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THE PLACE OF DANCE IN THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Abstract

The research aims to discover where dance should be placed within the National Curriculum. The study will look at the adequacy of the curriculum orders for dance education, and question whether or not the physical education curriculum caters for dance or if dance is best placed within the arts in schools. This shall be achieved highlighting important issues of the debate such as recognising the benefits of dance, identifying the limitations and the issue of non-specialist teachers teaching dance.

A sample of six subjects from both the physical education background and performing arts background were request to partake within the study. Structured interviews were conducted and recorded with each participant. It was felt that this was the most effective method of gathering data for the study. The research mainly comprises of peoples views and opinions regarding the current issue of dance education in schools. The questions in the interview were open ended as it was decided that this would allow respondents to justify there responses as well as adding any further opinions they have on the matter.

The study showed that the majority of the subjects felt that dance should stay within physical education. The reasons behind this were that many respondents felt by placing dance within physical education it allows every child to experience dance at a certain level. Subjects highlighted the increase in awareness of health related issues in young people suggesting this relates more to physical education than art. Despite this most recognised the importance of creativity and expression that is eminent through dance education and believed that more is needed to be done to promote this, mainly through preparing and education teachers more thoroughly in the subject of dance.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take the opportunity to thank a number of people for their continued support throughout this study. First and foremost I would like to thank my tutor, Ms Sally Varrall for her constant assistance and guidance during this study. I would also like to thank all of the participants within the study as without their dedication the research would not have been possible. Finally, I would like to acknowledge the constant patience and encouragement given by my parents, Elaine and Jeff, my boyfriend Huw and my dear friend Ian Gilmore.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This research intends to add to the continuing argument over where dance is best placed in the National Curriculum. Due to the distinctiveness of dance (Curl, 1998) it could be correct to say that dance does not have a natural home in the curriculum (Lyons, 1997). Conflicting opinions as to whether dance is best recognised as an art than it is physical education have become a main area of focus for the debate. Since the education reform act in 1988 dance has officially become part of the National P.E Curriculum. This is due to the various links dance shares with P.E, links such the emphasis on performance qualities, and the endorsement of a healthy lifestyle and positive attitude to fitness and sport (Sanderson, 1996). However this has sparked controversy among many dance professionals who believe that close links with P.E has diminished the status of dance as a subject.

Research by Marland (1998) found that the National Curriculum tends to overlook the arts within schools. Subjects like drama are now often found within English, and dance within physical education. However many dance professionals believe that by placing dance within physical education not enough emphasis is placed on the aesthetics of the subject. Curl (1998) identifies the importance of aesthetics in dance “to be even more specific it is the intimately perceived aesthetic qualities in dance which play a central role in then concept of dance as an art form” (Curl, 1998, p.5). This sparks arguments as to whether dance is taken seriously enough in the education system. Important areas of dance education are not given sufficient time in the curriculum although the 1988 act included spiritual, physical, moral and intellectual development as values, all achievable within dance. However these elements are rarely reported in OFSTED nor is cultural development being recognised (Marland, 1998). But many argue that these cultural and expressionist developments have cause much confusion among members of the P.E profession in terms of the identity of dance in the curriculum (Sanderson, 1996).

There is an overwhelming growth in the interest of dance education. A 2006-07 Government survey found that dance was among one of the five most popular sports within schools, with 96% of schools now offering it (Lipsett, 2007 cited in www.education.gaurdian.co.uk/schoolsports) One of the many benefits of dance being highlighted is the positive attributes to a child's development (Hanna, 1999). Brinson (1991) spoke of unique expression of meaning, the development of perceptual and motor skills and the obvious health and fitness benefits. Needless to say dissonance has arisen among the P.E and dance profession as to how these attributes can be affectively delivered by non-specialists within the school curriculum. Smith-Autard's model of teaching dance in schools though the 'Dance as Art' model is widely recognised. The model is seen as good practise within dance education (Smith-Autard, 2002). This model will be referred to within the study to understand how the model contributes to the debate of where dance should be placed. An issue such as teaching staff, facilities and allocation of time is also investigated in the study. This also reveals the lack of parity attributed to the status of dance, by virtue of its place in the curriculum. It is suggested that dance is hidden within other subjects.

