



CULTIVATING EXCELLENCE IN THE ART OF DANCE: AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ART OF DANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

In the context of the higher education, dance serves as an art form, which complements artistic expression, physical prowess and cultural relevance. Dance teachers rely on different strategies in order to cultivate excellence in dance within higher education institutions. This study delves into the review of teaching strategies, which promote the holistic success of dance students in higher education. It also focuses on the multidimensional landscape of dance education, shedding light on the cultivation of creativity. By assessing the teaching strategies employed, this research seeks to offer a direction for dance educators traversing the intricate journey of supporting the next generation of dance artists.

Introduction

Dance is an important part of China's rich history and cultural heritage. As a form of artistic expression, dance brings inherent and unique quality, which surpasses cultural and geographical barriers. It serves as a global language, which has the potential to connect people across different countries on a cultural point of view. Dance forms in China, including folk, classical and ethnic dances reflect Chinas' diverse cultural traditions. In the higher education sector, the cultivation of excellence, especially in art dance is an important endeavor that exceeds the ordinary attainment of technical proficiency.

Often, teaching strategies for the development of the art dance in higher education entails a wide range of approaches, which are intended to support the dancers' artistic expression, technical competency and the cultural aspects of the dance. There are several teaching strategies that dance educators utilize in order to cultivate excellence in the art of dance, such technical training, specialized training, artistic exploration, individualized coaching, and interdisciplinary education,



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among others. A discussion of these important teaching strategies will be presented in this research and how they support excellence in the art of dance within the higher education.

Background

The art of dance in higher education has undergone major changes, reflecting the dynamic changes in terms of teaching strategies used by the educators and the aspiration of students. Ensuring excellence in the art of dance demands a nuanced approach, which entails the educators' creativity, artistic expression, and technical competency. There are several teaching strategies that are widely used by dance educators to ensure excellence in the art of dance. The initial strategy involves the dance educator facilitating students or dance artists with a well-organized technical foundation in terms of dance forms, including jazz, ballet, and other modern styles (Dang, 2021). The importance of technical training in dance education cannot be overlooked because it forms a benchmark, which instill both disciplines and control among the dancers. In higher education, dance educators tend to use a designed curriculum, which gradually introduced and polishes technical skills. In most cases, relying on this teaching strategy helps dance students to acquire the physical abilities needed for dance excellence. It is important to note that technical training creates a strong foundation for effective dance practice. Further, this strategy provides dancers with the desired flexibility, which is vital for executing dance movements perfectly.

Another teaching strategy that promotes excellence in the art of dance focuses on improving the students' creativity. Educators inspire their students to explore different artistic voices, especially with the use choreography. Excellence in the art of dance does not merely involve physicality, but focuses on artistic expression (Zhang, 2019). In the realm of higher education, dance instructors facilitate a wide range of opportunities for dancers to experiment with their movement techniques. In turn, this promotes student creativity while also improving their self-expression. Across different learning institutions, this strategy employs dance composition classes, dance exercises and combined choreographic activities. Improving student creativity is one of the approaches that instructors use to enrich the students' performance and excellence in art dance.

An important element of promoting excellence in the art of dance in the higher education level comprises the deliberate review of cultural history, dance history, and the inclusive or wide ranging examination of global dance forms in the classroom. Such multidimensional approach is not simply an optional side of dance education but a foundation for a robust dance pedagogy (Le, 2023). In order to ensure excellence in the art of dance, educators are compelled to review dance history where students are given the opportunity to understand dance origins as well as the recent transformation of dance styles. The review of historical dance narratives provides a framework where students explore dance movements, past choreographers and vital movements in the dance continuum. Educators take students through dance history to shed light on the elements of the past, highlighting the motives behind the art of dance evolution and the extent it shapes individuals. Apart from the aspects of dance history, dancers get the chance to study the cultural traditions hidden in dance. Through comparison of dance forms across different societies and countries, students are taken through a variety of culture and traditions in relation to the art of dance. A clear

understanding of such historical contexts from different societies helps students to value dance as a common tool, which goes beyond physical boundaries.

One outstanding foundation for excellence in the art of dance focuses on the integration of performance opportunities in the higher education syllabus. Educators rely on this strategic method to close the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical use. In turn, this empowers students to utilize their artistic and technical skills in ideal situations, thereby making it easy to achieve excellence. Wang & Zhang (2018) indicated that dance education goes beyond the limits of studio and classroom. Many higher education centres understand the importance of practical exposure for dancers. Hence, they organize a variety of performance activities, which are intended to immerse the dancer with the real-world dance experience. Further, some institutions and educators rely on in-house productions where students are given the chance to translate the content learned in classroom into choreographed works. This strategy does not only improve the students' performance but also increases their chances of perfection in the art of dance.

