

Introduction to dance of the imagination for children education

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Abstract: Nowadays, children do not have enough time in physical activity at schools. Educators and parents should be aware of this need that creative dance is the key provide children an appropriate way to exercise. On the other hand, children can express themselves freely and naturally through creative dance, which also improves children's health and increase their creative thinking. A person's body is the most important property to a person. They also learn to appreciate the beauty of dance and life. Allowing children to have the opportunity to learn creative dance may improve their creativity. Most children love to leap and jump. Through dance, children may have better self-expression and have better understanding.

Key words: imagination; children; creative expression; dance education

1. Introduction

School is a place that helps students be well-read and have self-esteem, self-concept, critical thinking, creativity, or more skills in the individual and social growth (Efland, 1984; Lorenzo & Ideishi, 2007). To help children meet their developmental needs, schools should focus more on physical education in regular education with creative dance that needs to be developed and encouraged. Encouragement is a big plus to the learning interest for all the children. The goal is to guide children to communicate through movement with creative dance in school.

Educators should understand the importance of physical education for children during school, and creative dance program may increase or attract to children's physical levels (Sherman, 2000). School could provide opportunities for children in creative expressions to enter the world of creativity in physical expression through different arts, such as music, drama, and dance together. Creating a happy learning environment for children promotes their creative abilities and combines what they have learned with real life situation.

Children should start learning about dance and their bodies from the exercises that is closer to the ground and then work their way up. Creative dance is an easy tool for many ways of exercise, and it helps children to have better understanding of their body. The further the body pushes away from the ground, the greater the exertion by the body and a great exertion of the muscle without good control will only result in injury. Doray (1983) mentioned that "first choose a theme from subjects children can relate to such as nature (which includes plants, flowers, animals, the various weather elements, seasons, etc.), fairy tales, stories, everyday life" (p. 25). By choosing materials familiar to the children, they can more readily emulate these things in their dance.

From personal experience, the creative experience curriculum is to teach students to be independent thinking and problem solving, which could be achieved in dance. It doesn't have to be a long piece. Let them create it out

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of their imagination in their own way. They can also have a chance to cooperate with other children. Another very important thing for students is to learn to take responsibilities of their learning progress and behaviors. Researchers believe that children have great imaginations and potential, and teachers are their guide to lead and inspire children to explore the world.

Green (2005) has observed that dance education in next century is hard to predict. The dance educators have the ability to change government policies on the arts development with a strong or advocate voice in the 21st century, then dance education will be rekindle. Dance, as mother of arts, should be re-recognized a status of dance education in the art form. To offer creative dance to children as part of dance activity, educators could advocate the variety of dance to every child and give them the opportunity to dance to the next century.

2. Establish a positive working relationship

Providing students with positive learning experiences will facilitate student's desire to learn. Motivations of the inner states influence human behavior. External motivation is a trait of personality. If children accept skill training, they might not create any new step. This would lose the self-feeling in the active process. To provide good training by perfect instruction, children development in learning dance with the proper environment, proper instructions from an excellent teacher and lots of practice can be a better world for all the children of dancing.

Motivation can distinguish the inside and outside of the intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation to the learner (Driscoll & Roop, 1996; Lumsden, 1994; McCown, 1996). Offering dance to children involves a creative process that basically teaches the children to respond spontaneously and stimulate their imagination in order to make movements correspond to a theme or story with the accompaniment of music. In this idea, teacher should be providing improvisation and having children learn and show off in class.

Children have a chance to perform their spontaneous works of dance, which helps children establish themselves with their own uniqueness. Perhaps this is one of intrinsic motivation. In dance, one of the most important things is to have parents to come and watch their children's performance. By offering support and participation from parents, children would be very proud that their parents approve and enjoy their performance. This is one of the extrinsic motivations.

2.1 Relationship with children age

Infants communicate with their environment by body language starting when they were born. Children are born naturally with curiosity and an active imagination. They are curious because everything that they learn is learned through asking questions, and they also have imagination because they can create things from what they have learned. For example, by showing children an elephant and how it moves, children can imitate the elephant's movements.

Some children do not really understand the motions when they are two or three because children have different kinds of abilities and developmental skills to transmit their feeling and conception at different ages. Near the end of the third year in children's development, they have ability to move matures rapidly. Children grow in different backgrounds and environments, at five, they could be ready to enter the world of conformity, but the important things is to be trained in different ways that fit their age so they learn dance without forced. Therefore, in movement we must strive to keep them as free and open as they tense at four (Kalinin, 1987).

