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Showing what we can do: Assessment of primary school Dance

Abstract: In Australia, Dance is one subject in the National Arts Curriculum for early childhood and primary education. In many schools, dance is taught for the minimum time necessary to satisfy the system requirements of a summative grade that can be included in mid-year or yearly reports.

A qualitative study of the nature of dance education in two primary schools, collected data from video, observation, interviews with teachers and focus group discussions with children showed evidence of holistic learning achieved through Dance. In this paper, data are re-searched to look for evidence of the meanings that teachers and children attach to assessment in the context of dance education.

Following an examination of various definitions of assessment, this paper looks at the relationship between pedagogy and assessment in general and in relation to Dance education. Pedagogy and assessment in Dance education will be unpacked using a socio-kin-aesthetic perspective and drawing on literature and findings from this qualitative study, 're-packaged' to present an approach to assessing dance intended to be useful to generalist classroom teachers.

Keywords: Dance education, assessment, assessment for learning

Introduction

“Miss, miss, can you watch our dance?” Two or three groups are asking at once so I have to quickly allocate order, “ok, your group first and then yours, practice while you wait if you need”, everyone wants to share with me, they want acknowledgement of what they have achieved and advice; is there anything not working; how is it going; we want to make it better. Sometimes other groups watch each other while waiting for their turn. They often observe their own movement being used by others, but in a slightly different way. This leads to a sort of unspoken, acceptance that ideas can be shared in and between groups and there is lots of productive verbal and movement chatter.

This observation was written following a specialist dance lesson for Year four children in a Queensland regional primary school (9 year olds). As the children went about making dances together they were keen to show their ideas; from tentative explorations through to fully fleshed dances and to ask for feedback. The way children worked in this context, confirmed their interest in sharing their learning and the value of the playful development of ideas in dance. This led to questions of what is important; what counts as knowledge; and how and if that playful development and exploration could be assessed (Fraser et al. 2009).

A qualitative study was undertaken by the first author (the researcher) into the nature of dance education in three primary schools in regional Queensland. In the setting above, during a dance residency taught by the researcher: a research journal was kept; three teachers completed reflective questionnaires and focus group interviews and reflective conversations and mind-mapping were conducted with small groups of children from each class. In the other: participant observation of Dance lessons with three classes were undertaken over two terms; teacher interviews, student reflections and focus groups were conducted and Dance lessons videoed to produce a thick description of the context. In the third: a class was observed; two teacher interviews conducted and student reflections recorded. Assessment was not specifically addressed in the study, although in interviews, conversations and reflections children often spoke about what they saw as the point of learning (Bourke, Roseanna, and Loveridge 2014), including what they had enjoyed, learned and found engaging or challenging. For their part teachers would often make a point of remarking on the ‘surprising’ engagement or achievements of the class or of individual children.

A re-search of the data was undertaken to more explicitly consider questions of assessment in relation to a proposed pedagogical framework for dance education that will be a product of the study. In this paper, a review of literature and policy is blended with research data to more fully consider the data in relation to key models and approaches to the assessment of the arts and of dance within the Arts subject of the Australian National Curriculum as a step toward a model for assessing dance in the primary school. It begins with a consideration of debates about ‘assessment’ and implications for dance education.

Methodology

The methodology is qualitative, appropriate for exploring the qualities of an educational experience (Eisner, 2002) and the contextual and socially constructed meanings attached to teaching and learning practices in Dance education. There is a relationship between tensions in art research and tensions in assessment of the arts. According to Levy "Traditional conceptions of validity and reliability are inappropriate for evaluating artistic inquiry"(2015). Arts-based practices and investigations into the arts "produce partial, situated and contextual truths"; the aim of these approaches "is resonance, understanding, multiple meanings, dimensionality and collaboration." (Leavy, 2009, 16). In relation to assessment of learning in the arts traditional conceptions of assessment using summative, standardised, definitive, best-practice models (Bullough 2012), leave no space for consideration of process, uncertainty, diversity and the valuing of experience when and assessing children's art-making.

Therefore as an inquiry into arts education this study is not concerned with questions of truth or proving or disproving a theory or fact. It is more concerned with developing a language to describe what is happening and with questions of meaning, than with comparing, proving or generalizing (Donmoyer, 1985). The aim is to describe and understand the phenomenon of dance education in context, to add to understandings of the possible dimensions of better practice in dance education in the primary school, and it's contribution to student learning.

