

Connoisseurs' eyes on teaching dance from contextual perspectives

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Abstract

This paper describes a pilot study, from which an ethnographic inquiry was launched. [ij](#) The purpose of the study was to examine teaching that included contextual understanding of dance, an integral part of The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2000, 2007). A video critique exercise, based on the notion of “educational connoisseurship” (Eisner, 2002, p. 187), was designed for teachers on an in-service dance education course. Data was gathered from the teachers, aiming to ascertain the effectiveness of video critique for professional development when the focus is on developing teaching about dance contextually. Analytical procedures from grounded theory were used to code and interpret the data. In addition to identifying how the combination of video viewing with educational connoisseurship played a supportive role within a multi-layered learning experience in teacher education, the study also provided a platform from which to further explore theory and challenges related to teaching about dances contextually.

Introduction- background and significance

This paper describes how, in 2004, mindful of some of the limits of using filmic resources in teaching dance, I developed a critical viewing exercise of a dance education video for the professional development of teachers in New Zealand. The role that the video critique played in supporting the teachers' professional development is examined, and attention is drawn to some important issues about teaching dance contextually that arose during the learning experience.

Having worked and studied for over thirty years in dance and dance education in the UK and New Zealand, my teaching has developed from undergraduate and Masters studies in the UK, and doctoral study at The University of Auckland. I also have a background in contemporary dance technique, choreography and performance. Since 1996, through my writing about dance (2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012) and work in schools, universities, teacher education, community and theatre, my interest has been drawn to consider how best to support learning about dance for a diverse range of students. I migrated to New Zealand in 1997, and have worked in teacher education, as a university dance lecturer and also in an advisory capacity for the New Zealand Ministry of Education, *Te Tauhuhu o te Matauranga*.

My doctorate inquiry built on previous New Zealand research in dance and arts education (Barbour, 2004; Bolwell, 1998; Buck, 2003; Hong-Joe, 2002; Mane-Wheoki, 2003; Sansom, 1999; Thwaites, 2003). This relatively recent wave of research has broadly been generated by the inaugural inclusion of dance in New Zealand's national curriculum framework, alongside the more established music, drama and visual art, as marked by *The Arts in the New Zealand*

Curriculum (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2000, (hereafter *ANZC*)). In 2004, research into dance education pedagogy, and how it is manifested in teachers' working lives, was predominantly focused on the educational or artistic benefits of 'creative' dance, improvisation, choreography and technical skills; these being based predominantly within a Western-based pedagogy and/or theatrical idiom. In present day research there is still relatively less interrogation of pedagogy that is designed specifically to develop understanding about dances from contextual perspectives, or which inquires into teachers' thoughts about and experiences of such teaching.

Prior to the *ANZC*, dance had some presence in schools in the form of Eurocentric creative dance, or, under the auspices of physical education, as folk dancing or exercise-orientated routines (Sansom, 2011); vestiges of a colonial heritage. From within a postmodern, pluralist view of society, however, the *ANZC* recognises dance from New Zealand's diverse range of cultures including Māori, Pakeha, Pacific Islands and other heritages brought by migration and globalization, such as North American and Asian.

In the *ANZC*, four strands categorise key areas of learning with a focus on developing literacy in specific art forms, which are recognised as multiple ways of knowing the world (Eisner, 1991). Within each strand, achievement objectives indicate the development of specific skills and knowledge as appropriate for eight curriculum levels across years one to thirteen. The strands are depicted as intertwining during teaching. The strands of the dance component of the *ANZC*, and the activities associated with them, are: Developing Practical Knowledge in Dance (PK) explores and uses personal movement in the Dance Elements^[ii], the vocabularies of others, dance techniques and technologies; Developing Ideas in Dance (DI) is concerned with making dance; Communicating and Interpreting in Dance (CI) involves performing, viewing and responding; and Understanding Dance in Context (UC) focuses on developing understanding of the roles that dance plays in and the significances that it carries for societies via theoretical and practical investigations.

