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# Creative and embodied methods to teach reflections and support students' learning

## Introduction

Dance education in the 21st Century within UK conservatoire environments generally lives under the umbrella of Higher Education Dance, but its roots lie in vocational or professional training. Skill acquisition, discipline, professionalism and creativity are at the core of vocational dance training. The acquisition of practice-based knowledge is not new. The idea of 'learning through doing' in dance goes back centuries. This notion has traditionally been based on mimesis and repetition, frequently embedded in traditional and inherited pedagogic practices based on a master-pupil hierarchical model. However, the focus of dance pedagogy in the 21st Century has started to shift. Higher Education provision in dance has moved towards a more student-centred model, whereby the learner dancer's ownership of the training process is encouraged.

The evolution of contemporary dance techniques and the introduction of somatic practices into dance training has altered the landscape for dance educators. There is an implicit notion of the *knowing* existing within the *doing*, and therefore embodied practice is at the core. Developing "professional self-sufficiency" (Jones & Ryan, 2014, p.51) is at the heart of the learning experience. We believe that in response to these shifts there is a need for a renewed focus on theoretical approaches and academic engagement, a focus reminiscent of and aligned with the conceptual frameworks commonly associated with social sciences and education, in which the process of arriving at 'professional self-sufficiency' is inextricably linked to reflective practice. Traditionally accustomed pedagogical approaches, however, often foster superficial reflections or rumination. In this paper, we show that creative arts-based reflective work provides the impetus needed in dance education for reflective practice that leads to professional self-sufficiency. We commence with an exploration of reflective practice and the relationship between reflection and learning to provide the basis and philosophical underpinning for incorporating a creative and reflective approach to dance education. We then consider critically how this approach worked in one specific context – Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance.

## Reflective practice

Reflective practice is something of a buzzword within education (Calderhead, 1989). From Dewey (1933) and Schön's (1987) ideas of reflective teaching and reflection in action to Brookfield's (1995) critically reflective teacher, the discourse of reflective practice within teacher education has become a dogma (Edwards & Nicoll, 2006). Teachers in schools and higher education along with those in the social, medical and caring professions are trained to become reflective practitioners and to model this practice (Hatton & Smith, 1995; McAndrew & Roberts, 2015; Tremmel, 1993). Reflection is also an essential part of a conservatoire training for students in order to develop them as artists and professionals within their field (see for example Gaunt, 2016; Duffy, 2016; Guillaumier, 2016; Treagar et al., 2016). Reflective practice is seen as part of the process of an artistic or research practice. As such it has a role within the community and creative arts (Meyer & Wood, 2016), as part of "flow" (Hefferon & Ollis, 2006), impact on performance (Woronchak & Comeau, 2016), and part of identity formation (Wareing, 2017).

But what is reflective practice, and how can it be supported? Reflection and reflective practice mean different things to different people; there is not one agreed definition (see for example O'Sullivan, Tannehill, & Hinchion, 2008; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Reflection needs to be in context, and conscious in order to affect change. In the context of a conservatoire or dance school, it makes sense that reflection be embodied (Leigh & Bailey, 2013), and not limited to text or words alone (Leigh, 2016). Reflection can be facilitated through writing, dialoguing, visual methods such as drawing or mark-making, movement, and through the use of objects or metaphorical representations. Reflective practice is hard to teach in isolation, as it has to happen in the context of an event. We have to reflect *about something*. Reflective practice is often conflated with reflexivity, which can be thought of as the next step on from reflection, as it implies a change in practice as a result of reflecting. We want our students to first reflect as part of a habitual reflective practice, and then to become reflexive – that is to progress and develop as a result of their reflections.

Whilst reflection can have positive impact on self-efficacy, practice and performance, it can sometimes be conflated with rumination, which in contrast has been shown to have negative effects on both physical and mental health (Joireman, Parrott III, & Hammersla,

2002). Ruminating, rather than reflecting, negatively impacts performance, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Given the context in dance education of young, teenage students vulnerable to negative self-esteem and body-image issues, it is imperative that reflection is taught in a way that emphasises an effective reflective practice. It is a human tendency to reflect (or ruminate) on what went badly, so how can we structure reflection so that it is a positive and meaningful experience? One way is to introduce a variety of structures and forms to the reflective practice, and to guide students through the process, pointing out the tendency to focus on the negative so that they are forewarned.