1.1 Aims of the study

The research aims to discover where the participants of the study feel dance should be placed in the National Curriculum. By examining common issues in the debate through recorded interviews with teachers and focusing on a sample of both physical education and dance professionals the study offers a range of opinions representing those working in the field. The report discusses this method of research as the most appropriate when aiming to collect in depth, valid data. The results of these interviews are clearly set out and further analysed in the discussion

The research was based in Wales and focuses mainly on the Welsh National Curriculum. However the researcher draws upon the National Curriculum in England as well as drawing on how dance is practised in other countries, such as America.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Hypothesis

- Should dance be placed within an Arts Curriculum or within a Physical Education Curriculum at Key Stage 3?
- Could this research challenge the place of dance in the National Curriculum?

3.2 Research Design

A review of literature relating to the research question was carried out prior to the data collection. This review of literature allowed the researcher to gather a wider knowledge of the subject area. The review of literature could potentially highlight any flaws that could occur in the research design, mainly by observing the research protocol undertaken by other researchers.

A qualitative approach was adopted for this study, mainly due to the sensitive nature of the study and that the type of data it aimed to collect was to be valid in depth information based upon the subject's thoughts and feelings. When considering a qualitative approach Mason (1996) suggests "Qualitative research aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of rich, contextual, and detailed data" (Mason, 1996 p.4). Through my research I aimed to gain an understanding of peoples' thoughts and feelings not only to dance as a subject but also to its place within the National Curriculum.

It was felt that the most effective way to gain in depth qualitative data was to conduct recorded interviews with subjects who have had first hand experience within the research field. The data collection method of recorded interviews was chosen as it was felt the subject could expand on their answer more so than they could through a questionnaire. People's views, opinions, knowledge, interpretations and experiences are the "meaning properties of

the social reality of which the interviews aim to explore” (Mason, 1996, p.). Consideration was given to the interview approach. Semi-structured and open questions were adopted for the interview. This approach again was taken in order to gain as much information from the subjects with out influencing their answers Oppenheim (2000).

The only research used was qualitative research. Qualitative research can have its draw backs. Firstly the external reliability of the data has to be questioned. The theories and previous studies that form the basis for this study may not share the same circumstances or have an identical social setting (Bryman 2001). The use of interviews can also produce limitations. Unfortunately, interviews can be time consuming and expensive and the data analysis is on non standard responses which can prove difficult when analysing (Bryman 2001).

Interviews were considered to be one of the most effective ways of collecting appropriate data relating directly to the research question.

“Interviews are one of the most commonly recognized forms of qualitative research method. Perhaps for this reason, it is not uncommon for a researcher to assume that their study will involve some such interviews, without spending time working out why it should, why they want to use qualitative interviews,” (Mason, 1996 p.39).

Unlike other forms of research, interviews require a high level of interpersonal skills. Oppenheim (1992) suggest building a rapport with the interviewee and engaging them at just the right level can develop an increase in their attention and leave the interviewee feeling comfortable that they are contributing to a worthwhile cause. When conducting interviews it is paramount that the interviews sustains attention by asking questions in an interesting manner, being sure that the interviewer listens carefully to responses noting them down an acting upon them. Throughout interviews the interviewer must be sure to avoid giving their own opinion or upsetting the conversational flow of

the interview resulting in interviewer bias (Oppenheim, 1992). It was decided that the interviewer would not contribute any thoughts or feelings within the interview. Instead to avoid interviewer bias it was decided that only the questions would be read to the subject and allow them to answer independently. A copy of the questions was given to the subject and the subject was given a few minutes to gather thoughts or ask queries before the interview began. This allowed for the interview to flow without any unnecessary questions interrupting. Consideration was also given to the environment in which the interview took place to ensure comfort and ease (Mason, 1996).