Body language is the best way to express feelings. Children can do simple steps to the rhythm of music, such

as walking for slow music or running for fast music. The brain that controls balance rapidly develops at the age of one and comes close to maturity at five to six years old. Joyce (1973) suggested, "Fives are really skilled. They have coordination and balance; they know body parts and have special awareness" (p. 4). The intellectual growth of children in any stage is different from an adult. Jahn (1986) has suggested that as a general rule, it is better to start the early stages of dance training after five and professional dance instructions after eight years old.

2.2 Increase parents and teachers

Many possible relationships between dance and children character of parents needs. Most children's goals are not to become a professional dancer. However, not only should the children have a proper understanding of dance as discussed earlier, but the parents also need to be educated about dance. Joyce (1973) stated, "Most children grow up thinking that dance is a combination of steps that have to be learned". But dance is not just steps or movements. The teachers need to teach the children that dance is more than just steps to be learned, it could be self-discovery.

A popular feeling among the students learning dance is that the lessons that are too rigid. This can be harmful to the learning process because they lose interest out of the lack of being able to express their own creativity and feel discouraged due to this deficiency. Cheryl (1995) pointed that dance educators in creative dance "especially those with strong ballet backgrounds who have found movement freedom in creative or modern dance tend to share this freedom with students" (p. 16). However, if a teacher is rigid or fearful of spontaneity and suspicious of new ideas, he or she will never succeed.

Children have different styles in the physical appearance and personality. Children have different ways to express themselves externally and internally, for example, one may like dance because dance bears meaning for him or her. In addition, parents should pay more attention to the respect of the children as follows: his or her interest in dancing, the reaction of movement, instructional satisfaction and social relationship with other classmates.

Researchers had the children create a dance that allowed children to develop their talents with more time on creative dance. In addition, let children discuss their own feelings about their own works in the end of the class. Besides dance instructions, communicating with the children is very important, as well as inviting parents to participate after creative dance. A teacher should take time to listen to what the children have to say about themselves and show their parents the works that children have learned in dance (Lorenzo, 2007). Listening also gives the parents and teachers the opportunity to learn about the children as to how they feel about their ideas and to reinforce their creativity.

3. Moving into understanding

Every young student should know and be able to do in the dance movement to have access to balanced and comprehensive instruction in dance. Learning movements can vary interests and creativities. Holt and Hale (1987) stated that "movement is learning; movement is life. Movement can help a child become oneself. If a child can move he or she can become more a master of the environment rather than being controlled by it" (p. 696).

A person's life is made up of physical movements. When one sleeps, he or she moves the body with each breath; when a person cannot move, it means he or she is dead. In addition, with movements, one can have the ability to coordinate movements to do something meaningful or useful. For a child, movement can make a

difference in his or her life. For example, a disabled child with no hands can eat without help by using his feet to hold the spoon. The point is that with his feet, this disabled child is not as helpless as he seems to be and gives him a positive outlook on life.

All these mentioned above point out the importance of movement in life. Kraus (1969) addressed the importance of movement to a child is that “it is believed that control and mastery of the body’s movement relate to emotional as well as physical and mental development” (p. 277). Appropriate movements are important in the children’s development because inappropriate movements can hurt the children physically. Therefore, the teacher must be confident about his or her own abilities.

The creative thoughts cannot be visualized without movements. In addition, a person’s movements signify the character of the person; therefore, movement is a way for children to relate to their nature and creativity. La Meri (1933) defined the natural dance as “a form of free dance which is based on the natural movements of the body; i.e., walking, running, skipping, etc” (p. 183). In addition, Little (1977) has mentioned it as a valuable lesson that “if life is movement, then the art of that movement is dance” (p. 2). Dance is the art of giving meaning to movements. The phrase “life is movement” means that wherever there is movement, life is represented.

3.1 Learning through the dance

Simple rhythm music or song is suitable for children’s development and help them learn how to move. Gaining a sense of rhythm is important for dancing, teachers can provide the children with a sense of rhythm from songs by leading them to clap their hands or stamp their feet as they sing. The teacher can use a piano to play familiar children’s songs for the children since these songs will be easier for them to follow. After the children are familiar with the things that their bodies can do, they should concentrate on doing a whole piece of dance.

It is important to choose music that has a clear beat and rhythm for young children to dance because it offers the beat that accompanies dancing. Teachers choose music that has a clear rhythm for the very young because a simple beat is easier to follow. The teacher can also help the children to better understand the dance topic by giving simple and clear explanation of the music. Music is very important to dance; it is natural to see young children start to move their body when they hear music playing because they identify with the rhythm of the music. It is hard not to move when hearing the music because music leads to movements and explorations. (Church, 2000).