Another method is to widen out the idea of reflecting to include other modes in addition to writing, which is often the default approach within education. This is particularly important within a conservatoire setting, where admission is on performance rather than academic attainment and a higher proportion of students are likely to have specific learning difficulties of some kind than in other higher education settings (Leveroy, 2013). Journaling, and mark-making can be used as reflective tools (Oliver & Lalik, 2001), along with model making and drawing (Hay & Pitchford, 2016). Such multi-modal approaches, whilst often used with children to understand their experiences (Darbyshire, Macdougall, & Schiller, 2005) allow learning and reflection to happen in students and individuals of all ages. Creative arts-based methods (Kara, 2015) are, for example, one way in which it is possible to represent the experience of emotions (Leigh, 2017), disrupt habitual patterns and encourage change (Lapum, Ruttonsha, Church, Yau, & David, 2011), promote empowerment (Lyon, 2016) and explore identity (Gauntlett, 2007). Reflective practice is often associated with language and the ability to articulate artistic and or professional practice in written or oral forms. For young dancers in conservatoire training, the distance between practice and language can be great. The journey from experience to articulation will require a re-orientation or a re-construction of thought. To facilitate this process, if young dancers in training are given the opportunity to engage with a variety of reflective methodologies in order to access their embodied processes and arrive at useful conclusions, the gap between experience and verbal articulation of that may be shortened. Creative approaches to reflection, through artistic, audio-visual media or embodied expression, open up the channels of evaluative thinking in a more accessible way.

Reflective practice can also lead to fruitful exchanges of experience that in turn allow growth and development. Rather than being an insular or individual process, a collective exchange of experiences enhances the practice of a student group and propels them towards more engaged and active learning practices. The dialogue between the practice and the thinking around the nature of that practice, as well as the behaviours within that practice is a dynamic way of approaching dance training. Professional training in dance at conservatoire level, with its time and achievement pressures and the intensity of being with a group of people for long periods of time does not easily allow for moments of repose and reflection. The ideal is that the training embeds reflective practice as part of the day to day process, allowing students to practice and reflect equally.

Using reflective practice as an integral pedagogical tool within elite dance training does not mean that they will automatically produce better results in the studio or stage. In order for reflection to work as a pedagogic tool, it needs to come away from the focus on the product – the piece on stage or the exercise or skill in class – and enable the students to see themselves as practitioners. More specifically, through reflection, students ought to arrive at a process and practice that meets the needs of self, others and the art form itself. Approaching reflection from the angle of process and development can positively impact on both personal growth and dance practice of a student, and through collective and collaborative sharing of experiences to the development of the group as a self-efficient ensemble.

Dancers inherently reflect on what they have done in class and how they might be able to improve. However, the simple notion of what worked and what did not work can form a barrier, due to the perfectionist tendencies of students in dance training. The notion of accomplishment is elusive, and the self-image of the dancer can have deep-rooted negative perceptions of never being good enough. Perfectionism is commonly defined as "the setting of excessively high standards of performance in conjunction with a tendency to make overly critical self-evaluations" (Frost et al., 2014:np). Whilst reflection can be a positive tool in the process of unpicking negative emotions around self-worth and ability, it can easily remain at a superficial level. Frequently students will focus purely on the technique and what went

wrong (Leijen et al., 2012). This narrow focus is because the development of technical virtuosity often takes precedence over everything else.

Teachers have a responsibility to share their knowledge and experience in a way that facilitates independent exploration, learning, and self-efficacy in young dancers. A proactive and collaborative approach between students and teachers in reflection and target setting has potential to transform the dance classroom from a passive, mimetic learning space to an active and engaged space. Capturing this in a more structured way is a step further for dancers and regarding this project, it was vital to offer a multiplicity of ways to do this.

