The Dance Teacher: The Ideal Case and Daily Reality

J. H. A. Van Rossum

The dance teacher is a central figure in the world of dance; the impact of the dance teacher on the career of a young dancer can be decisive. A dance teacher is more often than not described as authoritarian. The present study investigated the various dimensions of the dance teacher's behavior. To map the teacher's behavior, a dance-adapted version of the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980) was constructed as the Leadership Scale for Dance (LSD). The LSD was administered to both teachers and students of the dance department of the Amsterdam Theatre School. In addition, dance teachers were asked to rate daily class behaviors of the themselves as teachers, and dance students were asked to rate their current dance teacher. While the characteristics of the ideal teacher were very similar for both teachers and students, large differences appeared in the rating of daily class activities. Ratings of the teachers and dance classes are interpreted within the framework given by the LSD scales, that is, as indications of the behavior characteristics of the ideal dance teacher.

Introduction

Professional dancers usually start their training for a professional career early, often at the age of 8 or 9 years. Over the following 10 years, increasing amounts of energy, time, and attention are invested in the dance career (Van Rossum, 2001a). During this period, the role of the dance teacher is of great importance and cannot be underestimated. In the domain of sports, parents are about as important in the career of a talented athlete as is the coach (Van Rossum, 1995); within the domain of dance, the role of the dance teacher (comparable to the sports coach) is of much more importance when compared to that of the dancer's parents (Van Rossum, 2001a). As an illustration, athletes have indicated often that their family is a "sports family," but only a small minority of young (12–17 years old) preprofessional dance students considered their family a "dance family" (Van Rossum, 2000). Of older preprofessional dance students (17–23 years of

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age), only 40% stated that their home climate can be described as a real dance climate (Van Rossum, 2001b). Therefore, the impact of the dance teacher can hardly be underestimated, while the influence of the parents of a young dancer can often not act as a balance to the dominance of the dance teacher. Nevertheless, research on the effectiveness of the dance teacher's behavior is scarce. This article describes the characteristics of the ideal dance teacher and sketches the everyday behavior of the teacher by taking two perspectives into account: that of dance teachers and that of their dance students.

The Dance Teacher

In 1998, Dutch television broadcasted a documentary on the dance education in Russia. Under the title "Caught on Point Shoes," a sketch was presented in which key words such as *hard* and *disciplined* appeared. One was left with the impression that the dance teacher, a woman, was relentless and authoritarian. This picture is not restricted to the Russian dance world. In a page-long article in a Dutch national newspaper (Korteweg, 1989), George Balanchine's School of American Ballet was described in an article, "The West Point of Dance," that makes clear that strict discipline is a primary value. While one might discard these examples as pictures of the old days, even today a dance education is easily associated with a demanding and authoritarian leadership style. A more recent example can be found in Hamilton's (1997) *The Person Behind the Mask: A Guide to Performing Arts Psychology*. Being a former dancer with the New York City Ballet and now a clinical psychologist specializing in guiding performers, she wrote that "Dancers often see a master teacher as an omnipotent authority figure who is both admired and feared" (p. 7). Hamilton sketched a destructive teacher who humiliates dancers in public, who seems only focused on errors and mistakes, and presents dancers with vague, poorly described goals. As another example of a portrait of a dance teacher, Hamilton reported on 30 dancers of the New York City Ballet who were asked about their experiences with the artistic leader of that dance company, George Balanchine, 2 years after his death. One third of the group remarked, "His critical comments were cruel and basically damaging to their self-esteem" (p. 11). Hamilton was most surprised to find that the relationship between the dancers and Balanchine was often childlike: They made themselves dependent on him and put their fate

in his hands. However, the dancers did not describe Balanchine only in negative terms. Nearly half of the dancers stated that he had freed them from their personal inhibitions, while others indicated that he had inspired them with his high standards and helped them exceed their own limits.