Prior to the first interview a pilot interview was set up. This was in order to test the research techniques effectiveness and also eliminate any questions that produce any irrelevant data as well as adding questions that will enhance the research. Ultimately the pilot study was needed to consider the feasibility of the main study and determine whether the research protocol was practical (Gratton and Jones, 2004). Originally the first interview consisted of 4 questions rather alike in terms of what they were asking which proved confusing for the interviewee and resulted in a lot of repetitive answers. Due to the potential problems indicated by the pilot study consequent changes were made. The interview questions were amended. Four questions were still used however these were refined and shortened to make them clearer to the interviewee. The fourth question was also changed so that it focused on the topic of specialist dance teachers in schools. It was felt this was an integral part of the research that was not mentioned in the pilot.

Consideration was given to the content and language used in designing the questions. It was decided that the questions would be structured but the language used would be kept relatively simple. Efforts to eliminate poorly understood questions were made acting upon the results from the pilot study. It was paramount that the subject understood the content and purpose of the questions. By using the method of open-ended questions it allowed the subject to express themselves in their own words. This view is backed by Oppenheim "the main advantage of the open ended question is the freedom it

gives to the respondents” (Oppenheim, 1992 p112). The questions aimed to gather initial thoughts and feelings from the answers given.

Contact was made with all participants either by electronic mail or telephone prior to the interviews. The purpose of the interview was then explained in full that it “intended to produce material that will be used for research purposes and...words can be used by the researcher at a later date on the premise that those words reflected their genuine thoughts and opinions,” (Descombe, 1998).

3.3 *Sample*

In order to gather valid and reliable data, careful consideration was given to who would be interviewed. A small sample was purposely used. Theoretical sampling where by a sample group is selected on the basis of their relevance to research question was adopted (Mason, 1996). “...researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality” (Cohen et al, 2000, p.103). Data was gathered from the six participants in the Cardiff area of South Wales. Recorded interviews were to be administered to a sample group of 6 subjects. The subjects were ultimately chosen upon their profession and what institution they worked in. Snowball sampling was used to gain subjects from the Arts background. The snowballing technique is when appropriate individuals are approached and then asked for names and addresses of other individuals who also fit the sample requirements (Oppenheim, 1992). The subject group was chosen, based upon a number of criteria:

- Subjects must be representative of the study. Their profession or position in society must reflect the views and meet the objectives of the research.
- The research had to be representative of gender therefore both males and females took part in the interviews.
- Geographically the subject must have worked in either Wales or England.

The sample gained presumably provided an equal balance of the criteria. Subject one was a female PESS (Physical Education in School Sport) co-ordinator. Subject two was a female P.E teacher specialising in dance. Subject three was a female P.G.C.E co-ordinator responsible for training post graduate students in becoming P.E teachers. Subject four was a female professional dancer turned teacher. Subject five was a female dance teacher who owns her own private dance school. Subject six was a Male head of P.E teacher.

The first and perhaps most obvious limitation is that the research is being carried out by one researcher which limits the time and cost which can be spent on the study. With more researchers and more time more people involved with dance and education could be interviewed. The small sample used is also a limitation, as results collected cannot be generalized to represent a wider population.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

As with any research study it is important to identify any ethical issues that may arise. The issues that could occur within the study could be as follows:

- Whether there is harm to the participants
- Whether deception is involved
- Whether invasion of privacy is involved
- Whether there is a lack of consent

(Diener and Crandall 1978)

Before any research could be carried out, consent was sought from all subjects. A covering letter containing the aims of the research along with relevant information such as name and contact details of the researcher are issued to each subject. Separate to this is a consent form. Only when this is signed by the participant and consent obtained can the research begin. These

consent forms are vital documents as they were signed papers showing that participation of the research had been gained as well as entitling full use of the findings. The consent form also informs participants that all their personal details will be completely confidential and their names shall not appear anywhere within the research (Oppenheim, 1992). In order to adhere to this every subject received a letter followed by a consent form; the consent form was signed and dated then handed back to the interviewer before the interview began. The purpose of the study and the use of the data collected were explained fully to the participant in order to avoid deception. The fact that the participant choice a time and location in which to partake in the interview as well as the right to remain anonymous showed consideration of privacy.