Case study was used to contain the diverse forms of data, including stories of the researchers practice and the practice of other teachers; and the engagement and responses of children (Yin 2014). Case study is not a methodological choice; it is used because it is the case that is of interest (Stake, 2008). In this study, it is the particular case of creative dance education in primary school classrooms in Queensland Australia.

In Queensland primary schools dance that is taught according to the intent of the Australian curriculum, is very rare. Therefore the selection of sites for the study is not representative of schools as a whole but akin to a convenience sample. The auto-ethnographic component, an account of the first authors experiences teaching dance in regional Queensland in urban, rural and isolated settings, was included to draw a richer picture of the experience of primary school children with creative dance.

The researcher's experience in dance warrants consideration of the educational connoisseurship method, which like appreciation of the arts, is an informed and perceptive ability to "yield what is not obvious" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p.100). Connoisseurship also applies to the teacher participants 'on the ground' knowledge of their own children and of classroom dynamics, an experience that needs to be respected. Connoisseurship must be balanced with criticism or the 'art' of disclosure. This enables the generation of themes and the location of the general in the particular (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p.100).

The study is also heuristic, through its "immersion in active experience" (Gray, 2013, 33) and use of autobiographical data and self-inquiry (Ibid.). I aim to using theory to "help explicate what has become visible" (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p.100). Story informs the collection of data, the nature of the data collected and the presentation of data (Marais & Lapan, 105). As a qualitative research method "narrative inquiry serves the researcher who wishes to understand a phenomenon or an experience rather than to formulate a logical or scientific explanation" (Kramp, 2004, p. 104).

Interpretation always takes place from a perspective (Patton, 1990). The researchers subjectivity "determines what variables and concepts are most important and how the findings will be interpreted" (Ibid. 86). Therefore it could be classified as "orientational qualitative inquiry" (Ibid.), because it is based on an explicit theoretical perspective, a combination of three: embodied, socio-cultural and imaginative, termed "socio-kin-aesthetic". This perspective emphasises the important role of the body, cognition and perception in "creating the community of learners within which understandings are developed" (Bresler, 2004, p. 128).

Background

Assessment has always been contested (2008). In Australia in an era of national standardization, the imperative of data collection and accountability has great influence on pedagogical approaches being adopted. In some places curriculum has been "abandoned in favour of improving test scores, especially for children who might be brought up to standard"(Brennan 2011,16). National high stakes testing has prioritized "the reliability of tightly defined assessments over continuing, formative assessment for learning, and authentically situated learning which is harder to fit into formal examination contexts" (Knight, Buckingham Shum, and Littleton 2013, 41). The Australian Curriculum itself provides no guidance for teachers since "in the core curriculum pedagogy is ignored and assessment is treated sparingly" (Ewing 2012, 100).

Debates about the teaching and assessment of dance and the arts in education take place in this contentious zone where assessment is increasingly seen as the purpose of schooling, further constricting opportunities for Arts Education, and therefore dance, in primary school classrooms (Garvis & Pendegast, 2010). It seems that the place of the arts is constrained by this performative drive (Alter, 2010; White & Smerdon; 2008) with the arts

being placed outside the limits of what counts as important or central in schools (McArdle, 2008). Whereas integrated approaches to curriculum and generic competencies or skills de-emphasise content and emphasise process in curriculum design and assessment the new Australian National Curriculum “works against integration” (Brennan 2011, 266). This has further reduced curriculum time available to the arts, because the curriculum is already overly full, after the implementation of the first four ‘core’ learning areas (Ibid.).

According to the curriculum documents, children in primary schools have an entitlement of one hour per week for the arts. The Australian National Curriculum: The Arts stipulates that five strands of the arts be taught. Yet in practice, dance, and to some extent drama and media, are hardly represented in school programs or in government sponsored policy reviews (Pascoe et al., 2005; Davis, 2008). Dance is often taught for the minimum time necessary to satisfy the system requirements of inclusion of all five art forms in their programs and a summative grade that can be included in mid-year or yearly reports.

The way the body is viewed in schools shapes the way Dance education is conceptualised, and therefore the purpose and nature of assessment, whether as an instrument of public performance to serve the school’s social goals and image, as a tool for children’s personal growth and creative expression, or something that must be taught in a tightly controlled way and summatively assessed (Bresler, 2004). These different meanings of dance put different pressures on teachers.