Dance as a form of art exceeds the mere physicality and this evolving landscape requires an inclusive teaching strategies. As a response to the changes in dance education, educators have started to acknowledge the benefits of a holistic approach, which comprises technical precision and artistic expression (Wanta & Vasinrom, 2022). Educators tend to guide students using a variety of dance styles, which inform them about modern dance, including ballet or even the styles involved in hip-hop. Such diversity in dance programs offers an immense opportunity for both educators and students to achieve excellence in the art of dance. Similarly, the rich diversity of dance programs requires a keen balance from educators. Educators are compelled to respect the traditional dance forms whereas instructing about the creative exploration of dance. In the higher education sector, educators are required to equip students with both the technical acumen and artistic ideas and visions to excel in the art of dance. Educators are trusted with imparting knowledge of dance to students and guiding them to achieve the best results.

Problem statement

In the context of higher education, the quest for excellence in the art of dance is stained with several challenges. Although the efforts to develop dancers, together with improving their artistic expression is important, the effectiveness of the diverse teaching strategies in attaining a robust goal remains a subject of inquiry. The key issue or problem lies in the need to assess and improve teaching strategies in a manner that can boost the performance of dancers, especially addressing the gap between practice and theory. The shortage of competent and qualified dance educators is also another issue that affects the attainment of excellence in the art of dance. In the midst of educator shortages, some higher education institutions face the problem of supporting technically expert dancer who are culturally aware and creative due to the lack of resources.

Research objectives

This research is guided by the following objectives;

- 1) To identify the teaching strategies used in higher education to promote excellence in the art of dance.

- 2) To examine the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used in higher education for excellence in the art of dance.
- 3) To examine innovative pedagogical approaches and their advantages for dance education in higher institutions.

Significance of the research

This research has immense importance in the sector of dance education in higher institutions of learning. By focusing on teaching strategies for the inclusive development of dance students, this study seeks to improve the pedagogical landscape. In particular, the findings acquired in this study will provide educators with evidence-based insights, which are vital in refining their teaching approaches. The study also adds value to the dance students. The knowledge gained by the educators will be key in ensuring that future dance students across higher education institutions are equipped with technical skills. Further, this research plays a vital role in the wider discourse on the evolving power of dance education, outlining its role in influencing an inclusive individuals who go beyond boundaries via the common language of dance.

Literature Review

Extant literature has affirmed that the art of dance stands at the crossing of technical training, cultural richness and artistic expression, which must be clearly taught by the educator. In the higher education, the quest to ensure excellence in the art of dance demands a nuanced review and understanding of teaching strategies, which entail the holistic growth of students. A study by Zhang (2019) suggested the importance of progressive skill development whereby educators start with the basic movements and later proceed to the complex movements. As a teaching strategy, this approach requires educators to take every step at a time. Particularly, in higher education dance activities, students start with a low level of experience. Hence, starting with the basic movements and later introducing intricate styles ensures that all students garner a good technical foundation. Through progressive skill development, students are able to realize their improvement. This strategy further averts overwhelm by not starting with complex dance techniques. Consequently, it ensure that all students have a strong grasp of the basic dance movements before focusing on the challenging ones.

Wen (2023) theorized the importance of dance students collaborating with other students from different disciplines, including visual arts and music. It is evident that the art of dance does not occur in isolation. This implies that dance intersects with different art forms. Educators have a huge role to play in ensuring that dance students collaborate to improve their performance. Guided by the help of educators, dancers can interact with musicians in workshops or studio to master the connection between movement and rhythm. Through this strategy of collaboration, educators empower dancers to broaden their minds while also being able to obtain inspiration from different sources. Constant engagement in class activities, involving dance sessions, improves students' creativity, especially in scenarios where students are exposed to unique artistic viewpoints.

The importance of focusing on choreography as a vital factor of dance has been examined in past studies. Yams (2018) indicated that teachers must be ready to create new chances for students to explore their choreographic works. Choreography is an important element of dance, which enables students to design their pieces as an influential teaching strategy. Students are empowered to become good performers as well as creators. Depending on the resources available in the school, dancers can explore choreography via workshops and normal assignments. This can help them to craft new movements, choose suitable music and express their feelings via choreography. Students engage in chore to boost their creativity and locate artistic voices. The use of creative sessions is considered essential in the art of dance. Educators often schedule regular sessions to encourage students explore their ideas or even express themselves via dance. Further, educators facilitate a supportive and safe learning environment where students are able to experiment with gestures, movements, and emotions. Across different schools, educators utilize different teaching strategies, especially depending on the needs of the students. Often, students are introduced to the diverse aspects of composition, which are applicable to their selected genre of dance. Educator play a vital role, which includes using innovative practices to guide students how to organize their movements or to convey specific ideas successfully.