## Reflection and learning in dance education

In artistic disciplines, the idea of reflecting on feedback is embedded in the psyche of the person. In the case of dancers this reflection is external to the person – it is the mirror, the body in the mirror, the gaze of peers, or the scrutiny of the teacher. Although within the context of dance education, learning is a collective experience and happens in the context of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), dance classrooms are not often seen as safe, open or democratic spaces. Surrounded by mirrors and potentially critical eyes, dance classrooms are exposing, be it in relation to body image or virtuosic achievement. Without wanting to demonise the studio as a space full of traps, studies in the field have investigated the impact of this environment on the training of young dancers (see Lakes, 2005; Radell et al., 2004). Furthermore, there is a traditionally established expectation of passivity, emerging from the hierarchical structure of the master-pupil relationship, particularly within the context of classical ballet and modern dance techniques. Within this practice the learning happens through mimesis and repetition, focusing on achieving the ideal form expected by the master-teacher. This inherent pedagogy within dance education identifies the prevalence of a teaching approach which "gives power to the teacher to manipulate students' bodies" (Green, 2003, p.100).

Expanding the 'offer' within the dance curriculum in higher education/conservatoire settings to incorporate both physical skill acquisition and cognitive development, moving to the notion of a 'thinking practitioner' could emancipate the trainee dancer from the

constraints of subordinate behaviour. Furthermore, incorporating a variety of perspectives through which dance training is perceived and experienced, and balancing the curriculum to ensure technique practices and creative explorations serve more equal purposes could lead to a more holistic approach to dance education. There is an inherent polarity within dance education between technical training and creative exploration, and this often forms a rift in the pedagogic approach.

A more democratic approach to the body is gradually shifting pedagogy towards a student-centred model. This is in vogue with the current lean of higher education which has advocated "learning through student discovery and construction of knowledge" (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p.7) since the 1990s. In this model, the expert teacher becomes a facilitator of knowledge and the students are "active discoverers and constructors of their own knowledge" (ibid.). In dance education, this has resulted in a re-framing of pedagogy concerned with general enhancement and development. We can observe a noticeable shift of the practice of learning from "dis-embodied knowing to embodied knowing" (Sööt & Viskus, 2014, p.1193). The importance of ideas of embodiment in higher education and dance education have been discussed by authors such as Leigh (2019), Bailey & Pickard (2010), and Pickard (2019).

We believe that by bringing all aspects of dance training together under the umbrella of reflective practice, the very nature of the training and the art form of dance itself can be illuminated through systematic analysis and critical engagement. After all, "reflection involves questioning existing assumptions, values and perspectives that underlie people's actions, decisions and judgements. The purpose of questioning is to liberate people from their habitual ways of thinking and acting" (Leijen et al., 2012, p.205). Reflective practice can be the vehicle through which we identify professional goals, evaluate skills, behaviours and set clear parameters for personal and collective development. A more systematic process of reflecting on practice within elite dance training, that is bespoke to 'dance as a practice' and not just evaluating technical achievement, could bring a more nuanced and refined collective or self-awareness and overall development.

## Philosophical approach

Behind every pedagogic model there is an underlying philosophy, either inherited or newly innovated, and influenced by societal values and cultural norms. Implicit in the approach to teaching and learning are behavioural expectations of both teacher and student. Dance is no exception. Dance training has inherited a traditionally established approach to learning – notions of mimesis, authoritarianism and concern with extrinsic values and aesthetic norms. This has been unravelled and scrutinised over decades of development in contemporary dance pedagogy. Cartesian dualism has been dismantled in favour of more connected and holistic approaches. Although there is no space in this study to explore this evolution within dance, it is important to bring into the discussion the influences of psychology, somatic education and improvisation as conduits to an enhanced interaction between mind and body.

A holistic approach to dance training encompasses technical, creative and personal development. Identifying self with a particular dance style and its characteristics can be common in young dancers. However, their motivation to train in a conservatoire is testament to their desire to approach training from a professional perspective as well as engaging in developing their technique and in some conservatoire settings, their creative voice. It is the responsibility of the school to ensure that these areas are developed and nurtured, allowing the individuality of the dancer to come through.