The first and perhaps most obvious limitation is that the research is being carried out by one researcher which limits the time and cost which can be spent on the study. With more researchers and more time more people involved with dance and education could be interviewed.

The small sample used is also a limitation, as results collected cannot be generalized to represent a wider population.

3.5 Reliability and Validity

It was paramount that the research carried out was reliable and valid. Failure of this would result in a miss informed study and non credible study. Reliability for the most part can be detected once all the research data is gathered. The simplest way to detect reliability was to find qualitative research focusing on the same topic aiming to gather similar findings if this research yields similar responses then there is a degree of reliability to the research. However if the findings yield completely different responses then this could prove that the research is unreliable. Fault for this may lie in the research design (Mason, 1996).

Data from the recorded interviews will be put onto compact disc and then Transcribed. The transcripts will be carefully analysed to identify common trends and opinions. These will be written up and statements and findings later discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.0 Results

Results were collected from the semi-structured interviews. The questions were statutory and subject's answers were given from their own thoughts and opinions. The findings were as follows:

4.1 Question one

What do you feel are the main benefits of dance in the National Curriculum?

- Provides creative opportunities and freedom of expression
- Can help free children of any inhibitions they may have
- Promotes independent learning
- Fantastic health benefits both pulse raising and body management
- Improves on social skills and build confidence
- Does not restrict like other physical activities based upon rules and game play
- Can reach children of all abilities

4.2 Question two

Where do you feel dance should be placed in the National Curriculum for it to best reflect these benefits? Within Art or within Physical Education and what are your reasons for this choice?

- Within Physical Education as it allows compulsory access to dance for all children
- Within Physical Education as that will cater for the emphasis on the health related aspect of dance
- Part of P.E until GCSE and A Level where it should be statutory due to it high technical demands

- Dance should stay as a part of physical education as P.E teacher are more able to teach dance than art teachers.
- Conflicting views to place it in Art or P.E mainly arguing over the effectiveness and subject knowledge of teaching staff
- Dance should be placed within the arts as dance cannot be quantified like other activities in P.E, dance is about the quality of the movement not about how fast you can do something or how high you can jump.
- Dance should be within an arts department as physical education is not sympathetic to the expressive nature of the subject of dance.

4.3 Question three

Dance only exists in the National Curriculum because it is placed in physical education, do you feel this in any way limits dance as a subject?

- Subject one does not believe that physical education places limits upon dance, as within the school in which subject one teaches every single student gets to experience dance, only when it reaches Key Stage four and five should it become part of the performing arts curriculum
- Physical education can place limits on dance due to the person teaching it, many P.E teachers are games based rather than artistic based this can then reflect in the standard of dance being taught.
- Yes, dance being placed within P.E does cause limits, students are able to opt out of dance and choose other activities instead.
- Dance should be placed within an arts programme where it will have the chance to become compulsory
- P.E doesn't necessarily have to limit dance as long as you have teachers in the department who have that dance as an art background and are able to incorporate that within their teaching.
- It is unfair that it isn't recognised as its own subject like music or art.

- Subject six believes any physical activity is faced with limitations when placed within P.E as it is limited in terms of the experience of the teacher and facilities available.

4.4 Question four

Do you think dance needs to be taught by teachers trained specifically in dance?

- as long as professional development programmes are given to teachers then no it does not matter if they have dance training or not.
- With careful planning and confidence along with knowledge by specialists, non specialist teachers can deliver a class just as well as professionals
- Dance should be taught by specialists, there needs to be a much bigger aspect of dance lecturing going on in colleges and PGCE in order to raise the standard of dance being taught
- If you are specifically trained in dance then you are going to deliver a much more confident and well designed lesson that will reach all standards of children
- Sometimes using a teacher who is not a specialist can give a more realistic experience of dance
- The lack of teacher's knowledge and confidence has a detrimental effect on the quality of work and the quality of the children's attitude towards dance.
- It doesn't necessarily have to but it would need someone with a very strong interest in dance and the ability to understand these artistic aspects of it and the expressive aspects of it.
- It does need to be taught by dance specialists as dance takes years to master and only someone who has had that specific training is in a position to teach it.
- Dance specialists are able to identify dance related injuries and adapt lessons to facilitate to specific needs.

