

---

# Dance in the community – Dance for everybody

## Active lifestyles

**Batalha, A.P.**

*Technical University, Dance Department- FMH*

### **Abstract**

In a permanent dance education perspective, the Dance for everybody is considered an activity with a huge educational value, which may have an important role in the community contributing for help children development, young people,s life styles patterns, and to promote active adults. The wellbeing and quality of life of the people in the community, while being a free time practice and it is a full potential to promote a good life styles patterns, and to control their lives and health. It's getting more and more important to invest in the people active life providing them significant, healthy, accessible, motivating and recreate activities in which the Dance for everybody. Studies have demonstrated the benefits of this kind of activity for the people in a physical, cognitive, psychological and social way. After our experience and analysing the Dance for all, we understand the advantages and benefits in an educational, communicative, motor, artistic, expressive and cultural way. It turned out to be possible to develop Dance programmes for every body in the community in various institutions such as schools, studios, academies, town halls, recreate associations, among others. These programmes can be developed with different objectives, with different people of different ages, using adequate, enjoyable and positive methodologies and strategies in order to improve the quality of life, promote a positive health, and increase active lifestyle of a different group with a different age.

### **Introduction**

It is our aim to develop a methodology for Teaching Dance for Everybody, taking in consideration that this is an activity integrating essentially emotions, sensibility,

affection, codes, rituals and strong interpersonal relations. In this sense, we propose to organise knowledge in the area of Dance, not only on the level of contexts (historic-cultural, creative-innovative, aesthetic-artistic, communicative-expressive, technical-formal), but also on the level of the Dance Techniques and of the Creative Process.

In a permanent and dynamic education perspective, Dance is considered an activity with a huge educational value, which may have an important role in the community, contributing for the wellbeing (physical, psychological and social), and quality of life of the everybody, while being a free time practice.

Nowadays there is a huge necessity to understand and study the people development, and to implement educative strategies to integrate positively everybody. The life is a process that implies a lot of transformations and losses, that can bring limitations and difficulties, which diminish some persons capacity to adaptate to life involvement. But most of negative situations that involve the development process, can be stopped, prevented and passed by, because most of them are general mobility, social problems and emotional disorders. So, it is necessary to create ways for positive free time occupation of all persons, for their development, for their education for an active and artistic lifestyle, to promote mobility, creativity, communication and recreation activities, we think as a way to achieve the wellbeing.

### **Dance Contexts**

After having come to the conclusion that the different expressive activities are in different evolution phases and are positioned in various contexts Batalha, A. P. (2004), we have established a reference table to provide us not only with its understanding and development, but also to allow us to delimit the convergence points and the borders where the specific characteristics of Dance come into light.

We would like to emphasize that the proposal we are now presenting should translate an efficient interpretation of reality, based not only in the formal aspects, but also in the dialectic relationship among the domains it comprehends. Besides, the originality of this model lies only in the dynamics of knowledge treatment, due to the fact that it seeks after answers, by embracing the whole expressive problematic.

Based on the assumption of reality interpretation and extension of the choreographic action, we will now present the Dance contexts. In our opinion, these are well adjusted to the Dance in the Community – Dance for Everybody:

### DANCE CONTEXTS

Creative - Innovating

Communicative - Expressive

Aesthetic - Artistic

Technical - Formal

Historical - Cultural

#### ***Creative – Innovating***

The creativity and innovation emerging from the work of Art may be factors for the artist's integration and success, because they match the author's sensibility regarding the world, reasoning flexibility, capacity to convey thoughts and ideas and aptitude to turn the artistic materials into new relationships, aiming at the final production of the choreographic work, which is performed to be observed and interpreted in connivance with the audience. They are full of sensations, which, naturally, originate some feedback.

Intrinsic artisticity implies the creation of forms, the invention, innovation and the finding out of new rules. The creating and original imagination is implicit in the shaping of the artistic object. It gives it autonomy and distinguishes it from any other type of construction-shaping.

In Dance, as an Art form, the domain of creation contributes to show, in a more spectacular way, the enormous communicational potential of the Body.

#### ***Communicative – Expressive***

Dance is understood as a person-to-person communication process with the specific intention of communicating something. Dance assumes itself as a communicational language, mainly at the level of the interpersonal attitudes, as an indicator of the Men's social behaviour.