For purposes of illustrating the pros and cons in the role of the dance teacher, one last example is taken from a lengthy interview with Alexandra Radius, a former solo dancer of the Dutch National Ballet. The interview was 7 years after her farewell in 1990 (VanSoest, 1997). She recalled Benjamin Harkarvy as someone who was fantastic in his role as dance teacher:

> He was able to get the best out of everybody. When he became my teacher at the National Ballet, I was still young, only 15 years of age. He recognized my dance talent and he really protected me, letting me do every time a little bit more than before. He always said that I have time, don't push yourself. Dancers have more time than they think. I am an example, I danced until I was 48 years of age. (p. 44)

Dance teachers evoke various, even contradictory feelings. As teachers of talented or gifted individuals, their impact is sometimes underestimated, possibly in the first place by the teachers themselves. The role of the teacher of gifted individuals is nicely sketched in Streznewski's (1999) book, *Gifted Grownups: The Mixed Blessings of Extraordinary Potential*. She discussed the fact that many of the gifted people she interviewed reported serious problems in school: "What seems to have made a crucial difference for many students is understanding, supportive teachers" (p. 74). Such teacher behavior is helpful in that it limits both the number and seriousness of such problems and it prevents dropping out of school. Therefore, as Streznewski found, a good teacher does make a difference: "Many of the students expressed gratitude to those special teachers who allowed them to see larger worlds, to try more sophisticated work, to play over their heads" (p. 87).

The purpose of the present study was to understand the general picture of dance teachers from the perspective of teachers and dance students. In addition to the characteristics of the ideal teacher, the way teachers behave in everyday life (i.e., while teaching a dance class) is addressed. In particular, differences between teachers' and students' opinions are explored.

Method

Subjects

Dance Students. The subjects attended a school for higher education in the Netherlands and formally studied dance with the aim of becoming professional dancers. In general, children start taking dance classes while in elementary school, become committed in their adolescent years, and start professional dance studies. In the Netherlands, a professional dance course (as one of the branches of Dutch higher education) generally takes 4 years and usually starts directly after secondary school at the age of 18 or 19. Candidates must audition prior to enrollment in a dance department of a school of the arts.

Each of the subjects in the present investigation was a student at the Amsterdam School of the Arts. The dance department offers five study routes. There are three routes for those who aspire to a professional dance career (classical ballet, modern dance, and jazz dance), one route for those who intend to become an independent dance artist (choreographer), and one route for those who want to become a dance teacher. It is self-evident that, in the three routes toward a professional dance career, many dance classes are on the daily schedule; a similar high number of dance classes are on the schedule of the choreographers-to-be and the dance-teachers-to-be. For the students in the present study, a mean number of 13 dance classes per week equaled 24 hours per week in taking dance classes. This illustrates that, within each of the different routes, a strong emphasis was placed on active dance involvement.

Two groups took part in the study: 157 dance students (65% of 234 students) and 39 dance teachers. Twenty-eight of the dance students were in preparatory education, 28 in dance teacher education, 21 in choreography, and 80 in performing dance education (ballet, jazz, modern). Of the 157 students, 127 were female (81%) and 30 were male (19%). The average age of the subjects was 21, with the oldest subject being 35 years and the youngest 15. The majority of the subjects were 20 or 21 years old. The mean age at which they started to take dance classes was 9.3 years, while the mean age at which they started to practice seriously was 14.0 years. The student group was considered to be a highly experienced and talented group of preprofessional dancers.

A Normal Week. A dance student spends an average of about 24 hours per week in the studio while taking dance classes. Those hours do not include theory class time, general physical preparation

before dance classes, travel to and from school, or other things related to school education, such as preparations and rehearsal for performances. The dance hours are spent on an average of 13 sessions throughout the week. Further, a student needs time for necessary marginal activities, such as travel to and from school, injury treatment, and short breaks. According to the dance students, such activities take on average somewhat more than 9 hours per week. Nearly all students live in the Amsterdam vicinity. Most live on their own and prepare their own meals since there is no campus or housing facility for them. To complete the sketch of a normal week, that is, a week without performances, many of the students also do activities that demand physical activity or physical effort, in addition to their activities and practice in school. About half of the student sample indicated that they were involved in additional activities for an average of about 5 hours per week. Sometimes such activities were necessary to earn money (waiting on tables, dancing as a go-go girl in a disco), while, for most others, it constituted supportive practice for dance (as cardiovascular or fitness exercise at the gym, jogging, and sports activities) and special dance classes, such as the Alexander technique. Therefore, for most students, a workload of more than 30 hours of being physically active is considered normal in a week without performances and rehearsals.

The students filled in a questionnaire during the early spring. Two versions were available. Foreign students were offered an English version of the questionnaire. The Dutch version of the questionnaire was completed by 68% of the subjects. As no significant differences were found in preliminary analyses that compared answers from the Dutch and English versions of the questionnaire, the data from the two versions were pooled.