The notion of an ultimate truth with regards to a correct approach is rooted in a traditionally accepted pedagogic model inherited from classical ballet. The expectations of learning and achievement operate in relation to specific (un)attainable ideals. This potentially leads to a compromising of pedagogy – in its etymological sense of knowledge exchange – in accepting authoritarian methods in the dance studio. Normalising authoritarianism in the name of art stands firmly against the notion of empowerment and self-efficacy that forms the essence of reflective practice models (Johns, 2000). Questioning the inheritance of the "authoritarian roots" (Lakes, 2005, p.1) has been part of dance research discourse for the last few decades, but the perpetuating of autocratic approaches by mainstream dance institutions, or even a "veneer of protectiveness" (ibid.) keeps the debate relevant. Current discourses emphasise the importance of the dancers' agency

(Roche, 2011) offering a model for experiencing process in dance as a dynamic exchange of knowledge through embodiment. Jenifer Roche argues for the student dancer to be placed "at the centre of the learning process by exercising agency, making choices and building self-reflexivity rather than being a passive surface to be inscribed" (Roche, 2011, p.8).

Established methods of dance training offer a sense of familiarity, an embodied 'home' for young learners who have danced since they were 3 years old, working through the ranks of their local dance school. These traditional practices are embodied and imbued in the dancer's approach to training. Within the more independent nature of higher education these normative behaviours and comfort zones may be challenged, and boundaries pushed in order to affect change. This links back to the notion of the motivation to train at a professional level – the quality of the motivation is significant as it directly influences behavioural approaches to training. Motivation has been described as the "drive to strive" (Quested, Cumming & Duda, 2010, p.1) thus offering reflective-practice as a platform to thrive. Motivational models suggest that the *capturing* of experience in order to understand the *why* and *how* of personal choices and behaviours, allows for a clearer understanding of the "quality of motivation" (ibid.), unveiling for the learner dancer their levels of autonomy or 'self-determination' versus their needs for external drivers. Reflective practice is deeply embedded in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000). A reflective approach to learning sits at the heart of psychological efficiency as it puts the trainee dancer in a cycle of self-awareness practice (observing, identifying, analysing and applying) which can lead to a clearer set of goals and achievements. As these processes take place the dancer can mature and learn by self-empowerment, rather than extrinsic reward (Quested and Duda, 2009).

Identifying the key motivational energies that drive an individual dancer's creative and artistic practice can facilitate the journey towards autonomy of practice and the challenging of autocratic approaches to teaching. In an industry that is increasingly demanding extreme versatility, the facets of self increase and so do the levels of awareness needed to understand and reflect on self. Roche's notion of 'embodying multiplicities' suggests that these notions are not only cognitive but reside in the (hi)story of the body itself and the accumulation of physical/movement experiences (Roche, 2011). Engaging in embodied reflective practices which put the body and its movement, as well as creativity and

improvisation or play at the heart of the reflective process, can begin to let us discover a self-awareness borne from more internalised processes (Mason & Davies, 2009).

From an embodied spatial and temporal knowing, we can also embody the articulation of that knowing – through art, through play, through design, through film and finally words. "Embodiment is in one sense a refutation of the Cartesian mind/body polarity…" (Block & Kissell, 2001, p.2), but more poignantly for this article the notion of dance practice as "being-in-the-world" (ibid.) rather than *doing*, brings the "body-subject" (ibid.) into the reflective frame, rather than the *body-object*, which is being lured to the reflective mirror and the master-teacher's voice.

## Context of Rambert School

At Rambert School, Classical Ballet has a prominent place alongside Modern/Contemporary dance in training in established techniques. The School offers 2-year foundation and 3-year BA degrees, and postgraduate study. Undergraduates can be accepted into the School from age 16, and a high proportion are international students. The majority wish to find employment within the sector on graduation. The 50-50 vision of the school aims to produce dancers who are as versatile as possible and therefore employable in a variety of dance contexts (Rambert, 2016). The retention of individuality is at the core of the training and the diversity of bodies and people within the student cohort very refreshing. This vision requires the teaching and learning to account for individual needs, aspirations and the different journeys of each young dancer, possibly encouraging a more diverse exchange in practices. Within this positive vision, the expectations on the dancers in training are not only focused on physical and emotional strength and resilience, but also a sense of self-efficacy and professionalism.