Kristine (2018) emphasized that the historical dimensions of dance are vital for dance education. Teachers are expected to guide their students through diverse socio-cultural aspects where dance forms evolve. This is not limited to a specific society or country but involves a wide exploration of dance forms from different communities. By exploring and comparing both cultural dance traditions with modern dance styles, students are prepared to embrace the most useful movements. Velten (2022) highlighted the importance of ensuring a balance between practical experience and artistic expression whereby both teachers and students must understand their role. A suggestion regarding a comprehensive teaching approach, which includes vital aspects is crucial, especially in facilitating students with the knowledge and artistic values to excel as dance artists.

Past studies have also examined diverse approaches in relation to dance education. According to Le (2023), a comprehensive strategy is vital for promoting an inclusive learning environment. Under this pedagogy, educators are warned to respect their students' personal space, in addition to understanding their physicality intrinsic in dance. Effective teaching strategies comprises of verbal explanations and illustration of suitable stance and movements. This is often headed by clear communication regarding the aim of physical contact whenever necessary. Educators are required to diversify teaching approaches, especially by showing diverse ways to approach a single task, dance movements, or even problem-solving. In addition, this pedagogy supports positivity by facilitating students with instant feedback about their dance efforts. In turn, this improves their confidence and motivation in dance skills, which is ideal for ensuring success.

Effective teaching of dance skills is largely informed by a range of theoretical frameworks, such as strategies and personal styles (Hu & Fan, 2020). Critical pedagogy outlines a variety of teaching styles, including the authoritarian approach where the teacher makes the key decisions, in addition

to the student-centred teaching style, which is governed by the student decision making. Apart from these teaching styles, there are other ways to structure a dance class, stemming from classes committed to skills acquisition to classes with the aim to improve inter-personal skills. The structure of the dance class is determined by the expertise of the teacher. Students vary in terms of their talent, personality and ability and so dance educators employ different teaching styles, including teacher-directed to student-directed teaching strategies to get the best out of the students. The reliance on developmental approach as a teaching strategy has been widely recognized in dance education. Under this strategy, educators introduce developmental approach in effort to establish creative dance skills along with technical proficiency. Apart from the common teaching practices, educators adhere to key elements, such as observing major issues related to dance teaching. By encouraging a healthy awareness to the physical aspect of dance, educators create enough space for exploratory learning where students are allowed to share ideas and obtain feedback from their educators. The reliance on positive teaching strategies, including facilitating students' adequate information serves to build their confidence and the desire to partake in boosting their dance skills.

Methodology

A suitable methodology is mandatory in order to examine teaching strategies for the comprehensive development of the art of dance in higher education. Specifically, this research used a mixed method research design. Hence, the research combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to facilitate an overview of teaching strategies in dance education. Using this approach will help the researcher to collect numerical data about the effectiveness of teaching strategies and in-depth understandings of students' and educators experiences. Both educators and dance students are the main participants of this research.

Quantitative data collection

The researcher developed a structured questionnaire to collect data from diverse stakeholders, including dance students and educators. The questions were designed in a manner that gathered quantitative data. A quantitative survey was then shared to the dance educators and educators in higher education institutions. The questionnaire focused wholly on teaching strategies, and this included their perceived effectiveness. The researcher relied on a Likert-scale questions as well as multiple choice questions in the research. Survey responses were analyzed via statistical software to locate the patterns among the teaching strategies, on top of their perceived effectiveness. The researcher relied on a descriptive statistics for data analysis (Giri, 2020).

Qualitative data collection

The researcher collected qualitative data using in-depth interviews, particularly with dance students and their educators. The interviews created enough space for open-ended discussions that focused on the participant's perspectives on teaching strategies, as well as their effect on students' comprehensive development. A purposive sampling technique was more suitable and it ensured

that there was diversity in terms of the participants' experiences. Interviews were chosen since they provide participants the chance share their thoughts. In addition, qualitative data collection revolved around classroom observations, which were carried out to determine the success of teaching strategies. It is interesting to note that these direct observations provided qualitative data on the actual use of strategies in dance education environment. The researcher recorded the observations, noting down the key points about students dynamics and the incorporation of diverse disciplines in dance education. The qualitative data gathered via the above methods were subjected to a thematic analysis. This process entailed the review of common themes and patterns in the data.