The UC strand draws attention to dance as having ritual, social and artistic purposes which are subject to tradition and change; terms which themselves require certain theoretical understandings. From anthropologist, Adrienne Kaeppler's (2004) perspective, tradition involves both "transformation and recycling" (p. 310). Her insistence that minority groups' cultural traditions should be prioritised is also relevant for dance education in terms of responsibilities to the people whose dances we study. Also, the "strategic interrelatedness of tradition and experiment, diversity and change" (Hagood, 2000, p. 25), as connected to intercultural appropriation or cultural borrowing, is another layer of theory latent within the UC strand. In drawing some parallels between understanding dance contextually in education and anthropology of dance, Judith Hanna (2002) points out the importance of weaving together theory and practice in teaching. Understanding such a weave would be important for the teachers on the in-service course when implementing the *ANZC* in their own schools.

A significant consideration in my inquiry was that for the teachers I was working with, teaching dance contextually was likely to be less familiar pedagogical territory than the teaching of creative dance. Also, it seemed timely, as part of my own professional development, to develop learning activities that focused on teaching about dance contextually. Mindful of the relatively short time that the in-service course provided, I turned

to designing a video viewing exercise that could provide a succinct learning experience for teachers.

The value of filmic resources within dance education contexts has long been debated. Some writers examine their value and possible roles for teaching, (Ashley, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2012; Kassing & Jay, 2003; Scheff, Sprague & McGreevy-Nichols, 2010). Others, however, place more importance on the teacher as the resource (Buck, 2003). From the field of anthropology we are alerted to the limitations of watching dance on film in terms of developing understanding about it (Williams, 2005). Also, dance on film can make “everybody look good” (Albright, 1997, p. 80). From this debate, the question I focus on in this paper asks: ‘In teacher education how can video viewing assist in developing understanding of teaching about dance from contextual perspectives?’

Methodology

From within the field of qualitative methodology, an ethnographic, interpretive approach was adopted as suitable for this investigation, because it involves “a type of reflection that examines culture, knowledge and action” (Thomas, 1995, p. 2). Acknowledgement that such inquiry could be laden with the values of my own background in Eurocentric dance and dance education prompted me to recognise that what researchers see, and don’t see, rests on their own values (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, this study was underpinned with a reflexive examination of how the creative dance that I have worked with over many years resembles, and how it differs from, teaching about dance from contextual perspectives.

The video critique exercise: Setting and design – connoisseurs’ eyes

I collected data from teachers who were studying on an in-service dance education course, a component of a part-time teacher education degree programme, as they participated in the video viewing critique exercise. [iii] As the dance lecturer, I taught 40 teachers in two separate groups of 20. The teachers worked in early childhood, primary, intermediate and secondary schools. Some of the teachers were novices to dance education and dance but others had previous experience in creative dance, and/or expertise in the following: Māori kapa haka; Cook Island, Samoan and Tongan dance; folk dance; jazz dance; and hip hop.

I designed a learning sequence in which a video of teaching dance was critiqued, drawing on the four (interactive) stages of Elliot Eisner’s (2002) process of developing an educational connoisseur’s eye:

- Describe
- Interpret
- Evaluate
- General observations

Eisner describes this process as building on existing expertise in order to, “help others see what they otherwise might not have noticed and, if noticed, not understood” (p. 187). [iv] In designing the video critique learning sequence, I built on the existing expertise of the teachers as educational connoisseurs of teaching in a more general sense. I utilised constructivist pedagogy (Vygotsky, 1962) and strategies such as discovery learning because the teachers

were familiar with these from their own work experience and/or from other study on the degree programme. It also occurred to me, as both Bruner (1986) and Vygotsky argue, that speech and language are critical to learning, and so I chose group discussion as the core activity.[\[v\]](#) As lecturer, I facilitated the teachers' learning, guiding the viewings, critiques and discussions as well as assisting with problems and questions.