The young dancers are required to engage with the two disciplines of ballet and contemporary/modern dance equally irrespective of their backgrounds and initial thoughts on where they want to go as dancers. The way in which they assimilate the information, apply corrections and evaluate their performance is a very individualised process and informed by what they have experienced in the past and how they have been taught. Some have not experienced the more traditional style found in ballet as they have come to

Rambert through exposure to dance in school and other settings which have emphasised more collaborative and student-centred ways of teaching and learning. However, dance classrooms and training practices are inherently collective. Training takes place in large rooms and large groups, so the traditional hierarchical model of master-pupil, even in its most positive form, becomes a norm. Feedback is also part of that norm. Knowledge is transmitted in specialised terminology and the focus is primarily on technical skill development, which will often be relayed to the class as a whole. As a result, the young dancers need to engage with an added layer of self-reflection and individual target setting, based on collective class feedback. Individualised feedback is also common, but not as frequent. The dance class is an ensemble experience.

## The project

Following a study funded by the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD) in 2016/17 surveying reflective practice across all the schools in the conservatoire, the CDD funded a collaboration between Rambert School, the University of Kent and University College London Institute of Education (UCL IOE) in 2017/18 to explore whether a creative, embodied approach to teaching reflective practice would be of value. The University of Kent and UCL IOE provided expertise around embodied reflective practice, creative research methods and a somatic approach to movement. We wanted to explicitly embed reflective practice at Rambert, and decided to focus on one cohort of 45 second year undergraduate students. A significant percentage of the Choreography and Performance module for these students included reflective work on their performance and choreographic experiences. As reflective practice was not explicitly taught as part of the curriculum, the School and CDD welcomed this project as a pilot to enrich the reflective 'tool-box' of the cohort and experiment with multi-modal perspectives and methodologies in order to discover the right balance of practice and theory based reflective approaches. Part of our initial questioning was regarding whether reflective practice sessions should be compulsory or not within the conservatoire provision and in which format they would be more effective and productive. The project therefore served as an experiment to identify the level of reflection already acquired and the most effective ways to develop and enhance this practice to support the vocational curriculum.

We devised five sessions working with the cohort in an open space, integrating movement exercises based around Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002) with theoretical models of reflective practice (Brookfield, 1995; Kolb, 1984) and arts-based activities using ideas of model-making and metaphor (Finlay, 2015). The relevant ethics procedures were followed in all three institutions so that the study could be recorded and researched, and consent was gained from all participants. Each session was filmed by a visual anthropologist in order to record the embodied experiences of the students.

The project was designed to be collaborative and participatory, drawing on Nicole's expertise in participatory and creative work with students (Brown et al., 2018; Brown, 2018), Jennifer's work on reflective practice and embodiment (Leigh & Bailey, 2013; Leigh 2016; Leigh 2017), Phaedra's experience as a teacher of dance in higher education and Catriona's prize-winning films (Blackburn, 2017). Each of us would be present in each session and would work together to introduce the students to different ways of reflecting, making the ideas relevant, creative and accessible by ensuring that they were embodied rather than theoretical, giving them access to creative materials, and using film as way to record and capture the process.

We ran five 2-hour sessions over one semester. The students were each given a journal. They were told that this was for them and them alone, that they were not expected to share or submit any part of it unless they chose to do so. This was integral to the study as reflection for assessment is not true reflection, as its purpose alters from eliciting change to passing an assessment (Leigh, 2016). They were asked to keep two entries a week as a minimum throughout the project, trying out the models that we exposed them to in class (as in the table below). They were encouraged to use multiple forms of 'journaling' such as film, vlogs, or any other mode that appealed to them if writing was a barrier. They were also given details of 'Padlet', a post-it site, where they could choose to share things with the cohort.

Content of sessions:

| Session number | Outline of activities | Theoretical model | Homework |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------|

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Session 1** | Introduction to journals, improvisation exercises to start becoming aware of tracking their movement through space, and the associated feelings, and emotions. Individually and in pairs. | Rolfe et al.'s (2001) "what, so what, what now?" model of reflection | 2 journal entries per week; open invitation to post thoughts or images on padlet; think of who they were as a dancer, and bring an object that represented them |
| **Session 2** | Improvised movement exercise tracking movement and associated thoughts. Half the group reflected on their objects; half built Lego models to answer the question "what is dance for you?" | Using creative and metaphorical reflective techniques | 2 journal entries per week; post an image on padlet |
| **Session 3** | Movement exercise tracking movement and associated images; groups of 5 choreographed a short piece with the theme of "reflection", reflecting through each lens in turn | Brookfield's (1995) four lenses, which were adapted for the context to be autobiographical, colleagues / company, audience, and theory | 2 journal entries per week; to post video of their group's dance on padlet; to read at least one article / watch a video that pertained to their chosen theory |
| **Session 4** | Movement exercises tracking movement and then improvising in relation to all streams of modality and in relation to the theory they had considered | Adapted version of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle | 2 journal entries per week; to work on a piece of writing/dance/image that demonstrated their learning and experiences in the project |
| **Session 5** | Focus group and individual interviews | | |