Schools often expect a performance product. Parental expectation, tradition, and the idea that the Art product should fit an accepted, neat or tidy aesthetic, can result in conformity and a showcase for those children identified as ‘talented’ (Miller, Nicholas & Lambeth 2008; Warburton 2002). Performance could be framed differently as sharing, with audiences and in contexts of different kinds, lowering the stakes, but raising the inclusivity while not diminishing the enjoyment, empowerment and seriousness that children give to ‘the performance’.

There can be tension between the ways the arts are devalued and the teachers’ belief in the broader and intrinsic benefits of arts education. A narrative study of Australian primary teachers and principles revealed a concern that ‘the arts’ wouldn’t be taken seriously by parents or the system unless it was subject to ‘formal’ assessment. There is a “need to have assessment in music and the arts so parents feel it is valuable” but also the flexibility of activities that aren’t assessed (Garvis and Pendergast 2012, 116). Formative assessment feedback to support children learning and value the process is one way to address this tension.

A summative grade is part of the demand for credibility, to prove that dance and the arts have a legitimate place in education. According to Hernandez authentic criterion referenced assessments are necessary to increase the place of arts education in the schools, and to make dance education an integral part of a school curriculum (2012). In Queensland Australia, schools are required to report twice yearly, providing a summative grade on an A-E scale on all subjects taught in their programs including the arts (Queensland Studies Authority [QSA] 2008). Authentic assessments in arts education should come from a ‘strengths based’ approach, typical of early childhood curriculum, in which children are recognized for what they can do rather than what they can’t (Alasuutari, Markström, and Vallberg-Roth 2014). Reframing the A-E rubric as a continua or a series of statements of what a student can do, would avoid the use of deficit descriptors such as minimal and limited while satisfying system requirements.

Despite the various demands on teachers, Arts education, in Australia at least, has by default been relegated to a third space, where it can benefit the school when needed but otherwise sits outside what counts as learning. In primary schools in particular, dance exists at the edge of the accountability culture and controls that exist in schools (Lingard 2011, McArdle 2008). This is a curious situation where the arts, and dance especially, as a result of their very marginalised position, have a kind of freedom existing as they do in a ‘liminal’ space (McArdle 2008). This is an opportunity for teachers to develop more relational and inclusive approaches to pedagogy and assessment. The meaning of the Latin root, of the word ‘assessment’ is: ‘which means, “to sit with.” This meaning suggests a less remote and more intimate assessment where teachers and children share the process of examining and reflecting on their learning (Atkin and Coffey 2003).

In the teaching task of the arts, the emphasis is on learning through inquiry and engagement in the medium (Oreck, 2004). Stobart proposes that assessment in some ways shapes what is measured (2008). In Dance education, with its moving/interactive assessment, it would be hoped that what is being measured could shape how it is assessed. The intent of the Australian National Curriculum The Arts is “to provide opportunities for children to create, design, represent, communicate and share their imagined and conceptual ideas, emotions, observations and experiences” (Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority [ACARA] 2014). In this curriculum children are positioned as artists. The interactive processes of the dance class are very suited to assessment for learning, which is “grounded in an understanding of the importance of the student–teacher relationship” (Klenowski 2012, 186). Assessment tasks should be designed to make student engagement in the ‘iterative’ process of arts making visible. Crucial aspects of effective arts pedagogy, that promote creativity

characterize the learning in a dance classroom and therefore have implications for assessment. These include collaboration (reference), physical interaction (reference) and open-ended creative problem solving (reference).

Assessment is social practice (Stobart 2008). This makes sense in a creative Dance class where the predominant feature of the learning is its collaborative and interactive nature. Assessment in Dance must include the body, it is 'situated' and 'emplaced', it should be a natural part of the process of art making (Stokrocki 2005) suggests that teachers should utilise the everyday processes of the arts classroom including problem solving and reflection as a more holistic assessment of learning. In other words, when assessment is part of the ebb and flow of teaching and learning, it takes advantage of the processes in the arts classroom such as the integration of creating, responding and presenting, that are part of the creative process (Warburton 2002).

The socio-kin-aesthetic framework has been utilized as a way to think about assessment in Dance and to envisage a set of considerations and tools that teachers can draw from to begin to develop their own approach. Each of these components will be investigated in turn, to identify methods of assessment that are truer to the nature of learning in dance.