Results

This sections outlines the results obtained from qualitative and quantitative data collection methods used. The qualitative results were as follows; qualitative interviews helped the researcher to understand the lived experiences of the participants (dance students and educators). For instance, they offered in-depth understanding of why and how behind the perceived different teaching strategies adopted in the higher education. Using the qualitative interviews helped the students and educators to express their experiences, especially with specific teaching strategies. This was highly beneficial in terms of revealing the effect or the suitability of certain teaching strategies. Hence, the open ended questions empowered the participants to reflect on their journey in regard to dance. Educators take a lead in implementing teaching strategies. Using the interviews helped them to share their stories and the changes in their teaching strategies. In relation to ensuring excellence in the art of dance, students revealed how the teaching strategies employed transformed their learning experience. In particular, the students indicated that there were instants of epiphany and related challenges, although their educators played a key role to overcome the obstacles. Despite the issues encountered during dance sessions, the students were satisfied with the teaching strategies used by their educators.

In the context of dance in higher institutions, quantitative data collection and analysis played a vital role, especially in highlighting the efficiency of diverse teaching strategies. The data offered useful insights about the dance and educators' perceptions. In turn, this provided a quantitative gauge of the effect of different teaching strategies on teaching and student performance. The researcher employed a Likert scale survey that was distributed to the participants. The data gathered from the surveys was analyzed to suggest trends in the perception of educators and dance students. For instance, the collaborative teaching strategy attained higher ratings compared to other strategies. Most of the dance students largely agreed with this teaching strategy, citing that collaboration helped them to perform or excel in the art of dance. This signified the effectiveness of collaborative teaching strategy in the art of dance. Further, educators acknowledged the role played by collaborative teaching strategy in improving dancers' movements and learning experiences.

Discussion

The art of dance in higher institutions has evolved in the past years. In the past years, dance focused largely on performance mastery with limited dance forms, including ballet. With the recent integration of music and dance in the curriculum, higher education institutions, with the aid of dance educators have been able to embrace numerous dance styles. This has been made possible through the reliance on a variety of teaching strategies, which not only make work easy but also ensure excellence in the art of dance among the students. Central to this research and discussion is the new trend and shift directed towards collaborative and innovative teaching strategies, which help educators to convey important dance skills, movement, and techniques to help students. Although technical excellence is a key foundation in the art of dance, the emerging recognition that comprehensive development of dance goes beyond physicality is undeniable. It contains artistic expression, cultural awareness and in-depth knowledge of dance history. Through effective teaching strategies, educators inspire students to master and also become versatile and increase their creativity. This is made a reality through the exploration of dance history whereby students are able to compare dance forms from different cultures and garner in-depth insights about dance movements.

Teaching strategies are considered the foundation for dance in higher institutions. They serve as the main tools that dance educators utilize to ensure development in the students. It is worth noting that teaching strategies entail a wide range of varieties, including the traditional approaches to the innovative methods. Interestingly, teaching strategies or methods also comprise interdisciplinary collaborations, performance opportunities and cultural immersions, all which are designed to offer excellence in the art of dance. Although pursuing excellence in the art of dance is a goal for every higher education, there are a fair share of challenges that educators must deal with. For example, educators are expected to strike a balance between traditional dance forms and the innovative techniques. In order to deal with the growing needs of dance students and also navigate fully in the ever-changing dance industry, educators are expected to keep on refining their teaching strategies. In the midst of challenges, however, lies good opportunities for students' growth. Educators are given the opportunity to experiment with the emerging teaching strategies. This is considered useful in terms of adjusting to the changing times and enabling students to become versatile in the art of dance.

Consequently, the aim of nurturing excellence in dance education is to guide students to become experienced dance artists who are not just technically competent but also able to convey emotions, tell stories via dance movements and engage with different audiences in a professional manner. The impact of effective teaching strategies is not simply restricted to academic success but also extends to individual self-growth, confidence and willingness to excel in career path. This research plays an important role in supporting dance education, especially in higher education where educators have the potential to guide students to achieve their dreams.

Conclusion

In efforts to ensure excellence in the art of dance in the higher education, this research has reviewed the evolving landscape of teaching strategies that play a key part in dance students. The evolution of dance education in the past years is a testimony that dance courses in higher education institutions are changing to align with the growing needs of students. The change towards a collaborative and inclusive approach to teaching, specifically the strategies that entail not just technical proficiency but also artistic expression and historical knowledge contributes immensely towards nurturing a competent dance artists. In the context of higher education, educators acts as catalysts who guide the journey of students as they work to succeed in their dance fields. They rely on the most suitable teaching strategies to empower students to attain good performance and also become competent creators of art.

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