## Conclusions

The project was funded with a small grant, however, in addition to the value of the project to the students, we need to consider the cost of resources and staff time. As the project was a collaboration between three institutions, ¾ of the travel and staff costs were not borne by the grant budget. With four members of staff in each session it was resource heavy, however it was necessary to achieve the level of individualisation and documentation we required.

From early on in the project it was clear that the dedicated reflective practice sessions were of value to the dance students. They reacted with pleasure and delight when given their own reflective journals and use of sharpie pens to write in them. They were willing to participate in both movement exercises and reflective discussions. Although the amount of preparation that students put in before each session varied, it was clear that in each session they were engaged and on task. Phaedra noticed that students who were normally very quiet and inhibited were talking and sharing their thoughts and experiences. The students on the whole were very honest and allowed themselves to be vulnerable and supported by the facilitators and their peers. The cohort worked well together in the sessions, and they were encouraged to interact with a variety of peers in order to make the exchange of ideas as fruitful as possible. We found that we had the most beneficial discussions when the large cohort was divided into two or three smaller groups. They were less inhibited in smaller groups, and much more attentive to each other's ideas with the added benefit of improved acoustics. However, one downside was that Jennifer and Nicole did not get to know all the students as well, and we did not all hear what they had to say and could not record all the groups on film. This also meant that the discussions in each group were not necessarily replicated. This was rectified by ensuring that we re-visited areas in our focus group questioning, where we did also discuss the gradual building of trust between the participants and the external researchers.

The challenges posed by the intensive timetable the students have, as well as the fact that it changed every week and the level of engagement with industry professionals and performance rehearsals is very high, meant that attendance in the sessions varied. It was a timetabled compulsory session, but in reality, students' wider commitments affected

attendance. The sessions were spread out throughout the Spring term. There were some long gaps between sessions and momentum was lost. This resulted in variability regarding students' engagement with the independent tasks. In a cohort of over 40 students this is probably normal – some will engage more than others, so we tried over the five sessions to ensure that everyone had something to work with/on. Additionally, the fact that they were young adults, a level of independence in terms of how much or how little to engage with the out-of-session work was required. This could potentially provide us with indirect feedback on the relevance, achievability and effectiveness of the independent tasks. A more concentrated run of sessions, for example over a week, may have allowed more momentum to build up for the class, however the longer time frame in this project encouraged more bedding down time for ideas and theories, and for the students to have time to try out new methods of reflecting. Potentially, a different time of day – not just after an intensive run of technique classes – may have also improved the process.

Based on the discussions and types of questions the students were generating, the level of understanding of the relevance of structured reflective practice varied. This was to be expected, as the engagement with theoretical frameworks poses a challenge to some, particularly in relation to how theory and practice can promote deeper understanding. Alongside this difference amongst students, the aforementioned 'self-evident' reflection that dancers feel they engage with on a daily basis formed a barrier for some, in the sense that they felt 'we do this anyway'. However, our belief was that exposing the students to reflective models that provided a structure, as well as pushing them intellectually to engage with different approaches would impact positively on their practice and its relevance would be revealed potentially at a later stage. By reflecting ourselves after each session, we realised that the assumption of daily reflexivity in technique class, as well as the mirroring of some of the models to their daily reflections potentially influenced the level of relevance they found. We needed to make the relevance more explicit, particularly in relation to the link with their reflective assignment in Choreography and Performance.