Dance Teachers. Each teacher in the dance department was invited to take part in the study. Of the 74 teachers, 39 filled in the questionnaire (53%), with 30 being female and 9 male. Mean age of the teachers group was 44 years, ranging from 29 to 60 years of age. Among the 39, 21 teachers (53%) were teaching dance technique classes, 8 (21%) were teaching theory classes, and 10 (27%) had other roles within the dance department, such as artistic director or another managerial function. Notwithstanding their various present jobs within the dance department, each of the 39 persons had experience as a dance teacher. Of the total sample of 39 teachers, 31 (79%) have been active as a dancer, 43% at the international level. For 28 teachers (72%), dance plays a role in their life apart from their work at the dance department (e.g., as a choreographer, performer,

coach, or repetiteur; in freelance activities; or at the managerial level).

Instrumentation

Three kinds of measures were used: a leadership scale, rating scales, and a questionnaire. A leadership scale was adopted for this study from the domain of athletics, where research on a coach's behavior has used the Leadership Scale for Sport (LSS; Chelladurai, 1990; Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980). The original scale consists of 5 scales: training and instruction (13 items), positive feedback behavior (5 items), social support behavior (8 items), democratic behavior (9 items), and autocratic behavior (5 items). The 40 items are answered by crossing one of five alternatives: "always," "often (75% of the time)," "occasionally (50% of the time)," "seldom (25% of the time)," and "never." Table 1 presents a summary description of the content of each of the five scales. One of the features of the LSS is that three versions are available: (a) the athletes' preferences for coach behavior (the ideal coach), (b) the athletes' perceptions of actual coach behavior (the actual coach), and (c) the coach's perceptions of his or her own behavior.

The LSS has been translated into at least 8 languages (Chelladurai, 1993). Most translations are restricted to the ideal coach version, as assessed by the athlete. Across studies and various language versions of the LSS, autocratic behavior has appeared to be somewhat problematic, since its internal consistency values have been lower than values of the other four scales (cf. Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998, p. 239).

Leadership Scale for Dance. Each of the 40 LSS items (ideal coach version) was translated into Dutch and, if necessary, adapted to the dance context. As an index of reliability (internal consistency), Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the scales of the LSD. For the total sample of dance students and dance teachers (N = 194), the values indicated that four scales could be considered reasonably reliable (values varying from .63 to .76) and similar to those of original English samples (cf. Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), as well as to a Dutch translation of the LSS for the sport context (Van Rossum, 1997). The LSD scale of autocratic behavior appeared to be unreliable (Cronbach's alpha, .07) and was eliminated from further analysis. Data analysis was therefore restricted to four scales. Intercorrelations among LSD scales were low (ranging from .05 to .34), indicating independence among scales.

Table 1

Categories of Behavior of the Athletic Coach, as Described by Chelladurai and Riemer*

Behavior category	Description of the behavior of the coach
Training and instruction behavior	Coaching behavior aimed at improving the athletes' performance by emphasizing and facilitating hard and strenuous training; instructing them in the skills, techniques, and tactics of the sport; clarifying the relationship among the members; and structuring and coordinating the members' activities.
Positive feedback behavior	Coaching behavior that reinforces an athlete by recognizing and rewarding good (proficient/quality) performance.
Social support behavior	Coaching behavior characterized by a concern for the welfare of individual athletes, positive group atmosphere, and warm interpersonal relations with members.
Democratic behavior	Coaching behavior that allows greater participation by the athletes in decisions pertaining to group goals, practice methods, and game tactics and strategies.
Autocratic behavior	Coaching behavior that involves independence in decision making and that stresses personal authority.

*Chelladurai & Riemer, 1998, p. 238, Table 5.

Rating of Current Dance Teacher and Current Dance Class. A new measurement format was employed in an attempt to have characteristics revealed about the dance teacher and the dance class. The rating scale for the dance teacher consisted of 22 items, such as supportive, inspiring, authoritarian, strict, and took interest in me as a person (see Table 2 for the complete set of items). The scale for the dance class had 18 items, such as structured, cozy, playful, disciplined, noisy, and motivating (see Table 3). The contents of the items were inspired and shaped by the findings Bloom (1985) reported in his study on talented individuals and were checked with experts in the dance field (dance teachers, artistic directors, dance faculty) to yield the two sets of items.

The student was instructed to rate each item that, in her or his view, characterized the teacher or the class. At the bottom of the list, room was reserved for the student to add one or two features that she or he considered relevant, but this option was rarely used. The expectation was that the ticked-off items would give an appropriate description of both the teacher and her or his classes, and the percentage of students that ticked a particular item was taken to indicate the relevance of the particular item.