Fortunately there are people with tremendous sensibility, able to communicate their experiences and their emotions, their ideas, the view they have about the world and the human being, and, thus able to stimulate us.

In dance, the audience is a necessary and indispensable assumption, allowing the message to be conveyed and received through dance expressiveness.

Communication, via the performance of symbolic expressive movements, reinforced by virtual forces and framed by various choreographic stimuli, assumes, in the artistic world, and more specifically in Dance, its own essentiality.

#### ***Aesthetics – Artistic***

Aesthetics intervenes not only in the artistic context but also in all the artistic operations, as a justification of art, of the phenomena of evolution of taste and beauty,

and of the formation styles and criteria. Art contains aesthetic meaning, but the aesthetic expression does not only arise in Art.

Aesthetics and aesthetic comprehension cannot be abstractly understood; they presuppose a manner of feeling and understanding reality, and, thus, exposed to judgments. One of the characteristics of contemporary aesthetics is that it does not aim to be a normative science; it aims to understand and justify, in a mobilizing manner, human behaviours and taste constraints.

### ***Technical - Formal***

What is essential in Dance is the birth of an individual movement, an inhabited body, expressing the re-invention of the body, from both the sensibility and the experiencing of emotions and inner energies.

However, in Dance, the Body has to be an efficient precision instrument so that it may carry out its mission of interaction with the audience. Thus, we are of the opinion that, besides mastering a large motor repertoire, the Body has to be technically available. We may now highlight the importance of the dance techniques and of the specific performance, that is, the dancer's technical expertise in the communicative-expressive and aesthetic-artistic reliability and validity process.

Technical and formal mastering presupposes expressive forms that, beyond particular codes, imply a series of sophisticated specificity and virtualities, aiming at reaching meaningful behaviours.

By meaningful behaviours we mean those which intentionally stimulate, through the Body, Space, Time and Dynamics, the senses of the interlocutor, thus generating illusions and meanings.

### ***Historical – Cultural***

Finding a balance between generations, and understanding the evolution process, by closely following the changes, and knowing how to interpret the dialectic relationships that are in the origin of the adjustments, which naturally proceed and justify the evolution, is part of this domain.

Once Dance means experiencing emotions, it could condition us to assume radical positions face to an aggression, instead of accepting the choreographic transformations in an ecological attitude and, thus, accepting a new dialogue with a new reality.

We would like to put in relief, the importance of the understanding and appreciation of the effects of the influences of the historical and cultural contexts in the forms, ideas and values of Dance.

### Dance Contexts

Creative - Innovating	> Invention, Innovation, Finding out of New Forms
Communicative-Expressive	> Expressive Vocabulary
Aesthetic - Artistic	> Understanding and Justification of Behaviours
Technical - Formal	> Movements of Dance - Skills
Historical - Cultural	> Understanding of the Evolution Process

### Dances' techniques

Using all levels of dance techniques, we will have a model of pedagogy where dance is understood of as an art form, and a global view of all the implicated aspects predominates.

This way, we studied several dance techniques, based on a analyse methodology by Batalha & Xarez (1996), and we have verified that Dance in general it is a kind of practice that has great benefits for people, such as the same benefits of another physical activity, a social and historic meaning, choreographic, motor skills and rhythmic patterns, and is an artistic and accessible challenge. Besides that, movements dance (dance for alls) has some advantages comparing to other activities and theatral dance, because it is a kind of culture, it has an direct application on community, it respects the knowledge of everybody, it uses easy patterns of movement, it promotes social and cultural skills, and it is an artistic, healthy, funny, and secure alternative. This way, this movement dance have an artistic nature (creativity, aesthetic, expression and culture), a communicative nature (relation, symbolisation, and recreation), a recreative nature (they have been associated to recreation days and humor aspects), and a social and historical nature, that turns them useful for everybody. They are a kind of expression that helps all persons to find aspects of the culture and communication again trough body and movement. These benefits have their effects in several levels such as biological, motor, cognitive, psychological, recreational, affective, social, relational, artistic, and cultural. These dance for everybody combine affectivity, learning, creativity, communication and mobility, which are important facts for a psychological balance and wellbeing for everybody.