Teaching the children to express movements that have meanings such as anger, refusal, happy, sad, marriage, and even death is also another way. After the children are familiar with a few movements, teacher should arrange them into groups and let the game begin. The emphasis on letting their creative thinking process work is in the games which will create more excitement for the children. Using game activities, imagination, encouragement, evokes potential and develops an appreciation for movement in dance with creative ways.

Wiener and Lidstone (1969) have mentioned, “Movement style is always uniquely expressive of the whole person” (p. 222). Learning to dance offers children a chance to improve their thinking process and memorization skills. To children, dance should be a means of happiness and fulfillment in life. By learning dance, the children will also learn about their own emotions and thoughts. This is a great asset for the children by giving them more space of expression and exploration of movement (Rachel, 2004).

3.2 Learning experience with performance

Children would experience more in communication, emotion, expression, and impression, and would

perform something special. A child may fear being laughed at by their peers on their embarrassing mistakes, but on the other hand, they could also be proud of their creativity and wish to share it with everyone. The teacher could try to expose the children to a variety of dance styles such as ballet, tap, modern, jazz, etc. Let them try different movements from different styles, which will offer them more material to work with for their next creative dance piece.

The teacher then should offer a chance for the children to express their creativity with performance. A good concentration is required to maintain and even to improve the quality of performance. Another important factor of the children's performance is the costumes and stage settings. The use of various costumes and settings can increase the children's interest and if the teacher wears the same costumes as the children, this can increase the closeness of the teacher with the children and thus allowing the instructions to be easier.

Performance can be a confidence building experience for children because it stresses self-discipline, coordination and energy in movement while performing. Performance not only lets children watch the skills of each other but also stimulates the spontaneity of the children to create movements and to meet new challenges. After each performance, the teacher should give helpful advice to the children on their work such as timing, techniques and interpretation of music, and offer information about dance at set up meetings or through conversations. Communication and encouragements are things that belong in the realm of how to teach. When there is a chance for the parents to talk to the teacher, he or she must know not only what to teach but also know how to teach.

4. Dance education with curriculum

The dance education today concentrates on two types of developments: the professional and the improvisational. The professional ability means that the training, which is given to the children according to their age and abilities has a set pattern. This type of training improves the children's hand-eye coordination with repeating practices; it also gives the children a chance to achieve better concentration and to strive for excellence by oneself because of repetition. The fact, we were looking for a school that had a total program, such as dance, music, fine arts and performance all the criteria available to be part of core curriculum.

It is important for a dance teacher to know that the creative process can be developed in all children movement through the dance curriculum in preschool develops rich cultural learning experience for children and they get more benefits and opportunities. In 2007, Lorenzo and Ideishi noted that "preschool movement and dance programming brings a multi-layered experience to inclusive preschool settings so children of all abilities can experience and benefit from creative and complex movement experiences" (p. 25).

The dance comes alive in school programs. Creativity requires thoughts and techniques that need the memorization to be performed effectively. Class lessons that are too difficult or too rigid can be discouraging or harmful to the learning process of the children and make them lose their concentration and the chance to express their individuality. Teachers can give the children a dance topic for improvisation and give simple movements such as jump, hop, stretch, make circle and run into different shape with clear explanation of music. Teacher can see the children's themes development and can guide and support children as their efforts increase in complexity.

An instructor of children's education should possess expert dance background knowledge and skill ability to teach effectively. This knowledge includes class conduct, music, dance pieces, performance, and communication

between students and teacher. In addition, a teacher should have a good judgment of the length of class for children of different age groups. Margery (1957) observed, "Dance is of particular importance in education because it lends itself readily to creative activity" (p. 2). This states that children who are exposed constantly to any subjects, such as dance, for a long period of time tend to increase their understanding of this subject. Therefore, exposure to dance-related subjects should begin at an early age to achieve the maximum benefit.

For the five to six years old, a schedule of a 45-60 minute class per week is good enough, but the seven to eight year olds can go over an hour. Still, a long class is not very good because the children need proper rest after a rigorous exercise. The most effective understanding is through a direct experiencing of the process itself. Therefore, a teacher must be confident about her own creative abilities.

4.1 Children with development

To help children develop through dance, parents should give more space for their children to think and communicate. Many who have studied the relationship between child developments and dance value the different circumstances and social interaction (Bartenieff & Paulay, 1970; Cooper & Ryan, 1988; Church, 2000; Edwards & Springate, 1995; Hanna, 2000; Stinson, 1990). The progression and the achievement of children are not judged by the high or low skill, but to understand children's learning process with development.