For the dance teachers, identical rating scales were included. Teachers were asked to assess themselves and their dance class on "How do you describe yourself as a dance teacher?" and "How would you describe the typical dance class you are presently teaching at the dance department?" As with the student questionnaire, there were 22 items to rate themselves and 18 items to rate their dance class. Teachers, too, were given the opportunity to add one or two items they deemed relevant. In an introductory question to these two rating questions, each of the respondents was asked about his or her actual involvement with teaching dance classes. Only those respondents who were, at the time of the study, actually teaching dance technique classes responded to these questions about rating themselves and their dance classes (i.e., ratings were obtained from 21 of the 39 teachers).

Questionnaire

For the dance students, the LSD questions and the ratings of dance teacher and dance class were included in a 21-page questionnaire in which information was gathered about their personal dance history (cf. Van Rossum, 2001a). The questionnaire was completed by the dance students in my presence during a regular 60-minute theory-oriented class.

Table 2

Current Dance Teacher

Characteristics of dance teacher	Students (n = 157)	Teachers (n = 21)
Relaxed	33.1	33.3
Geared toward pleasure in dancing	36.9	52.4
Geared toward future profession*	68.2	95.2
Supportive*	41.4	85.7
Inspiring	34.4	47.6
Very critical	40.1	38.1
Authoritarian	10.8	0.0
Passionate*	22.3	52.4
Distant	18.5	4.8
Role model/ideal	12.1	14.3
Protective	5.1	14.3
Strict	34.4	9.5
Tough/uncompromising	5.7	0.0
Unclear	12.7	9.5
Positive*	41.4	71.4
Complimentary	20.4	19.0
It's never any good	7.0	9.5
Geared toward discipline	38.2	33.3
Boring	9.6	0.0
Motivating	42.0	52.4
Took interest in me as a person*	26.8	76.2
Took interest in me as a dancer	68.8	90.5

*Students versus teachers: chi square < .05.

Note. Responses of all dance students, both preparatory dance and HBO education, on "the teacher with whom you take the most classes" and of those teachers who are currently teaching dance technique classes. The table gives the percentage of respondents of each group that crossed the answer in the question (see Figure 2). Order of items is same as in the questionnaire.

With respect to the dance teachers' sample, questionnaires were put into his or her personal mailbox. Questionnaires were completed and anonymously returned in an envelope. Data gathering from the teachers took place at about the same time as the student questionnaire sessions were held.

Table 3

Current Dance Classes

Characterization of dance classes	Students (n = 157)	Teachers (n = 21)
Relaxed	26.8	33.3
Structured*	59.9	95.2
Cozy	12.7	4.8
Little attention paid to me	7.6	4.8
Playful	7.6	14.3
Safe in the group	15.9	19.0
Working for yourself	61.1	38.1
Disciplined	55.4	61.9
Not nice	6.4	0.0
Geared toward improvement	74.5	90.5
Hard work	66.9	71.4
Noisy	4.5	4.8
Fanatic	29.3	14.3
Informal	7.6	9.5
Chaotic	8.9	0.0
Inspiring	37.6	57.1
Got a kick out of it	12.7	19.0
Motivating*	45.2	76.2

*Students versus teachers: chi square: $p < .05$.

Note. Responses of all dance students, both preparatory dance and HBO education, about "the classes as taught by the dance teacher with whom you take the most classes" and of the teachers who currently teach dance classes, describing their own classes. The table gives the percentage of respondents who crossed the item in the question (see Figure 3). Order of items is same as in the questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using an analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the comparison of mean scores. Effect size (*ES*) was estimated as the eta-squared value as computed by the statistical package SPSS 10, GLM module. The eta-squared statistic describes the proportion of the total variance attributable to a factor (cf. Cohen, 1988). In order to compare frequencies statistically, chi-square analysis was used. In all analyses, a p value of .05 was taken to indicate statistical significance.

Results

Leadership Scale for Dance

Mean scores on each of the four LSD scales of students and teachers are presented in Figure 1. In agreement with findings in the sport context, both dance students and dance teachers considered training and instruction and positive feedback the most important dimensions of the ideal dance teacher. Teachers regarded two dimensions as more important than students: A two-way ANOVA showed a significant difference ($p < .05$) on training and instruction (means: 4.08 for teachers, 3.69 for students; $F = 23.46$, *ES*: .11) and on positive feedback (means: 4.20 for teachers, 3.65 for students; $F = 27.35$, *ES*: .12). No significant differences were found on the LSD scales for social support (means: 2.65 for teachers, 2.67 for students; $F = 0.06$, *ES*: .00) and democratic behavior (means: 3.40 for teachers, 3.30 for students; $F = 0.89$, *ES*: .01).