Socio-cultural

The literature and this research demonstrate the importance of interaction in the dance classroom (O'Connor and Dunmill 2005, Holland and O'Connor 2004, Heath 2001). Exploring more dialogic and relational forms of teaching, and more authentic assessment is an ideal way for teachers to enhance their children's experience of and understanding of symbolic representation through collaborative, physical and expressive learning.

Year Four children (9 year olds) in two schools worked in groups to create dances together and afterward talked about the problems of collaboration, including the good the bad and the ugly side. As a researcher I was able to spend time talking to children after their dance experience. What is evident from conversations is how they build their understanding, developing it together by making and reflecting on dance. They are learning not just about making dance but also about the process of working collaboratively

-Everyone got so angry, for some reason

Cause you were

-Cause I was like the leader

It's good because you know about everyone and who leaded (sic) and everything

Since people were not here when we were practicing

It wasn't good, Aaron going away, we lost track

I saw good teamwork from other teams, but not our team. I was disgraced by N and B. I wonder why they didn't participate in dance.

I saw that working in a group [it] can be hard to agree on one thing.

Other things you can learn in dance are how to work with your friends. You learn whether or not your good at it, you see who else is good at it and you earn an appreciation for dancers realizing how much effort they put into it

You learn to be more creative and to get along with others.

My group worked really well and we all worked as a team and came up with ideas and added to them and I enjoyed spending time with people

The fun isn't all about it, it's a part of serious and it helps you in life sometimes and you are more social with people and you're more physical

And you get to see other people and see their strengths and their weaknesses

Visible learning approaches, including self- and peer-assessment, give children increasing agency over their learning; this is important in terms of shifting and rebalancing the ownership of learning within the class, changing the relationship between teacher and student, and the co-construction of learning (Lilly, Peacock, Shoveller, and Struthers 2014). This relationship includes "high expectations, mutual respect, modelling of creative attitudes, flexibility and dialogue" (Davies et al. 2014, 88). When learning is co-constructed questioning becomes very important. According to Craft, "While some views of creativity argue that at its heart, creativity in

one domain is the same as in another, in that it ultimately involves asking ‘what if’ in appropriate ways for the domain (2008, 7).

Questions and tasks; provide feedback that move learners forward. Dialogue is important and consideration should be given to the purpose of questioning and nature of questioning. In dance the questions are not so much about problem-solving or right answers, but about stimulating curiosity, inviting reflection, encouraging problem-finding (Craft 2008). The affective domain is also important “children have to be able to invest in learning to believe they can achieve” (Spencer, Lucas, and Claxton. 2012,14). In the theories of learning and development influenced by Vygotsky (1978), the social and relational contexts are all important. If the arts are ways to connect feeling and cognition (Damasio, 1999), then trust between the parties in the learning is paramount; children need to feel safe when engaging in dance. In dance, effective pedagogy, which encourages the development of ideas, benefits from the sharing of power with children (Anttila 2007)

A conversation with a Year four student during a dance-making episode, involved the role of the body, mind and emotion.

He was sitting away from his group, hoodie pulled over his head, not making eye contact.
“Hey Jason, what’s happening, what are you thinking?”
“I can’t do that, don’t want to, I’m not good at moving”
“Yeah, you know, I heard you play sport, I heard you’re pretty good”
“Yeah I’m ok” (as if it was a silly question)
“Yeah, of course, you play sport, so you’d be good at moving”
“Yeah, suppose so”
“I think so, yeah, I reckon, you could do this, you could make it work”
I look beside me another member of his group is doing a type of hip-hop move, rippling from one arm to the other.
“Hey what about that move, we could add that in, and hey just before I saw you do that thing”
I demonstrate where one and then the other runs around the back of the others and joins arms
“Maybe you could use that to bring everyone into the space, and you come in last and then you could start that wave movement”
He is looking a lot happier, going off with his group and taking the lead for the next while, and in the final dance taking on a leading role.

Questioning is important, but so is listening. Rituals of sharing can be developed, not just an end-point summative moment but also something that happens along the way. Groups of children can share their creative work in progress with another small group, offering ideas for what stood out, or a moment that was not quite clear. Moments of individual and shared reflection prioritise the “sharing of cognitive, emotional, social and physical resources (Buys & Miller, 2009, pp.3-4). Children become ‘us’ in the dance, and become ‘us’ and support each other in the sharing.