A child's development does not mean being pushed to learn. Parents want their children to grow healthy and be happy. Therefore, it is important to understand how the parents offer the children the best condition to learn dancing. According to the reward theory in physical psychology, children should get more applause and confidence for better performance. Children performances, either good or bad, depend on the teachers' direction with problem solving. They are more successful when the teacher thoroughly understands movements.

Creative dance classes can help parents connect with their developing child and have better understanding of the skills and cooperation needed in creative movement. The student could express themselves in the area of dance. A simple walk can be developed through a child's phrasing with developed movement idea and form their own dances. The most important issue is the preference of the children in the field of the dance. Inspiration for the dance is everywhere; they can be flowers, insects, birds, animals, or any other things in life from which the children can imitate in their creative dance.

The successful development of the children's creativity depends on their environment and teachers. A wise teacher finds the balance here between freedom and rules. Wiener (1969) believed that "a good teacher has to be in good physical shape, know what he or she is doing, practice and he or she has to have the right feeling for it" (p. 111). This passage points out two important things in teaching: knowledge of the subject being taught and the right feeling for teaching. Knowledge comes from the education, training and experience of the teacher while the right feeling is the willingness and effectiveness of the teacher in teaching. So, if one is going to teach, he or she should love the subject and try to communicate this passion to the children.

4.2 Imagination with creative dance

The beginning students in dance cannot immediately reach the level of muscle control and flexibility at an optimum level. The teacher should try to introduce new materials according to the capabilities of the students. A proper dose of new materials will stimulate interests among the students to learn. A thing that helps the smooth running of a class is the all important class schedule. The schedule can be separated into several sections that includes basic warm up exercises, stretching, techniques, music, projects and performance.

To help children relate to how to move the body, improvisation is one of good idea to use in the dance class and it has no set pattern or standard. Improvisation, on the other hand, is an informal type of dance from which comes the basic creative dance. This type of dancing gives children the freedom to express themselves in a way other than speaking. Sign language, as well as creative dance uses movements to convey meaning. Elizabeth (1964) stated that dance is “much more than basic movement; and it is essential for class work to be extended to the point of providing students with actual dance experience” (pp. 4-5).

The children can use their imagination to do different movements like stretching, hopping, shaking, swing, pushing, walking, circling, and jumping in creative dance. This type of dancing gives the children chances to express themselves in ways other than talking. Children may not understand what is dance or movement, but the dance techniques must be taught at a very basic level at the beginning, such as moving with the toes, arms, hands, feet, eyes, and fingers to enjoy creative expressions.

Imagination is being able to create anything and any scenario that a person can think of in their thoughts. Wiener and Lidstone (1969) noted that “image material is just right for the developmental level of the child, he can achieve total involvement, and he becomes the wire. Image material for the dance is everywhere” (p. 97). This statement means that children, at an appropriate age, can pick up images from their environment and include these images in their dance by imitation. In addition, to teach children the imagination of dance, games with movements such as imitating animal calls and expressions can be used.

Creativity is the ability of a person to use imagination to construct something original and unique. Other means of the creative process is the process by which children use their creativity to make movements in dance. Using imagination to create movement in children is the key to success and happiness in life. On the other hand, a child’s imagination should be encouraged to grow and help students be problem solvers as well as intelligent young scholars.

5. Conclusion

Dance is a wonderful experience for school-age children, because it is important to the proper teaching strategies because children are usually ready to accept the challenges. A good teacher with patience and compassion understands children’s learning needs, respect the children’s personal development, and communicate with children. Dance is a human contact and lifelong activity that can bring people of all age together for fun and creative dance helps people to express themselves in ways other than through speaking.

Observing children that are participating in dance is the best ways to achieve the curriculum. Not everyone has students who possess skills and knowledge necessary to develop a healthy lifestyle. However, a health education component was added to the dance for health program in the curriculum of the school that is helping young people learn to care for their bodies because people of all ages desire to be healthy. The most important issue is that children can become happier and satisfactorily, improve wellness, and understand the creative spirit.

Hagood (2001) believed that dance education was the most important art that schools need to develop. Using creative dance for students learning in school would be a suitable movement experience with the well-down education of dance. Dance can be so many things to different people including happiness, good health, hobby, profession. But perhaps the most important thing of all is that creativity dance helps children understand themselves.

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(Edited by Nydia and Lily)