Rating of Dance Teacher. Students were asked to characterize the dance teacher "with whom you take the most classes." Note that only dance teachers who were presently teaching dance technique classes were involved in the statistical analysis; therefore, as indicated earlier, data of only 21 of the 39 teachers who filled in the questionnaire are presented. In Table 2, the percentages for the items are given for each of the two samples.

Figure 2 presents graphically a selection of the choices of the two groups (criterion: crossed by at least 40% of one of the groups). The bars are to be read as follows: While nearly 70% of the students characterized the teacher as geared toward later profession, more than 90% of the teachers did so. In the graph, significant differences between the two groups are indicated with an asterisk.

As is apparent from both the figures and the tables, teachers appeared to present a more positive sketch of their characteristic behavior than students did. Using chi-square to test the difference between student and teacher percentages, significant differences ($p < .05$) were found on five characteristics: geared toward future profession, supportive, took interest in me as a person, positive, and passionate. It should be added that the item authoritarian was crossed by none of the teachers and by only 11% of the dance students, and "it's never any good" also did not surface as a characteristic of dance teacher behavior (crossed by 10% of the teachers and 7% of the students; see Table 2).

Although, taken together, the characterization of the dance teacher is possibly best done by using various items, two items

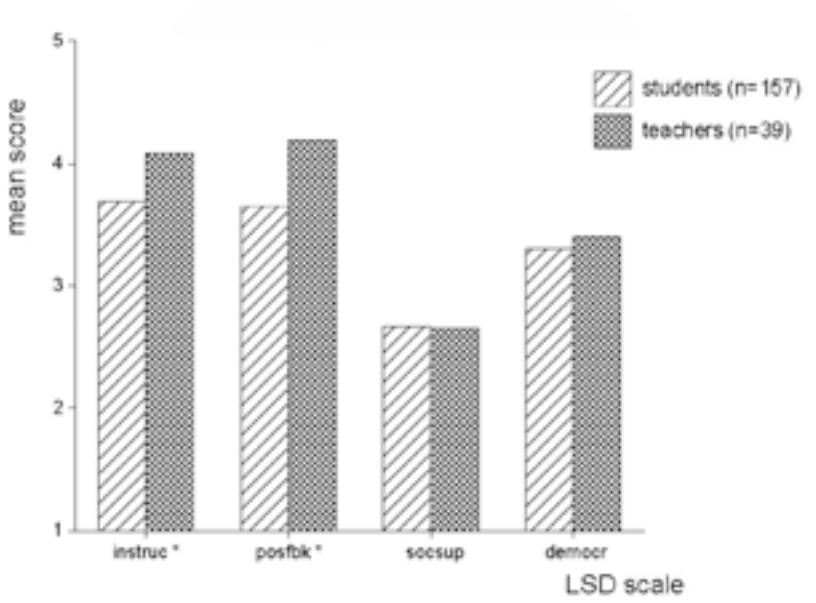

Figure 1. Leadership Scale for Dance: Mean score on four leadership scales of two samples: dance students (n = 157) and dance teachers (n = 39). The four scales are: training and instruction (instruc), positive feedback (posfbk), social support (socsup) and democratic behavior (democr). See Table 1 for more detailed information as to the contents of each scale. Statistically significant differences between students and teachers are indicated with an asterisk.

stand out as being most relevant to students, as well as to teachers. These two items appeared to be fundamental in characterizing the dance teacher: geared toward future profession and interest in student as a dancer (crossed by more than 68% of the students and 90% of the teachers). To these, one should add the following qualifications: supportive, interest in student as a person, positive, motivating, geared toward pleasure in dancing, passionate, and very critical. With respect to the mean number of characteristics crossed, teachers and students did differ significantly ($F = 6.42$, $p = .01$, $ES: .04$): Teachers crossed an average of 8.10 items, and students crossed a mean number of 6.30.