It was important for us that they were not assessed on their ability to reflect in the sessions, nor on the quality of their devised pieces. They were being given the tools to allow them to excel in their assessment in order to reflect on their choreography and performance

practice. When the students fed back to us it seemed that some had understood the introductory "what, so what, now what" model (Rolfe et al., 2001) to validate that they were already reflecting and grasped-on to this initial view.  From our point of view, we were initially mindful of overwhelming the students with theory and theoretical models, however as a result of this, in a subsequent project we would consider making attendance compulsory throughout, working in smaller groups for less time and starting with Kolb's cycle, introducing the theory from the beginning, and working our way to a model that mirrors their current 'natural' practice. It was noticeable that those students who engaged in all the sessions, and who found ways to undertake independent tasks, were able to make connections between practice and theory and see the value of the work that they had put in.

Filming sessions meant that we were able to capture the students as they developed self-reflexive skills and were able to articulate this to each other. The filming style was similar to cinema verite with participants not just being observed by the camera but engaging with it (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017; Eglinton, 2013). Film was used as a tool to aid reflective practice by drawing on the participatory research techniques. The documentation will incorporate this footage with that filmed by the filmmaker and the making of the film and visual essay that will follow is a literal way of displaying the embodied person beyond the text. Filming sessions meant that we were able to capture the students as they developed self-reflexive skills and were able to articulate this to each other. Film allows the data to affect or "haunt" (Wilson, 2018) the audience by giving them access to the participants embodied and emotional experiences.

Partaking in multi-modal approaches to reflection allowed us to observe the students in varied experiential and cognitive tasks and gauge their engagement in each one. Embarking on an experimental project such as this meant that we had to be open and reflect on the fluctuations of responses and variety in understanding. Capturing responses through varied media was very interesting, in particular seeing what was 'revealed' though the less cognitive reflective processes, such as the model-making or drawing. These revelations uncovered quite deep thoughts and internal processes. The construction process abstracted the notion of what dance means to them and then *re*-construct their thoughts into

language. In this way the gap between inner thoughts and feelings to articulating these in language was bridged via the model-making. Similarly, the ceremonial passing around of the main project camera from group to group in one of the sessions allowed for a dropping of the guard by some participants due to the fact that a friend/peer was on the other side of the lens. These methods allowed each participant to be on an equal standing with each-other as it did not depend on a significant technical skill or on how good they were at writing, drawing or speaking. These processes can be liberating and the combination of strict parameters as well as freedom in expression were both enjoyable and revealing.

In order to be a successful, professional dance practitioner, dancers need to reflect as part of an ongoing practice, and then to become reflexive. In order to support reflective practice at every level, it needs to be part of the culture. The notion of 'thinking with the body' is supported by evidence from psychology and neuroscience (see for example (Maye, Fonagy, & Target, 2007; Marshall, 2015; Price, Peterson, & Harmon-Jones, 201)) and it is akin to the work of dancers. David Gauntlett, a proponent of LEGO® Serious Play® suggests that "cognitive processes such as learning and memory are strongly influenced by the way we use our bodies to interact with the physical world" (Gauntlett, 2010, p.8). Dancers use their bodies every day, firing up complex neural pathways in their daily practice, and as part of this project we were hoping to find pathways into deeper reflection through embodied means, in order to utilise the familiar 'instrument' of the body as an ally in order to experiment with and expand reflection. Enabling cognitive processes through embodied means, whether that was movement or model-making, had the potential to reveal endless possibilities and gradually lead to refined reflective insights. Our challenge was to ensure that the relevance of these insights was appreciated by the participants and that it was captured in some sort of way in order for them to be able to revisit or re-frame in the future.

Overall, the project was designed to innovate the dance curriculum, and to find a way to teach reflective practice in an embodied, creative, contextualised and relevant way. This project aimed to assist the students with the assessed reflective component of their programme, and more importantly help to embed the habits and tools for them to become effective reflective practitioners and dance artists.

One important goal of the project was to get the students to buy into the idea of reflective practice, and there was a varied 'seizing of the moment' in the sessions by the participants. As a result of the student discussions and feedback the idea of embedding a more structured reflective practice within the technique class was favoured, due to the close relationship and trust they have built with their dance teachers. Also, as per the students' feedback, the involvement of the entire faculty of teachers in the reflective practice processes would be of great value, so the School ethos is enriched by a collective and coherent approach to reflection and reflexivity. In future, this could result in democratising the relationships amongst students and teachers and leading to an empowered and professionally self-sufficient student dancer and trainee professional. Furthermore, moving to explicit rather than implicit reflexivity and reflective engagement could benefit dancers further in their training as well as their careers – having methodologies and frameworks available in their reflective 'tool-box' and ensuring this is collectively shared amongst students and staff could enrich the practice in the School further and support the development of professional skills. Our project served as a springboard for experimentation and on the basis of the focus group feedback a future plan can be formulated with regards to reflective practice development.