- Dance would benefit from specialist teaching however due to costs implications and head teachers being in charge of budget it would be difficult to provide specialist teaching in schools.
- The quality of dance being taught would improve if specialist teaching was given.

CHAPTER SIX
CONCLUSION

6.0 Conclusion

With dance becoming a more popular subject and participation rates rising as more schools offer dance (Lipsett, 2007 cited in www.education.gaurdian.co.uk/schoolsports) it is imperative that we asses the National Curriculum's criteria for dance in terms of their adequacy and effectiveness. Therefore, the study aimed to find out the opinion (of current teaching staff) where dance should be placed in the National Curriculum - should dance be placed within physical education or within an arts curriculum? To this end, interviews were conducted with six subjects in order to gather their opinions on the debate. These opinions were analysed in relation to the published literature and research conducted in similar fields, and, from here conclusions was made.

The study found that there were many conflicting views in the argument of where dance should be placed in the National Curriculum. Indeed, many respondents identified benefits that both the arts curriculum and physical education curriculum provide in accommodating dance. Notwithstanding this the majority of subjects felt that dance was best placed within the physical education curriculum as this is where it has existed and developed since the Education Reform Act in 1988. This concurs with the research done by Sanderson (1996) in that given that dance is officially a component of the National Curriculum for physical education it will for the most part remain that way for the next five years or so. However, the present study may have produced these findings due to the sample used. Ideally the sample aimed to gather a balance in opinions that would become representative of a wider population. Although many of the subjects favoured physical education over art as a home for dance, it is important to recognise that there were only two practising dance professionals within the study.

This study did produce interesting findings about the teaching of dance. Many endorsed the practising of dance by non specialist dance teachers. This concurs with research by (Sanderson, 1996) who claims that it is the female P.E staff that have nurtured dance in the curriculum, indeed with the majority

of the sample being female and of a P.E background this finding was expected. However, with literature suggesting physical educationalists exude a fear and lack of sensitivity towards dance (Lyons, 1997), questions arise as to whether not if the study was based on a larger more representative sample if these findings would be consistent. Indeed, this opinion was shared by the only male in the study; this does not conclude the findings to be representative of both genders however this does increase the validity of the study. The male subject did express his judgment that P.E teachers are more experienced and equipped to cater for dance than teachers who have partook in an art P.G.C.E. an opinion that is not so advocated by (Curl, 1998). Curl argues that the discourse of aesthetics in dance education is largely due to the lack of distinctiveness between perceived aesthetic qualities and non-aesthetic physical properties. and argues against the opinion that art teachers are not skilled enough to teach dance drawing upon how an art teacher practises and identifies aesthetics that can be related to dance education “The art teacher also talks of paintings as having ‘great vitality’, ‘depth’, or being ‘full of tension’ the red pulls against the green’, ‘the blue recedes’, the lines are ‘nervous’. The teacher knows full well that these flat innate canvasses have no such characteristics – in reality; they are perceived qualities of the painting” (Curl, 1998, p.6). Curl also makes associations between teaching dance and teaching drama, music, English literature, biology and technology. Despite the acknowledgement that dance education provides links with almost all subjects on in the curriculum (Curl, 1998), the study showed that most respondents favoured dance to stay within P.E. However, they did acknowledge the importance of teachers who are sympathetic towards the needs of dance both artistically and physically.