Rating of Dance Class. Dance students, as well as dance teachers, were also asked to characterize the dance class. For students, it was the class that was taught by the dance teacher with whom the stu-

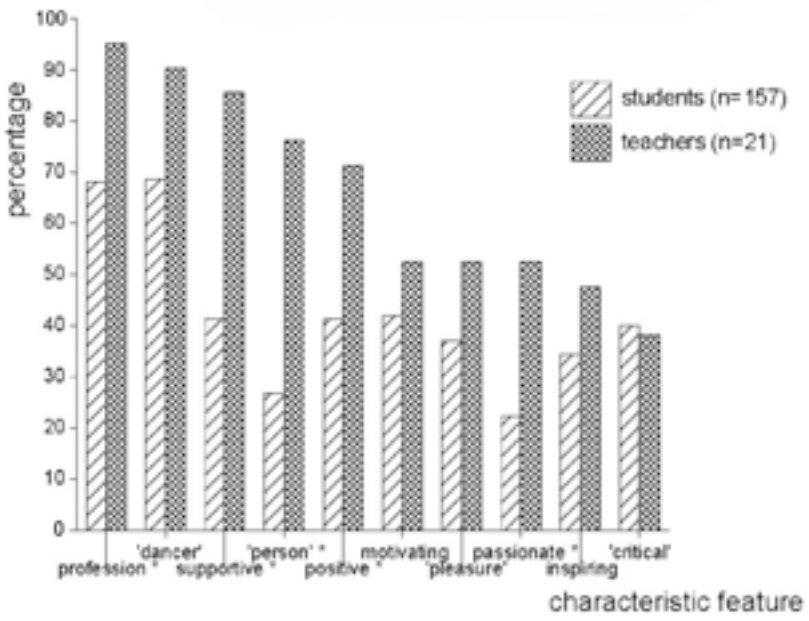

Figure 2. Rating of current dance teacher: Sketch of characteristics of teacher according to dance students (n = 157) and dance teachers (n = 21). Of a total list of 22 items, 11 are presented. See Table 2 for a complete list of items: profession = geared toward future profession; dancer = took interest in me as a dancer; person = took interest in me as a person; pleasure = geared toward pleasure in dancing. Statistically significant differences between students and teachers are indicated with an asterisk.

dent took the most classes, while the teacher was assessing an ordinary class he or she taught. Both students and teachers used a list of 18 items. Table 3 gives the percentages for each of the groups for each item.

In Figure 3, the most remarkable choices are depicted. For example, structured was chosen by 95% of the teachers and by 60% of the students. The chi-square test was used to test differences in percentages between groups. On two items, a significant difference ($p < .05$) was found: structured and motivating. These significant differences between the two groups are indicated in Figure 3 with an asterisk.

With respect to the characteristics of the dance class, teachers and students had a similar view. For one thing, they did not differ in the average number of items crossed (teachers, 6.14 and students,

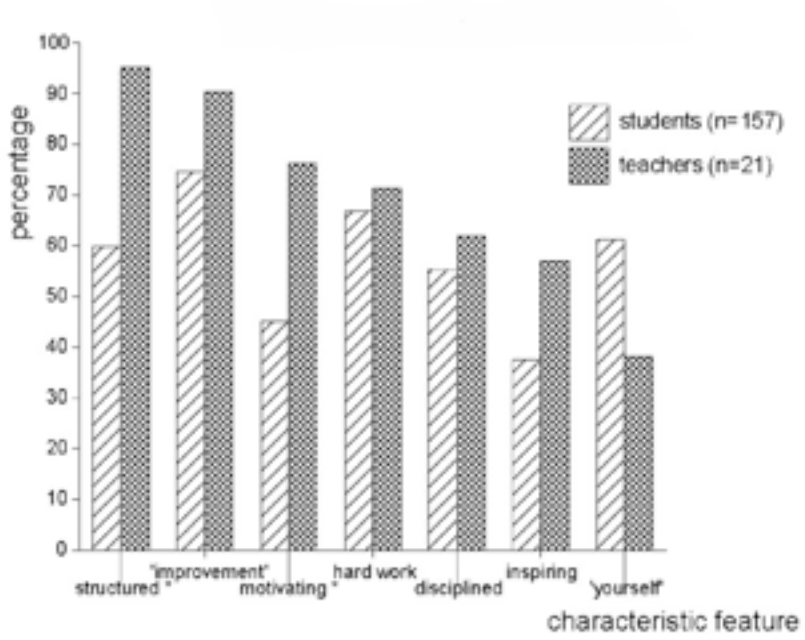

Figure 3. Rating of current dance class: Sketch of characteristics of the dance class according to dance students (n = 157) and dance teachers (n = 21). Of a total list of 18 items, 8 are presented. See Table 3 for a complete list of items: improvement = geared toward improvement; yourself = working for yourself. Statistically significant differences between students and teachers are indicated with an asterisk.