Dance is potentially an inclusive type of learning once teachers recognize that there is no one way to dance, and are open to the movement offerings of their children. Recognising children’ personal and movement culture is a part of inclusive practice. A starting point for more effective and achievable pedagogy and assessment in dance is to share the process of creating movement with children, acknowledging and using their ideas. This can be done during warm-up and movement exploration. Children and teacher stand in a circle or spread throughout the shared space. Use of variations of copying, including mirroring, shadowing and follow the leader, allow children to take the lead in offering and sharing movement ideas. The feedback is visual, and physical. Follow the leader--copying, mirroring, also becomes part of feedback.

Kinaesthetic

Dance is physical learning for both teacher and student, and engagement is visible. Changing the pedagogy, changes the relationship between teacher and student, and different issues have to be confronted such as “children . . . talking to one another rather than to the teacher” (Windschitl 2002). Changing the pedagogy also means, “designing assessments to capture the learning [you] want to foster” (Ibid). Physically placing yourself in the moving process is an opportunity to gather and record children developing understandings and other capabilities such as their collaboration and persistence. There is more opportunity to observe children and talk with them during learning than after (Ibid.). Taking more opportunities to assess children’ physical performances during teaching could help to avoid the negative impacts when assessment is divorced from the experience of learning. The high stakes attached to summative assessment, can dominate teacher decision-making.

The following account is based on a story offered up by a teacher during a lunchtime discussion about past experiences of dance in school settings. It shows the impact of dance on one child, and the abject failure of the assessment culture to maximize that impact. The real life event, the sharing of the dance with the parents and school community, was deemed to be fun and a celebration whereas assessment was important and to be taken seriously. If a snapshot could be taken in the lessons leading up to the performance and compare that to the before picture it would be possible to see the dramatic shift in learning for that child especially in some of the key indicators of creative learning, involvement, enjoyment and persistence (Robson 2014).

At first he was reluctant, expressing his disinterest and dislike of dance. Gradually he was won over by the enjoyment of the physicality of the 'Haka' and the challenge of getting it right, spending hours practising at home. He had been turned around and was now mad about dance. The day came for the performance in front of school and parents. It was a huge success, the audience loved it, the performers excelled. They were on a high from the excitement and being able to show off their dance.

As part of a unit of work in the Arts, the dance needed to be assessed, but how? The teachers were unsure, thinking they had to assess the techniques and skills alone. They organised follow up performances in small groups where children would be judged in front of a panel of teachers. Now it was different, the buzz was gone, they were being graded, and their performance suffered, their grades were disappointing. The joy and excitement were gone, he was devastated by his failure, and didn't want to know about or talk about dance anymore. If there were to be a next time, he would not be interested.

After learning like that, a 'once-off' summative assessment might be seen as a failure, a breaking of the trust established. There needs to be a focus upon the processes of creative skills development rather than outcomes, as evidence suggests that "external pressures in terms of achievement or exhibition deadlines can tend to distort creative relationships in the classroom and hence disturb creative learning environments" (Davies et al. 2014, 89). The excitement children feel about performing is often heightened when assessment is involved. Teachers need to ensure that children are aware that the performance is important, but so is what they have been doing in the process. A performance of Year 3 children after a series of four dance lessons, based on a nature theme, was designed as a shared celebration. Parents were invited into the classroom to view the small dances devised by mixed groups of boys and girls. The performance culminated with a spontaneous moving spiral of all children, allowing parents an insight into the joyous and enthusiastic collaboration that had been instrumental in the creative process of the past four weeks.

There is also opportunity for children to develop their kinaesthetic understanding and skill albeit in playful ways. Children can learn the difference between movement and stillness and what it takes to maintain stillness or readiness to move and develop movement memory through dance games. Movement vocabulary can be extended and children challenged to develop flexibility, strength and balance in group movement activities and as they collaborate to invent movements and devise dance that is connected to any performative, stylistic or gendered idea of skill, but to fundamental movement strategies that are useful in life in general. Video and photo documentation and shared reflection (Sansom 2009) could support children in recognising and documenting their developing bodily control.