The majority of the study suggested that multiple links with both physical education and the arts would prove most beneficial to dance education. But as Warne (2001) suggests, incorporating dance into the arts in school is not the only solution and it could still prove problematic with regards, time, staff, and facilities and funding. It is these issues that constitute how dance is taught in schools. Ultimately as the study found dance is in favour of being taught within physical education. As it is likely that dance for the most part

shall stay as a subject within physical education for the foreseeable future it is paramount that P.E addresses the individual needs of dance and identifies sufficient ways in which to improve the standard of dance education in schools so that they meet the current curriculum orders. Teaching staff need to be prepared to teach dance and strong teacher training programmes need to be implemented (Jobbins, 1997). It is paramount that facilities and funding are also addressed by individual schools (Marland, 1998). Partnerships with the professional dance world would strengthen link with Smith Aurtard notion of appreciation and viewing dance as well as contributing to educating young people culturally.

Due to the limited size of the sample it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions - a larger study would need to be implemented. The present study was only focused on a narrow geographical area of South Wales. By broadening the study and conducting research in other geographical areas more representational findings will occur. It is also important to note that the present study only concentrated on the delivery of dance in schools. If a follow up study was to be conducted it could focus on the learners independently or as well as teachers. An equal ratio of male and female should be used if the study is to be conducted again as well as an equal ratio of dance professionals and physical educationalists, this would produce a more balanced and valid set of results. In order to gather more detailed information from a greater range of questions, a series of questionnaires may be an option, allowing the subjects to participate in a less intrusive environment.

Since its inclusion in the National Curriculum, dance education has increased dramatically in popularity (Sanderson 1996). However, without a co-ordinated response involving support from both P.E staff and dance professionals who recognise the asset that dance is to education and the impact it has on young people, there is a danger that the subject will stagnate and that little progress will be made from where the subject is today. Dance needs to develop into a mature, self-confident subject and for this to occur progress needs to be made to ensure it develops its own status within the National Curriculum rather than being hidden within other subjects.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PILOT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As previously indicated in the covering letter you may withdraw at any stage, and be assured that all information remains confidential and will be referenced only for the purpose of my dissertation.

Listed below are the questions that you will be asked to consider in the interview. Please read through them and if you have any questions at this stage, please feel free to ask.

1. How do you feel dance contributes to a child's education?
2. Do you believe that by placing dance in physical education it limits dance as a subject?
3. Do you feel dance would benefit from being placed in an arts curriculum?
4. What limitations do you feel dance encounters within the National Curriculum?

APPENDIX B

FINAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As previously indicated in the covering letter you may withdraw at any stage, and be assured that all information remains confidential and will be referenced only for the purpose of my dissertation.

Listed below are the questions that you will be asked to consider in the interview. Please read through them and if you have any questions at this stage, please feel free to ask.

1. What do you feel are the main benefits of dance within education?
2. Where do you feel dance should be placed in the National Curriculum for it to best reflect these benefits, in the arts or within physical education? And what are your reasons for this choice?
3. Dance only exist in the National Curriculum because it is placed within P.E. do you feel this in anyway limits dance as a subject?
4. Do you think dance needs to be taught by teachers trained specifically in dance?

APPENNDIX C

Kelly Smith
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Llanmaes
Llantwit Major
CF61 2XR

Dear

My name is Kelly Smith and I am currently a third year student in UWIC studying a BA (Hons) Dance degree. As part of my third year it is required that I write a dissertation. My purpose for writing to you is to ask if you would be kind enough to help with my research by taking part in an interview.

My chosen topic of discussion is Dance and the National Curriculum. The research aims to discover whether *dance should be within PE or the arts curriculum?* Participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any stage of the research process. Confidentiality will be upheld as far as is possible. Your name will not appear anywhere at any time, and the features cited are only those relevant to the research.

I would very much appreciate and value your opinion and views on this subject, and hope that that you will be willing to help me with my study. If you are willing to participate, then please read and sign the consent form provided.

Yours faithfully

Kelly Smith

APPENDIX D

I have read and fully understood the request to be a subject of Ms Smith's research. I understand what I have to do. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary, and that withdrawal is possible at any time. I understand the measures that will be taken to uphold confidentiality as far as possible.

I agree to participate.

Signature

Date