5.41; $F = 1.87$, $p > .05$, ES: .01). Students and teachers agreed that first and foremost a dance class is geared toward improvement. Further, they agreed that it is hard work, disciplined, and motivating. While they also agreed that a dance class is structured, teachers were more convinced of this quality than students appeared to be (see Table 3). Teachers also claimed that a dance class is inspiring (students did not), while many students went to a dance class in accordance with the motto of working for yourself.

Discussion and Conclusions

As a first conclusion to be drawn from the results, it can be said that, in general, the dance findings are in agreement with those from

other domains and that, within the dance sample, more likeness than dissimilarity was found between subgroups. This was confirmed by the effect sizes of the significant statistical effects, which were all small (*ES* < .15).

With respect to the ideal dance teacher, teachers and students held similar views: A dance teacher should first and foremost be knowledgeable and know how to best teach and train dance students who opt for a professional career. Both teachers and students indicated that positive feedback is an important tool. As said before, these findings are highly similar to the characteristics of the ideal sports coach (Terry, 1992, Fig. 34, p. 114). The dance data, therefore, seem to suggest that one could generalize findings across domains: A teacher, a coach, a trainer, or a mentor (by whatever word the person is called within various domains who is offering deliberate practice) will probably be experienced as the ideal person by the pupil, student, athlete, and so forth if behavior is, first of all, based on expertise (i.e., behavior that demonstrates quality in terms of training and instruction) and, secondly, if teacher behavior is offering plenty of positive feedback (i.e., not just indicating what went wrong, but showing ways to prevent earlier mistakes and improve earlier performance).

This finding is based on the data of all dance students (n = 157). With respect to the student sample, it is recalled that the students were mostly female (81%), as well as originating from one of five dance routes: classical ballet, modern dance, jazz dance, dance teaching, and choreography. Statistical analysis revealed no significant gender effects on any of the LSD scales (p > .05). Further, regarding the five dance routes, one significant effect was found on one of the LSD scales: the mean score on training and instruction was significantly lower for the subgroup of choreography students (n = 21; mean score, 3.33) compared to that of any of the other routes, with mean scores varying between 3.58 and 3.87 (F = 4.37, *ES*: .12); post hoc analysis (Student Newman Keels, p < .05) indicated the latter subgroups not to be statistically different.

Within the teacher sample, a statistical analysis was carried out to explore differences between "real" dance teachers (those who are presently teaching dance technique classes, n = 21) versus "other" teachers (those who were teaching theory classes or had other roles within the dance department; n = 18). A significant difference (p < .05) was found on one of the LSD scales: Real teachers had a lower mean score on democratic behavior than other teachers (means 3.04 and 3.81, respectively; F = 21.26, *ES*: .37). On each of the other three scales (training and instruction, positive feedback behavior, and

social support behavior), no significant differences between the two subgroups were found ($p > .05$).

A second conclusion is that the findings of both LSD and ratings point to two key qualities in teachers: expertise and providing positive feedback. In the reality of daily life, the ideal teacher will probably not be present most of the time. The current teacher is possibly best described by two characteristics: geared toward future profession and interest in student as a dancer (see Table 2). Each of these characteristics might be classified as examples of training and instruction behavior within the LSD framework (see Table 1). Other characteristics that were mentioned relatively often by teachers or students were motivating and positive; these could be viewed as examples of the LSD category of positive feedback.

A third conclusion that forces itself is that the commonly sketched image of the dance teacher (as was illustrated in the introduction of this article) is an unjust judgment. Almost no support has been found for the image of the authoritarian, strict dance teacher for whom "it's never any good." According to both teachers and students, the ideal teacher favors democratic behavior. Within the context of a dance class, democratic behavior should probably be interpreted to indicate the need for consultation on matters that occur during class or are highly related to dance performance in class. Democratic behavior might be shown by the teacher in asking the students about the effectiveness of various ways to communicate certain messages. Democratic behavior might also appear in such issues as healthful eating and drinking habits, measures regarding injury prevention, or ways to deal with class instructions while in a process of injury rehabilitation. In general, democratic behavior is shown in teacher behavior that allows greater participation by the students in decisions pertaining to class goals, practice methods, and matters related to (the preparation for) rehearsals and stage performances (see Table 1).

