, and may contribute to future academic journal articles and conference presentations made available to the general public.

<b>Please complete the following checklist. Tick [✓] the appropriate box for each point.</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<i>I would like to be known by my full name in any publication of findings;</i> _____.		
<i>I would like to be known by a pseudonym in any publication of findings;</i> _____.		
<i>I wish to receive a copy of the findings. You may also request this at a later time.</i>		

Participant :

Signature :

Date :

Contact Details :

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher :

Signature :

Date :

Contact

Details :

\_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix C: Information Letter to Parents/Caregivers**

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO  
FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

### **Reflective practice and transformational learning in children's community/recreational dance.**

**Researchers:** Liahona Walus  
(Candidate for Master of Sport, Health and Human Performance)

*Kia Ora, I am a community/recreational dance educator located in Hamilton. I am in the process of Masters level study to deepen my understanding of quality pedagogy for children's dance. I am interested in learning from experienced dance educators to observe first-hand their teaching of dance.*

Your child's teacher (educators name) is a participant in this research project and I am visiting her class today (date of observation) to observe her teaching process.

Your child will only be involved in this research project as a participant in the class. My observations are primarily upon the teacher and the methods he/she chooses to use in class, as was explained to you by your teacher prior to class. Feel free to ask me any further questions about the research before or after the class. You may also at any time withdraw your child's participation from the class.

I, the researcher, do not know your child's name and therefore your child will remain anonymous in the presentation or publication of the research findings. In publication, I may refer to dance class participants as a means to describe teaching methods and teacher's responses to children collectively. All findings will be presented in a way that masks identifiable traits or characteristics.

Please be aware that this observed data will contribute to a published thesis and may contribute to future academic journal articles and conference presentations made available to the general public.

The observed data from today's class will be stored on my password protected computer for 5 years and then deleted.

*Thank you so much for allowing your child to participate! My research aims at improving community/recreational dance education in New Zealand, bringing quality classes like this one to more children who can benefit from the transformational benefits of dance!*

Nga Mihi Nui,

Liahona Walus

## **Appendix D: Open-Ended Semi-Structured Interview Topics/Questions**

Topics to be covered and *sample* interview questions:

Dance Education (values within, purpose of, experiences in, Traditional/Student Centred Pedagogy/Community-Recreational Dance)

- Why do you teach children's dance?
- Why do you teach community/recreational dance?

Motor Skill Pedagogy/Technique

- What general aims or objectives do you base your classes/this class around? Why?
- "In your lesson plan you included (particular motor skill/activity). Why did you include this as part of this dance class?"
- Describe your approach to teaching this particular motor skill/activity.

Transformation in Dance/Transformative experiences (personal and as seen in children)

- What does the term 'transformation' in dance mean to you? Have heard of it before?
- Have you personally experienced moments of transformation in dance? Explore...
- Do you think children can experience transformation in dance, and if so, have you seen this in your dance class? When and how can you tell?

Reflective Practice

- What is reflective practice?
- Do you reflect on your teaching practice?
- Describe how you reflect on your teaching?
- How do you use this process to meet your objectives?
- Consider your own personal. So, your values influence your pedagogy and if so, how?
- Have you ever questioned/changed your values in dance education?
- 

**Post-Interview/Post-Transcript Email correspondence follow up:**

Sample questions:

- "In the interview you determined that (skill/activity) did/did not work well. What have you done in previous/successive lessons to develop your teaching of that skill?"
- "How did you come make that choice? Describe to me your process for decision making."
- "How have your values influenced that choice?"

## Open-Ended Semi-Structured Interview Topics/Questions

### (educator specific after observation)

Dance Education (values within, purpose of, experiences in, Traditional/Student Centred Pedagogy/Community-Recreational Dance)

- What is dance to you?
- What is your dance background? How did you learn to dance (trad/creative) ped?
- Why do you teach children's dance?
- Why do you teach community/recreational dance?
- How would you identify your overall pedagogical style?

Motor Skill Pedagogy/Technique

- What general aims or objectives do you base your classes/this class around? Why?
- Lots of effort and energy qualities used? (dap/flick/suspend/collapse)
- You do teach skills (dance positions, tendu, skips, chasse, rolls, isolations)! I saw and heard specific dance steps. How and why do you choose these for each class/group level? Do you even stop to teach one thing over and over again or do they just pick it up week after week?
- Language (floppy, levels, sneaking, canon) was clearly understood and easily processed by the kids... when and how do you introduce these? (formal lessons, activates, taught in words, actions etc.) How long would you spend?
- "In each class you included teacher led combinations in circles. How often do you include this as part of this dance class as they seemed to know it?" Do these get repeated every week? Is this where dance vocab comes from?
- I see you used less teacher directed activities as the children got older. Discuss.
- What role do technique (motor skills, steps, correct placement etc.) have in your objectives?
- How much would you correct? Why?

Transformation in Dance/Transformative experiences (personal and as seen in children)

- What does the term 'transformation' in dance mean to you? Have heard of it before?
- Have you personally experienced moments of transformation in dance? Explore...
- Do you think children can experience transformation in dance, and if so, have you seen this in your dance class? When and how can you tell?
- You mentioned the most important thing is to see their choreography... how does this relate to your values and definition of dance?
- What role do skills have in Transformation?
- Why do you think your kids are so uninhibited!!! Amazing!
- Group work... you give little prompts how have you gotten them to be so independent?
- Do you use the same music every time?

Reflective Practice

- What is reflective practice?
- Do you reflect on your teaching practice?
- Describe how you reflect on your teaching?
- How do you use this process to meet your objectives?

- Consider your own personal experiences. Do you reflect on your past experiences or values in your reflective process?
- Do your values influence your pedagogy and if so, how?
- How does your teaching now differ from 16 years ago?  
Have you ever questioned/changed your values in response to expectations?  
Why?

**Appendix E: Observation Table**

Objective Skill/Activity from Lesson Plan of Interest	Intended Pedagogy (if noted)	Actual Pedagogy: what did the teacher do? Demonstrations Verbal Cues Class Management Spatial Use Corrections	Children's Responses Engagement Effort Skill acquisition					