A project like this often generates more questions and further inquiries. The question around the relationship between the established pedagogic models in the dance studio and the more emancipated and empowered student through reflective engagement is an important one. There are some further questions that need to be asked of dance learners and teachers alike: Are we caught up in models of learning and pedagogy that drive our perception of our practice? What influences the way we perceive or think about our practice? Do we have set ways of evaluating our practice? Can we expand the notion of creativity and utilise it in the 'thinking about' our practice? Can we alter the way we ask questions about our practice? Placing these questions in the context of Rambert School and its 50-50 training ethos allows for the dynamic between traditional practices and more holistic practices to be explored. In a vocational environment which is professionally driven, the pedagogic narratives are linked to technical attainment and the journey towards this achievement is at the core of the training. Despite their individual differences and their

personal journeys and goals, Rambert School dancers share a commonality in professional goals. It is upon this commonality that we can build further, by establishing reflective methodologies that allow for sharing and therefore shared understanding of dance as practice. This includes the notions of self-awareness, self-efficacy, self-regulation, self-reflection and finally professional self-efficacy. This project argues that exploring interdisciplinary approaches to critical reflection and utilising the synergy of different educational paradigms has the potential to produce powerful results, but the level of vulnerability relating to reflective practice and the trainee dancers' identities is very important to consider.

In the case of this project, the participants were highly skilled, highly intuitive and physical and very creative. Creative individuals are often seen as the ones able to express themselves freely and un-conditionally, without hesitation. Historically, the Arts have been considered as the vehicle for inner expression, revelation of feeling or thought – sometimes in a radical way – as well as a transmitter of ideas (personal or collective) through a creative medium. In this process of un-concealing an inner world the artist is also revealing part of him/herself, thus potentially allowing a level of vulnerability. In the art of dance, this process takes place continually – a process of continuous performative revelations, 'digging-in' to emotions in order to replicate them for a role, finding a 'feeling' in the movement, or on the flipside of this performing a character and thus putting on a mask. Furthermore, the dancers' instruments are their bodies, so there is a level of identification with the art form through embodied experience. The dancer's performative self may embrace a set of behaviours which may or may not be harmonious with the needs of the real self. This poses an ontological question – how do dancers perceive themselves? As an open book or as a masked character?

The formulation of dancers' identities is rooted in their training experiences and in the case of Western theatrical dance there are traditionally accustomed models of training, particularly in Classical Ballet and Modern/Contemporary Dance. These models are based on universally accepted norms of training the dancing body, which over the centuries have evolved and been cross-fertilised and radicalised but have also retained a core structure and a core set of potential behaviours.

We believe that we need to change our pedagogy and curricula so that reflective practice and reflexivity is embedded within the programme. We argue that in order to achieve this successfully for young dancers, reflective practice needs to be taught in an embodied and creative way that plays to the strengths of the students and allows them to experiment with reflection and develop positive reflective habits in a safe space. Through this project, we discovered that nurturing the individual dancer's creative/reflective journey, and encouraging the ensemble nature of dance practice can enable a more collective sharing of reflection. We worked on the basis that by opening up the reflective process to encompass a range of cognitive, embodied and creative activities, learners would be able to access deeper thoughts. As a result, students engaged in meaningful discussions and interactions that tapped into different aspects of their identity. Reflection can be expressed in so many ways, through symbols and metaphors and through multi-disciplinary and multi-modal expressions. By experimenting with a range of these alongside exposing the Rambert School dancers to the structure of theoretical frameworks we can look forward to a more holistic approach to training a reflective practitioner. Moving forward we would like to establish an ethos and a philosophy whereby the dancers' active sense of ownership of their practice through intrinsically motivated reflection is of greater worth than the passive sense of sole reliance on extrinsic feedback.

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