When asked about daily practice, both teachers and students did not give any indication that authoritarian was a key characteristic of the dance teacher. These findings would certainly bring some to discard the notion of the authoritarian dance teacher, since it is not recognized by either teachers or students. Onlookers might not be convinced this easily: They might point to this intriguing phenomenon that dance students are so dependent upon their teacher that they interpret the teacher's behavior in a positive manner and, therefore, might not be the best judge of the authoritarian teacher. In an essay "On Authoritarianism in the Dance Classroom," Smith (1998) claimed, "Although authoritarian behavior appears to be imposed

upon the students, often the students themselves expect and accept such treatment" (p. 123). The findings obtained in the present study cannot be decisive on the issue, but they do point to an interesting gap between the outsider's opinion and the insider's perception.

In *Ten 20th Century Masters* (Warren, 1996), 10 portraits were presented on internationally famous dance teachers, 6 of whom were women. Within the world of the dance, women hold the majority. In the present study, 81% of the student sample, as well as 77% of the teachers sample, were women. In the questionnaire presented in this study, both dance students and dance teachers were asked the following question: "For me the ideal dance teacher is...?" Four alternatives to answer the question were offered: (a) a man, (b) a woman, (c) dependent on student's gender, or (d) teacher's gender makes no difference. For 75% of the dance students and 90% of the dance teachers, gender made no difference. Only 12% of the students and 5% of the teachers indicated that the ideal dance teacher is a man, 6% of the students and none of the teachers indicated that it is a woman, while 5% of both the students and teachers felt that it depends on the gender of the student. Finally, therefore, it is suggested that the ideal teacher characteristics and the ratings of dance teacher and his or her class appear to be valid for both male and female dance teachers.

The present study did not asses the dance teacher's effectiveness in promoting the students' dance qualities (e.g., in terms of grades in ballet technique). Since many teachers are involved in the teaching process, it would not have been possible to assess effectiveness in terms of the number of students who are placed in excellent professional dance companies. The present study was simply concerned with the process of teaching. It remains to be determined how changes in a teacher's behavior might produce effects in terms of career outcomes. In this context, it is of interest to point to findings of large-scale studies done with young athletes. After having been trained in creating a healthy psychological environment in which positive feedback by the coach is a key element, coaches of these young athletes did not have an improved won-lost record. Other changes, particularly in psychosocial measures, were striking. Athletes of trained coaches were different from those of untrained coaches: Athletes liked their trained coaches more, had more fun, liked their teammates more, demonstrated lower levels of performance anxiety, had higher self-confidence, and had lower dropout rates (Smoll & Smith, 2001). Therefore, further research should be conducted regarding the dance teacher's behavior by taking its effects in terms of outcomes into consideration.

Implications

When summarizing the findings, I am tempted to say that the dance teachers are described as highly knowledgeable. This quality is recognized by students. On the other hand, there also appears to be much room for improvement in the area of positive feedback, at least if teachers want to become more of an ideal teacher.

The description of the dance classes by teachers and dance students underlines a task orientation: Dance classes are geared toward improvement and hard work in which structure and discipline are highly valued. As findings indicate, both students and teachers emphasized the task orientation of dance teachers. Students indicated, however, that they also wanted their teachers to relate to them more in terms of positive feedback and social support.

As the results of this study show, teachers have a more positive image of their behavior than students have. This discrepancy between teacher and pupil is not limited to the domain of dance. In their research on coaching effectiveness in sports, Smith and Smoll (1996) concluded that young athletes demonstrate a more valid perception of coach behavior than both the coach himself and the parents of the athletes: "The only significant correlation [between the observation of the coach's behavior and the coach's rating of his or her own behavior] occurred for punishment" (Smith & Smoll, 1996, p. 130). In a continuation of their research, Smoll and Smith (2001) have devised a special course (Coaching Effectiveness Training; CET) that, among other things, intends to offer coaches the means to calibrate their behavior. From the present results, one might be inclined to take the idea of a dance CET as an interesting suggestion. At the very least, teachers should not take their view on daily reality for granted. This study should be taken as a sign that students sometimes do perceive things differently!

A further point to be taken from the results of this study is that authoritarian can hardly qualify as a valid descriptor of the behavior of dance teachers. While these results should certainly be replicated before one can come to firm conclusions, one might doubt whether such objective, empirical findings are indeed effective in changing the existing image of the dance teacher. From social psychological research, it is well known that information or knowledge will not suffice here (cf. Smith & Mackie, 2000). Nevertheless, not only would more research be helpful regarding the role and behavior of the dance teacher, it would also be of interest to replicate this study with dance teachers in other segments of the dance world. The present study focused on dance teachers of preprofessional students.

Further research might take either the dance teacher of the local dance school or the teacher of the professional dancer as an appropriate study object.

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