Each group of teachers selected a note taker to record their group discussion under each of the four stages of the critique exercise. The notes also generated whole class discussions at the end of each stage of critiquing. The video critique session lasted for around two hours, during which the teachers could make repeated viewings at any time of their choosing. The video critique was not assessed but was designed to support the teachers as they worked towards assessment. As participant observer, I collected data about the teachers' understanding of teaching dance contextually as it emerged from the group notes and discussions.[\[vi\]](#)

The video episode chosen for viewing was from the dance education resource *Dancing the long white cloud* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2002).[\[vii\]](#) Having been appointed Project Director by the Ministry of Education in 2000 for *Dancing the long white cloud*,[\[viii\]](#) I considered that it had potential for informing teachers about teaching that included the Understanding Dance in Context (UC) strand. The episode selected emphasised learning about Samoan *sasa* from within the UC strand. It shows teacher, Samoan born Mele Nemaia and a class of year three / four mainly Māori and Pasifika children participating in dance lessons based on a Polynesian story, *Princess Grandma* (Overend, 1994). The video shows the learning activities in logical sequence matched to the four curriculum strands, and is annotated by a voiceover. The ANZC level two dance achievement objectives, and the learning outcomes specific to this episode, are shown as onscreen captions. This short episode is packed with information, and allowed the teachers an opportunity to thoroughly scrutinise the video in the time available.

The video critique exercise had a triple function: it was integral to the teachers' professional development; it informed my teaching when evaluating the teachers' development of understanding about teaching dance contextually; and it provided data from which to launch a larger, ethnographic doctoral investigation into teaching dance from contextual perspectives. In the larger inquiry, another set of data was collected from the teachers on the in-service course during a group planning and teaching presentation, and two further sets of data were collected from other teachers via a questionnaire and focus groups between 2005-2006.[\[ix\]](#)

Data analysis and interpretation

Analytical methods associated with grounded theory were used to analyse the data (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory helps to “preserve an emphasis on language, meaning and action” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 184). This rationale seemed wholly in keeping with my inquiry because spoken, written, kinaesthetic, and at times visual and musical languages all featured during the investigation.[\[x\]](#) This approach to data analysis offers a set of strategies by which to code, categorise, interpret and theorise key themes from the realities captured within the data. Coding is key to assisting the researcher to build a picture of what is happening, crystallizing meanings and themes that are grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Initially, open coding was used to identify fragments of meaning from the teachers' written records of their group discussions, within each of the four parts of the video critique. Then, data was codified word-by-word and/or line-by-line, with colours and icons to track informal patterns, or repetitive words. Other field notes and memos from the whole class discussions were then coded similarly. By collating some common initial codes, fragments were organised and synthesised in secondary coding, and categories were crystallised into conceptual clusters. For example, in the descriptive phase of the critique the teachers' repetitive use of movement terminologies such as "tempo, rhythm, speed, gesture and travel" formed a cluster depicting the teachers' understanding of teaching within the Developing Practical Knowledge strand, as viewed on the video.

During interpretation of the data, key themes were identified, providing clues as to any developments in the teachers' understanding of teaching that includes the UC strand. In keeping with an ethnographic approach, I designed three sub-questions to facilitate interpretation of the data. The questions were:

1. How do these teachers perceive the Understanding Dance in Context strand in comparison with the other three curriculum strands?
2. What benefits to learners do these teachers identify when teaching includes the contextual understanding of dance?
3. What, if any, preferences for pedagogical strategies do these teachers reveal when teaching includes the contextual study of dance?

These sub-questions maintained connections between the data, the research question and emerging themes. Sub-question one was applied to data from the descriptive phase of the connoisseurship process, associating the teachers' ability to accurately describe the content of the four curriculum strands with their understanding of them. Sub-question two facilitated interpretation of data from the interpretive phase, and assisted in building a picture of how or if the teachers' understanding about teaching about dance contextually was developing. The teachers' appraisals of the teaching in the video from the evaluation and general observation critique phases were analysed for any other developments in their understanding about teaching dance contextually, such as those associated with their personal preferences. In this paper, these sub-questions are used to frame presentation of the data for the reader, as they were in the larger ethnographic investigation.

The data and discussion

Key points, representative of the data that were collected, are presented in this section. In attempting to build an overall sense of credibility for the study, I aim to present data in sufficient detail with regard to the usefulness of the video critique exercise for teacher education. The bullet lists in this section are exact reproductions of the group discussion notes. Also, in synthesising the data with relevant literature about some of the theoretical complexities that are associated with the UC strand, I attempt to provide a clearer idea of how the connoisseur process highlighted some pertinent concepts and issues. The findings are relative to these particular research participants, and there is no attempt to generalise findings to a wider demographic.