This way, we could select dances technique skills with important value with several components (Varregoso & Batalha, 2000), such as: a) Social Component – movements dance with high potential of communication, integration and socialisation - collective dances valorised for circle design, dances with partner, dances with different representation and symbolisation; b) Psychological Component – social dance and group dances that demand responsibility of everyone for collective result, joyful and

funny, that improved self-esteem and self-concept; c) Expressive Component – movements dance with different dynamics, different styles, using all kinds of fundamental movements and expressions, dances and choreographics studies associated with many thematic; d) Communicative Component – dance techniques with specific codes and semiotic, that put all together in work with the same propose, improving communication and non verbal communication (with it self, the other and the others), and communication with spectators; e) Motor/Technical Component – movements dance with small variations in direction or plans, and with simple basic movements or easy and slow steps (walk, run, gallops, hops, jumps, leaps, slide, slow turns); we find dance techniques with simple structure and choreography, and simply adaptable (simple design, simple co-ordination and combinations, simple walk ways in space); we find choreographs, without complicate jumps or leaps, without repetitive movements, not too fast; we find dance techniques with moderate rhythm, periodic rhythmic phrases and few rhythmic accidents (Varregoso & Batalha, 1999); simple expressively skills (posture, dynamic, actions like touch, slide, beat); f) Bio-Functional Component – movements dance which its practice improves cardiac-vascular system, breath system, and other body systems, preventing certain deseases; g) Creative Component – dance in general with several structures and choreographs, that could be varied in terms of rhythm, expression, space, positions, design, without perversion of its essence; dance-improvisation that conduct to the creation of new models; h) Artistic Component – dance in general apply to the several forms of art, because the dance as art form include aesthetic, artistic, creative, critical and corporal concepts of the traditional and contemporary culture of everybody; Historic and Cultural Component - dance that where used in the past and are still in use, keepinge the same characteristics or another contemporary forms and they had in the beginning of the learning process, because their signification, rituals and symbolic logic, that can help personal and social values.

We find that there is a quantity and a diversity of this dance techniques, that they are accessible and adaptable, and because of that, they can adjust to different objectives, different motivations and different capacities. Many of the dance patterns were modified, like when they were too long, too fast, too intense, too sophisticate, or too complex, in order to adequate to everybody. The motivations, and capacities, trying not modify the essence of such dance technique. We have recognised that those dance in general seem to be very good for all people, and adapted to their needs, because those components can bring them benefits and improve mobility, autonomy and independence, in order to get a better adaptation to daily life.

### **Dance in the Community - Application Dance for Everybody**

We propose to develop our Dance for Everybody in two phases. On the first phase we will emphasise the intrinsic value of Art. This is apparent from its important accomplishments:

- It develops a different kind of intelligence;
- It promotes the capacity to create;
- It ensures the development of the aesthetic sense;
- It is essential for the understanding of cultural endeavours;
- It contributes for the improvement of perceptive qualities;
- It provides assurance in artistic communication
- It contributes for the control in unpredictability;
- It foments adaptability to innovation.

On the second phase we will try to demonstrate the highest value of the artistic genre. In the case of Dance, this value resides in the opportunity of assuming individuality, but also in the search of human meaning. This is done in the creative and dynamic modulation of the body, space, time, and mainly life itself. It is important to actualise the capacity to give expression to a live spirit, to satisfy a thinking Body.

We designed as objectives: to promote mobility, to promote artistic movements, to improve the well-being, occupy free times, improve social integration, improve personal development, respect sensibility, knowledge and dignity of everybody. Supported on that, our proposal is worked several dance techniques, with all people, male and female, about several ages. The institutions in witch we worked where: a Schools, Academies, Studios, a Recreate and Cultural Associations, Health Centres, Town Halls and a Political Local Institutions.

In terms of methodology, there were used strategies of action, exploration, creativity, model, climate, animation, recreation, aesthetics and appreciation. We used fixed models of Dance Tecniques, adapted models and models created by each one. There were used expressive, creative, communicative, rhythmic, and technical exercises; balance, co-ordination and flexibility exercises; respiratory, stretch and relaxation exercises; sophisticate and complexe exercises were not made, and certain exercises where made with some cautions. Some characteristics of this strategie where valorised: mobility (locomotor and no-locomotor basic skills), expressive communication, creativity, affective and relational aspects (use of circle, corporal contact, work with partner); and social aspects (group work, acceptance, understanding, sharing, solidarity, inclusion).