Tests or assessments that limit what is to be tested, cannot account for the complexity and diversity of student learning and behaviour (Achter, Benbow, and Lubinski 1997). This is in line with the various assessment models for creativity (Kaufman and Sternberg 2010) and Warburton's (2002) call for a 'holistic' model of dance assessment. Assessment should consider the particularities of the domain being assessed; it should be in context and should take place over time, not just at the end of the learning.

When it comes to assessment, without an understanding and mastery of inclusive and democratic approaches to dance (Buck and Rowe 2015), teachers will tend to see it as a talent contest, where those with the 'natural talent' or 'physical skill' will outperform the rest. In the dance class the elitist and individualist idea promulgated by media events such as, "So you think you can dance", need to be replaced with a more generous and supportive idea perhaps, "we think we can all dance".

Daniel was small; he was identified by the teacher at the beginning, as one to watch, because he's on the spectrum. At the end of the second dance lesson he was clearly glowing, enjoyment and achievement. The teacher called him over, "I really loved the way you used your whole body when you danced". He looked unsure, maybe not used to getting this type of compliment, maybe he had done something wrong. Then it dawned, I did something right, he was clearly chuffed and went away with a bounce. On the day of the final lesson and dance assessment, he and his group of four girls, went into the back room to get changed into their 'costume', he emerged looking a little shy, smiling with embarrassment, but it didn't stop him,

he danced his dance, he was part of the group, he completed the task, it was an achievement, and an enjoyable one.

Reflective tools such as video documentation, audience feedback or self and peer reflection could be used to document and explore these physical embodied experiences of dance learning. Multi-modal approaches, such as video/photo documentation, recording children creative conversations, drawing and writing could be used to allow children to “express their embodied experiences in a plurality of modes of expression” (Nielsen (2009, Page number). Teachers can keep track of learning and engagement, using distanced forms of documentation, such as checklists or matrices. Alternatively it is an opportunity for conversations with children about their creative processes and how they go about making their decisions. Children could map their own progress using journals, blogs or more structured forms such as feedback grids. These can list skills, actions, dispositions using ‘I can statements’ that are organized according to the task criteria, using progress indicators (Lilly, Peacock, Shoveller, and Struthers, 2014).

A common theme in children’s talk about dance is the opportunity to learn through the body. An effective pedagogical strategy to take advantage of this preference for the kinesthetic is to begin the dance lesson with a group dance as a warm-up exercise, where communication is limited to gestures and hand signals. This strategy of ‘move first talk later’ is powerful because many children seem to become engaged and excited by this sudden change from “business as usual’ (everyday pedagogy reference). It seems to engage children, including some who resist dance, for example, because “it disrupts a classroom culture that they have excelled in” (Atkinson and Scott 2014). This strategy demonstrates the value of physical learning, engagement and participation as an important element of successful learning in dance.

The imaginative

An imaginative perspective values the expressive nature of learning in dance (Bannon and Sanderson 2000). Assessment of dance should be in line with the theoretical basis of the curriculum documents, which position children as reflective artists. The major foci of The Australian National Curriculum: The Arts are content descriptions and achievement standards, including affective, intrinsic and embodied experiences in dance (Hanna 2008). The learning elaborations include examples of learning experiences characterized by inter action and student construction of knowledge, based on experiential and creative learning. For example, the learning statement, 4.1 ‘Imagine and create new movement through improvisation’, includes elaborations of what children will know, understand and do such as “responding to the feelings and sensations in their bodies during improvisation” (ACARA 2014). Such a statement defies the certainties and limitations of summative assessment.

Warburton 2002) calls for a new conception of the dancer as “less a receptacle of collective wisdom and choreographic tradition and more a person engaged in mindful movement and creative inquiry” (Warburton 2002, 119). This statement was not written with primary school children in mind, yet it is relevant, because creating dance is an inquiry into movement. Reflection gives teachers an insight into this inquiry and “the deep connections being made when we dance” (Leonard and McShane-Hellenbrand 2012, 86). Reflection is also an opportunity for children who have other skills such as writing or drawing to demonstrate their understanding of Dance. Reflecting is not about having the right answer. It is an opportunity for children to learn about themselves by seeing how others think and solve problems. Participatory strategies such as the use of mind mapping (Whyte, Fraser, Aitken, and Price 2013) encourage children to make connections between ‘learning in dance’ and ‘learning through dance’.