Research sub-question one: How do these teachers perceive the Understanding Dance in Context strand in comparison with the other three curriculum strands?

In the descriptive phase of the critique, the teachers' group discussion notes were interpreted as representing their initial comparative understanding of the four curriculum strands.

Usually, the group notes included the level two, PK strand achievement objective, and/or the corresponding learning outcome written out in full, and also correctly described the associated warm-up activities in detail. The use of terminologies, such as tempo, rhythm, speed, fast / slow, gesture and travel, were included in all 10 groups' written notes, as were descriptions of the Developing Ideas in Dance (DI) strand. For example: "Develop everyday action into a set rhythmic phrase of movement– Beat/rhythm/tempo". However, groups whose notes were brief tended to describe *only* the PK and DI activities and strands. For example: "Describe: Warm-ups–travelling, different tempos. Explorations use everyday actions. In groups using words to make up actions e.g. weaving, talking (PK DI)."

In the video, a group of children are shown explaining the meaning of the arm gesture phrases that they have made on the theme of gardening, thus demonstrating to others their understanding of how the sasa shows everyday actions. On screen, this is connected to the Communicating and Interpreting (CI) learning outcome. Some teachers' responses, in describing these activities, correctly associated them with the CI strand, as in these examples:

"Informal presentation describes how dance expresses ideas and feelings."

"Shared group actions–performance and explanation."

Other groups, however, conflated the CI and UC strands, and this raised one of the UC strand's inherent complexities–its overlap with performing and responding to dance. Arguably, the same conflation could be read into the video episode itself, drawing attention to the possibility of combining these two strands in the curriculum on the grounds that separation has potential to divide theoretical appreciation from the practical experience of dancing.

Most of the 10 small groups' discussion notes lacked any mention of the UC strand, and this alerted me to a possible gap in understanding that could impact on their ability to implement the ANZC. Of the descriptions of the UC strand that did appear in the groups' notes, one was a copy of the Learning Outcome from the onscreen caption, whilst the other described the learning activity: "List everyday events–key words and actions to suit the story". There were only two comprehensive descriptions of all four strands with the contingent learning activities.

The teachers' initial interface with understanding the strands comparatively, in the first stage of the connoisseurship process had, it seemed, presented the teachers with some challenges, and these were manifest in the data. The 10 small groups' descriptions of PK and DI were noticeably more comprehensive than those of the UC and CI strands, and could be read as implying that at this early stage in the critique, the teachers possibly understood the UC and CI strands comparatively less well. I used this information to guide my teaching, encouraging the teachers to focus more on the UC strand in the interpretation phase of the critique.

The perception that teaching *about* dances contextually was likely to be new to many but that, as argued by Sansom (2011), some teachers would have skills and experience in teaching creative dance, has some correlation with the early suggestions from my study. Interestingly, a recent study that sampled all secondary teachers with responsibility for dance in secondary schools in Yorkshire, the largest county in England, reported that: “83% of the respondents acknowledged that dance is reliant on the teaching, use and interpretation of the composite elements of dance: actions, space, dynamics and relationships” (Connell, 2009, p. 121–122).

If we consider the theory that underpins context as a concept, the difficulties that understanding the UC strand may bring for teachers is made more evident. Anthropologist of the dance Drid Williams (2004), informs our understanding of such theory in her analysis of context as including any of the following, or a combination of them: an ideology or belief system; a social context, such as an institution or geographical setting, with associated systemised formal practices such as language or dance; an historical episodic narrative from within some specific model, as in dance being in a dramaturgical model; and personal narratives. Subtle shifts of understanding that engage with who, what, where, when, how and why issues, are required. Unravelling the cultural meanings of dance movement, as well as other associated features such as sound, costume and what the function of the dance is within its socio-cultural setting all require consideration in trying to understand what a dance is about. Substantial theoretical underpinnings are what teachers take on in teaching about dances contextually. Such understandings differ in many ways from those that underpin teaching creative dance.