## Findings

In our teaching experience we concluded some facts about Dance For Everybody in the Community and we found that:

1. Dance as a corporal activity, contributes to improve health and to an active lifestyle of all persons, because they can improve biologic functions (cardiopulmonary function, bones function, muscular function, ...), it helps obesity control, develops vitality and autonomy (improving motor control, motor development, movement capacities), answers to the natural necessity of movement of each person, fights sedentary and isolation, develops general motor capacities, and improves physical condition .
2. Dance as a leisure activity, contribute for leisure activities and for all persons free time occupation for everybody, because they can improve individual and collective wellbeing, bringing social interaction and recreation .
3. Dance as a recreate activity, contribute to psychological wellbeing and for expressive and communication of all persons, because they can improve conviviality, affective and social relationships (more and new relations), helps to improve self-esteem and self-concept (by better acceptance, sense of competence, sense of control); it gives the pleasure of dancing and doing movements with music and other people, proportions enjoyment and fun, helps the social integration and socialisation, improves psychological and emotional balance (feelings of wellbeing, social interaction, independence), and they can fight tension, stress, depression and anxiety.
4. Dance as an educational activity, contribute for the learning and development for everybody, because they can improve the acquirement of values, attitudes and knowledge, they improve cognitive function by stimulating hit, they improve motor vocabulary, they improve expressive vocabulary and they help dance and rhythmic education.
5. Dance as an artistic and cultural activity, contribute to identity and individuality of each one, because they improve cultural questions, improve social values, contribute to historic and cultural development, to expressive and communicative development, and to aesthetic and artistic development .

This kind of recreate activities are very important to all persons because they can help them answer to individual questions such as psychological, corporality, pleasure, happiness, exercising, itself respect, and they can help answering to social questions such as health, wellbeing, education, laser, community participation, and so on (Guedes, 1998).



## Conclusion

In Portuguese society is a huge necessity of investigation about Dance in the Community, and a great necessity to study Dance activities to be used with everybody as a way to obtain their participation and integration in the society, as a road to their individual development, and to stimulate them having an active and healthy lifestyle, promoting their free time occupation, stopping and retarding ageing effects (physical, psychological and social).

This way, we can say that Dance for Everybody where applied in the Community in different kind of Institutions, as an activity for promotion of the development and wellbeing of evrybody, of different ages, like a contribution to the recreate and active lifestyle for free time occupation. This activity can be applied in other kind of institutions such as Schools, Clubs, Studios, other Dance Institutions, other Political Institutions, Religious Institutions, Dance Groups, and so on.

The Dance for Everybody constituted a very positive experience for the participants, which helped them to have a more effective, joyful, and occupying daily life, with improvements in their development, mobility, general health, wellbeing and quality of life. Through Dance for Eveybody it is possible to work for collective public health, combating detrimental lifestyle and compensating physical and emotional process, so as to contribute for individual health, happiness, wellbeing and quality of life of the everybody .

## References

- BATALHA, A. P. (2004) . Metodologia do Ensino da Dança, Lisboa: FMH Edições, FMH-UTL
- BATALHA, A.P. & XAREZ, L. (1999). Sistemática da Dança I - Projecto Taxonómico. Lisboa: FMH Edições, FMH UTL.
- GUEDES, G. (1998). Do Popular ao Erudito: A Seranda, Expressão do Trabalho, do Corpo e da Arte. In A. Marques, A. Prista & A. Faria Junior (Eds.), Educação Física: Contexto e Inovação - Actas do V Congresso de E.F. e Ciências do Desporto dos Países de Língua Portuguesa- Maputo/Moçambique. 1º vol.. Porto: FCDEF-UP/FCEFD-UPM, 145-159.
- VARREGOSO, I. & BATALHA, A. P. (1999). Contributo das Danças para o Bem-Estar de Pessoas Idosas. In J. Mota & J. Carvalho, Actas do Seminário A Qualidade de Vida no Idoso: O Papel da Actividade Física. Porto: Ed. FCDEF-UP.
- VARREGOSO, I & BATALHA, A P. (2000). La Qualité de Vie des Âgés: le Rôle de la Danse Traditionelle. In Proceedings EGREPA 8th International Congress - Physical Activity and Ageing. Bruxelles: ULB/ISEPK, 285-291.
- WHO (1998). The World Health Report 1998. Life in the 21 st Century - A Vision for All. Geneva: WHO