Encouraging children from the beginning to ask questions and valuing their responses, builds a greater understanding of symbolic representation and of meaning making (reference). Using a reflective guide could become a classroom ritual whereby thinking is made visible, expressed in drawing, writing speaking or dancing (Ritchhart, Church, and Morrison 2011). Using questions to encourage discussion and feedback that moves thinking forward, can help to build children’ understanding of the process. In turn this leads to the development of peer and self assessment (Black, Buoncristiani, and Wiliam 2014). Teachers could include moments of sharing, during dance lessons, when pairs or small groups of children show their work in progress to another group. Invite children to pay attention to particular aspects of dance as they watch, but not in a proscriptive way, and then to share what they observed with their peers, thus modeling strategies for appreciating dance and furthering their understanding of how dance makes meaning.

Research in New Zealand showed that when asked about assessment standards, children’s answers are typified by conversations about experience and the point of learning (Bourke and Loveridge 2014). When primary children, in two schools, were asked about Dance they talked about the experience and what they learned, which often was the same as what they enjoyed. They described the dances they made. They had opinions about what dance was. They had opinions about how it could benefit or help you. They described the

successes and achievements. The point of learning for these children seems to be - the experience of it and this included:

- Collaboration
- Movement
- Having your own ideas
- Getting over shame or embarrassment
- Creating something yourself
- Feeling good about yourself
- Learning something

It might be that “children’ predilection for spontaneous artful behaviors allude to the possibility that they are likely interested in the act of art as much as they are interested in its products” (C Blatt-Gross 2013, 10). As they interact with children doing a dance class, teachers can draw attention to the tools available for the development of ideas in dance without detracting from the experience. At the end of a warm-up, as a cool down and debrief, the teacher can describe, perhaps using visuals, what we have just done. For example, “Great warm-up, lots of energy, I saw you use all of the elements just then” or “remember when we were doing this movement”, as you name and physically do the movement and some of the changes, such as changing the level and describing how that seemed to change the movement, recalling them with physical examples, not as a lecture, but by thinking aloud about the process (Torzillo 2015).

The inclusion of diverse forms of assessment is necessary to recapture the diversity of learning for individual children. Paying attention to the creative process throughout is a reminder that we are making art and developing ideas, not just coming up with a pre-determined end product.

Conclusion

Collaborative, embodied and creative learning in Dance is best fostered by inclusive, engaging and challenging pedagogies. The type of assessment that best captures this learning is assessment that happens as part of the learning process, using varied means to incorporate the diverse individual and collaborative experiences and achievements of children. The dilemma for the teacher is to resolve the tension between formative and summative assessment (Harlen 2005). Ideas about valuing experience, uncertainty and diversity in process can seem nebulous, hard to pin down and difficult to achieve. Yet within Dance there are many opportunities for collecting evidence.

During the warm-up, in movement exploration and once children start to create dances, as a whole class or in small groups. During the dance-making process, children explore movement ideas, select movements and movement phrases, vary and develop these into dance sequences, refine and share these dances and then respond and reflect on the process and the arts product created. During this process children can:

- Be observed – memos, photos, video
- Observe – drawings, blogs, recorded conversations
- Create - dances, mind-maps, reflective responses
- Perform – to familiar and un-familiar audiences
- Reflect – artwork, blogs, presentations, journals, manifestos

In particular, working more collaboratively with children and using cooperative methods is an opportunity to use questioning and discussion in more conscious ways. The teacher can scaffold this process using think-alouds, modelled feedback and by introducing reflective moments into the lesson using guides such as, "What did I see, think, wonder, and feel?" If allowed to be open ended, without the need to get it right, a shared culture of reflection can be established. Furthermore individual and group reflections can be documented using multi-modal forms as in the examples above. Collecting some of these in a portfolio of work will be a record of the embodied exploration and involvement and the development and expression of ideas in Dance.

Acknowledging the process of learning, and valuing each children’ contribution, by collecting reflections and making learning visible, would be a relatively small change for a teacher, that could have big impacts on learners. Assessment from this perspective, fulfills its requirements for summative grades, but gives more status to the value of ‘learning as we go’. It also emphasises the shifts in understanding and transformation, of each child and their learning journey (Sansom 2009). The use of formative assessment keeps open the possibility of uncertainty (Garrovin cited in Thompson 2015) in dance education in the primary school. Making collaborative, embodied and expressive learning more visible challenges the idea of a benchmark or standardized criteria for dance while valuing the dance experience.

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