Research sub-question two: What benefits to learners do these teachers identify when teaching includes the contextual understanding of dance?

During the interpretive phase of the connoisseurship process, the data showed that when critiquing the relationship between teaching and learning, as viewed on the video, the teachers developed their understanding of the possible benefits for the learners of learning in the UC strand. The interpretation phase seemed particularly effective in stimulating the teachers, as general connoisseurs of education, to share perceptive observations about the video.

In their discussion notes, several groups identified the benefit of the cultural relevance of learning about *sasa* contextually for the mainly Māori and Pacific Island children in the video. One bullet list, representative of others, showed a particularly well-informed understanding of this:

- Predominantly Pacific Island children
- Book level at interest level and reading age of children
- Book linked to cultural background of children
- Recent cultural festival established interest in dance
- Used dance style familiar to children.

In the class discussions, remarks such as: “The setting was age appropriate, familiar and using the children’s own environment–promoted their well-being,” expressed the teachers’ approval of how the cultural identities of the children were valued in the teaching. The teachers also talked about how this experience seemed to boost the learners’ confidence and

motivation to learn. Use of terms such as “enjoyment” and “self-esteem” highlighted the teachers’ awareness of how the contextual learning about *sasa* benefitted these learners. Interestingly, the teachers identified similar benefits for the learners’ well-being when learning to create dances (DI).

As discussion opened up there was some strong feeling that the video showed the importance of community involvement in teaching that “affirms cultural connection”, includes “authentic dance”, and “involves community in playing instruments – partnership”. As their critiques went one level deeper, some teachers seemed to be developing their understanding of the value of making personal, embodied and cultural connections for the students with community life. This meets the expectations of the pluralist, postmodern agenda carried by the *ANZC* in which it is recognised that: “Teaching that invites the students’ lived experiences links to issues of social justice” (Sansom, 2011, p. 49). Other New Zealand dance education researchers make similar arguments (Barbour, 2004; Bolwell, 1998; Hong-Joe, 2002; Melchior, 2011).

Research sub-question three: What, if any, preferences for pedagogical strategies do these teachers reveal when teaching includes the contextual study of dance?

As teachers shifted to evaluating what, in their eyes, was successful or unsuccessful in the video, their attention turned towards teaching strategies. There was some general approval of the logical progression of the learning activities as viewed on the video. This list is representative of several full evaluations, covering all four strands:

Evaluate – very successful

- (PK/UC) demonstrated through children’s ownership, enthusiasm, gestures, facial expression, movements which showed their awareness of dance in the community
- The scaffolded progression of activities enabled the children to develop their movements sequentially with confidence
- (DI) Children’s ideas were welcomed, elicited, gathered and valued
- (CI) Informally presented their dance to a group, received feedback

In whole class discussions, some teachers also identified movement features that make a *sasa* traditional, in terms of its group formation, unison relationship and precisely synchronised, iconic arm gestures.

I interpreted these data clusters as showing progression from the first phase of the critique process in terms of developing understanding of teaching within the UC strand.

Teachers wrote and spoke particularly enthusiastically, articulately and prolifically about the Developing Ideas in Dance (DI) strand. Their endorsement of encouraging students to create their own dance movements was clear in the use of such comments as these from the whole class discussions:

“The lesson was very successful. Children have ownership of the little actions they made which lead to the final product.”

“Small group work allowed for personal exploration and creative innovation.”

“Extended children’s movements. Each group member performed their movement sequence in a safe environment, where all children felt included.”

These positive value judgements about the sense of ownership and inclusiveness, that were generated when children used their own creative dance ideas, reflect the teachers’ palpable enthusiasm that I noted in a memo at the time.

One group connected creative innovation to the cultural parameters of the Samoan *sasa*: “Children were all involved in developing ideas which were linked to the context.” This evaluation succinctly captures the culturally appropriate teaching which guided the children’s own dance phrases, and linked the UC and DI strands. This is, I suggest, a relatively sophisticated understanding of how to connect making dance with its specific cultural context.

However, other teachers criticised the teaching in the video, taking issue that the creative dance making had not gone far enough. One set of group notes suggested that there could have been more exploration of “alternatives, bring in standing/travelling, high physical activity component.” One teacher said: “Groups could have taken on different aspects of the story”, and another remarked: “Could have used progression into levels [high, medium and low] and using the whole body.” In response, one teacher drew attention to the possibility of inappropriate innovation, in her curt remark: “Kapa haka – something not to be changed.” This remark was made at a volume just loud enough to be audible to the rest of the group, but none of the other teachers engaged in dialogue.

Had this learning episode shifted towards an intercultural fusion with creative dance, its contextual relationship with the traditional Samoan *sasa* form and functionality would have diminished; the *sasa* would have been ‘changed’. Developing movement in relation to the Dance Elements and episodic narrative using characters and role, as some teachers suggested, rather than creating within the traditional parameters of a *sasa* collage structure and group unison relationship, shifts towards more a Eurocentric creative dance tradition. In this approach, the UC and DI strands could become culturally disconnected, overriding the *sasa* aesthetic and/or social significance.

Rovegno and Gregg, (2007) provide a parallel example of the dilemma of balancing the traditional with the creative. In teaching a mix of traditional Native American Indian folk dance with creative dance, they admitted that they “may have traded authenticity for experiential learning” (p. 216). Their dilemma lay in whether the time the children spent on creating their own dances, on themes such as wildlife and food, would have been better spent learning more about the folk dance.

This dilemma of how far to take the creative process in relation to respecting culturally different traditional dances, is of substantial scholarly interest. Hawaiian sacred hula traditionalists, for instance, were disapproving of versions of hula that merged with Asian and Western choreographic narrative dance traditions: “To them these dances were no longer hula” (Kaeppler, 2004, p. 307). As Gregory Sporton (2006) observes: “The mystical respect for otherness usually ends in commodification, as modernity devours the significance of the

dance” (p. 89). Sporton identified four stages in the assimilation of others’ dance traditions with Western contemporary vocabularies, namely: observe, critique, adopt and own. I suggest that such processes could also occur in dance education, resulting in some disregard for traditional dance knowledge, and the possibility that “[a]s practised, formal education is the ultimate human enterprise in its concern for and trafficking in the signs of culture” (Smith, 2005, p. 201). In curriculum terms, the DI and UC Strands become inappropriately conflated culturally. Although such misappropriation has been acknowledged for many years, the issue of concern here is the possibility for a progressive, liberal, learner-centred education to disinherit learners from their own dance heritages.

Viewing through connoisseurs’ eyes-summary

In summarising the key findings, as grounded in the data, I highlight aspects of the teachers’ learning, and some broader theoretical issues and challenges associated with the UC strand that they encountered during the connoisseur process.

In the descriptive phase of the critique, oversights that conflated performing and viewing with understanding dance contextually, I suggest, formed milestones in the learning experience. The comprehension of both the possibilities and restrictions of studying dance contextually underpinning these milestones should not be underestimated, in that the conflation also raises the question of the need for separation of the UC and CI strands. Unification could help teachers to weave theory with practice more fluidly when teaching about dance. Physical dancing could be linked more easily to contextual understanding, such as viewed in the video when children described the sasa gestures that they had made in relation to the story, demonstrating how their dance told stories laden with contextual significance for their own community. Updates to the arts curriculum reveal the feasibility of such a merger. In the 2007 revised arts curriculum, the CI strand, previously bereft of contextual considerations, reveals noticeable slippage into UC territory in the wording of the revised CI Achievement Objectives at Levels Three, Four and Six.

In the interpretation phase of the critique, as teachers identified the cultural relevance of the teaching for the learners, they locked into one of the underpinnings of the ANZC, its proclivity for valuing different cultural identities. This augurs well in terms of teachers understanding the educational benefits of teaching about dances from contextual perspectives, just as they recognised similar educational benefits of dance making. The teachers and I came to appreciate that even though the UC strand encompassed pedagogical issues that were theoretically and practically different from those associated with teaching of Eurocentric creative dance, both approaches could be of benefit for the learners’ well-being.

When contention about the issue of intercultural borrowing arose during the evaluation and general observation phases of the connoisseur process, another theoretical issue was encountered, although not necessarily resolved during the discussions. When loose ends remained for the teachers, I used these as links into the next phase of their professional development in which, in groups, they planned and taught with inclusion of the UC strand. The data collected in this phase is not presented here because of space restrictions, but it was rich and revealed new questions and dimensions for the inquiry.

Overall, the data revealed that the teachers' critiques became more detailed and insightful as the process proceeded. Revealing, as it did, some of the layers of theory and practice that underpin teaching about culturally diverse dances, I suggest that Eisner's connoisseurship in critiquing a dance education video resource could be a helpful strategy as part of teacher education. I also suggest that, mindful of the debate about the values of filmic resources, it was the layering of the connoisseurship process, group discussions, the video resource, myself as teacher-resource and the teachers' general educational connoisseurship that provided an effective platform for professional development. This combination facilitated coverage of many important factors in a relatively short time, and, I suggest, offers ideas for the effective use of filmic resources in teacher education that could be of interest to a range of stakeholders.

In closing, I feel that it is important not to underestimate the challenges that teachers take on if they are unfamiliar with teaching dance contextually. Importantly during this study, connoisseurship also became a useful analogy for how I proceeded to investigate teaching within the UC strand, and tried to see what otherwise previously I may not have noticed or understood. This paper has only touched on some of the issues related to weaving the theory with practice of dance in teaching about dance contextually. The complexities surrounding teaching about dance contextually arising from this study formed the basis for the next three sets of data collection in the larger inquiry, and I hope to make these available in print in later publications.

Biography

Dr Linda Ashley (PhD University of Auckland; M.A. University of London; B.Ed. (Hons) University of Liverpool). Recently retired from the post of Senior Dance Lecturer and Research Leader for dance at AUT University, New Zealand, Linda has over thirty years of academic, choreographic, teaching and performing experience in dance. Linda has been writing about dance since 1996. Her most recent book, *Dancing with difference: Culturally diverse dances in education*, (Sense Publishers) is based on her doctorate research. *Essential Guide to Dance* (Hodder Education) went into a third edition in 2008, and is used in tertiary dance studies worldwide. *Dance Theory & Practice for Teachers: Physical and performing skills* (Essential Resources, NZ) was published in 2005 and went into a UK edition in 2009. *Dance Sense* is in second edition. Now semi-retired Linda is still writing, researching, lecturing and choreographing as an independent consultant. <http://www.lindaashleyphd.com>

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Notes

[i] The research was part of a doctorate inquiry completed at The University of Auckland in 2010.

[ii] In 1948, pioneer of dance education Rudolf Laban presented his sixteen basic movement themes in his book, *Modern Educational Dance*. He identified abstract movement concepts clustered around what are commonly now known as the ‘Dance Elements’, namely body, space, time, weight / dynamics and relationships.

[iii] The course consisted of four days of practical dance and drama education sessions. Several weeks later, three further days followed when assessment and feedback sessions took place.

[iv] Eisner’s educational connoisseurship has been used in other research, in which the teachers reflected on their own dance teaching (Buck, 2003).

[v] The teachers grouped themselves in groups of three, four or five, mainly based on their previous acquaintance with each other from the degree programme, or a preference to work with teachers from the same educational sector.

[vi] A collation of the participants' critiques was distributed to the teachers, to support their learning and to act as a member check on accuracy of the data collected. This video resource was sent by Ministry free of charge to New Zealand schools to assist with teachers' professional development. It was not intended or appropriate for viewing by children because of its focus on teaching dance in schools.

[vii] This video resource was sent by Ministry free of charge to New Zealand schools to assist with teachers' professional development. It was not intended or appropriate for viewing by children because of its focus on teaching dance in schools.

[viii] The team consisted of myself and experienced dance educators Elizabeth Anderson and Suzanne Renner.

[ix] Full ethical approval was granted from the university ethics committee. In accordance with this the information provided by participants is reported in such a way that they will not be identified.

[x] Other dance researchers have used grounded theory productively to analyse data (Bannon, 2004; Chappell, 2007; and Wilson, 2009).