

Teacher Training for Dance Studies: Insights into a Continuing Education Course

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Teacher Training for Dance Studies: Some Considerations.¹

This article reflects upon teacher training in a continuing education project. To this end, we make some considerations about how the professional that will work with dance in primary and secondary education is trained. Later on, we introduce some concepts that were experienced during the project, such as the *reflective practitioner* who builds his knowledge in relation to action, reflection and action (Schön, 2002) and the *knowledge of experience* (Larrosa, 2002), updated to *knowledge of dance* by Godoy (2013).

We know that the specific training of dance teachers that work in public and private certified schools is currently provided in undergraduate dance courses, but in practice physical education teachers, who have graduated in pedagogy or from a teacher's training high school, as well as graduates in other types of art, have been working with dance in schools (Brasil, 1998a, 29). This has been accentuated since the publication of *PCN-Arte* (National Curriculum Guidelines for Art, 1998) and *Educação Física* (Physical Education, 1997), which consider dance to be part of both areas of knowledge. Moreover, the recent discussions of the Curricular Common National Base (BNCC, 2016) reinforce this prerogative.

Despite a growing number of undergraduate degrees in dance--as a result of the Higher Education Reform, which presented a plan of action for the restructuring, development and democratization of the federal institutions of higher education

¹ This text offers a review of some ideas from the doctoral research developed by one of the authors of this article.

(Brasil, 2003a)--we do not yet have specialized teachers in sufficient numbers to meet the needs of schools². In addition, in the specific case of early childhood education, an issue we will highlight later, teachers have a multipurpose education without a disciplinary specificity.

For these reasons, the concern with the training of teachers in dance has been a constant in the development of the research group "Dance: Aesthetics and Education" (GPDEE),³ linked to a postgraduate program of IA/UNESP, the Instituto de Artes (Arts Institute) of the Universidade Estadual Paulista, which has the research emphasis of *Training, Teaching and Learning in Dance*. This is of particular relevance to this article, as it investigates the teaching and learning processes of dance and their mediations in formal, non-formal and informal spaces—places that are conducive to educational practices.

This is done through cultural action projects and initial and continuing teacher training. Therefore, this article proposes a dialogue of dance with other artistic languages, for the production of research, methodologies and didactic material for dance professionals and the like. This production reveals the observer's look, which focuses on the teacher's practice with the students. Therefore, the group has shown a growing public interest in the demand for the courses offered⁴ by the GPDEE, which has in its team professionals who present in their profiles an initial education in several areas, among them pedagogy, visual arts, physical education and dance, and who work with dance in schools.

In this way, due to the profile of these teachers who seek the continuing training offered by GPDEE, we highlight an insertion of dance in the disciplines of art and physical education, in which one or another teacher works with dance on his/her own initiative. This is because in practice these professionals who teach dan-

² Consulting the website of the Ministry of Education, e-MEC, there are now 32 degrees in dance in Brazil. Available at: <<http://emec.mec.gov.br>>. Accessed on: Sept. 12, 2016.

³ The authors of the article are part of this research group.

⁴ Since 2006 the group has developed teacher training projects through the offering of continuing education courses in arts and dance. Some of these were: "The Continuing Teacher Education Project" of Jundiaí (2006-2007); "The Web of Knowledge Project" in Araraquara, Presidente Prudente and São José dos Campos (2006-2007); and, participations in "The Citizen Pedagogy Project" in Itaquaquecetuba (2006-2009) and "The Citizen Pedagogy Project" of UNESP / UNIVESP – the Virtual University of the State of São Paulo (2011-2013).

ce in schools have received training in gyms or free courses, or have had some experience in the area and because of this insert dance into the school context.⁵ Continuing education, for these teachers, aims to establish the interconnection of *knowledge in dance* with themes worked on in the school and knowledge brought by teachers with the aim of fostering *sensitive knowledge* in dance (Godoy, 2013). In addition, the discussion about the training of the professional who will work with dance in school intensified during previous decades due to the approval of the LDB (National Education Bases and Directives Law 9.394/96) that established that the training of teachers would happen in universities, colleges and higher education centers, both for undergraduate degrees and in higher education courses. And more recently, Law 13.278/2.016 amends paragraph 6 of article 26 of Law No. 9.394 of December 20, 1996; this new law refers to the teaching of art and includes the visual arts, dance, music and theater as languages that will constitute the curricular component of basic education. In addition, it sets a five-year deadline for educational systems to implement the resulting changes, including the necessary and adequate training of teachers in sufficient numbers to work in primary and secondary education.

These changes present us with an increasing demand in the area and a need to increase the number of professionals in the area. This is an action that requires adequate time, budget, and public policy. It is a gradual and dependent process of specific training that prepares the teacher to master the language of dance as well as the expression of this knowledge in educational practices according to each work context.

That said, the continuing education courses directed towards the area have been an alternative and a space for professionals that seek to work with dance—among

⁵ The data on professional education and practices with dance were collected in selected interviews of continuing education courses of the GPDEE, and published in these articles: Godoy, K. M. A.; Bazarim, Caroline; Bergamasso, Mariana; Philadelphus, Milena; and, Ninin, Roberta Cristina. "Dancing in School: um projeto desenvolvido pelo Núcleo de Ensino do Instituto de Artes da Unesp." In: Sheila Zambello de Pinho; José Roberto Corrêa Saglietti. (editor). Núcleos de Ensino, 1st ed. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2006, v. 1, p. 641-649 and Godoy, K. M. A., "Poéticas da dança na formação básica - um projeto NE voltado à formação continuada em dança para professores da rede pública de São Paulo." In: Pinho, Scheila Zambello; Spazziani, Maria de Lourdes; Mendonça, Sueli Guadalupe de Lima; Rubo, Elisabete Aparecida Andrello; and, Villareal, Dalva Maria de Oliveira (editors). Ser e tornar-se professor: práticas educativas no contexto escolar. 1st ed. São Paulo: Editora Academic Culture - UNESP / Prograd, 2012, v. 1, p. 415-428.

whom are professionals who are working with it and did not have dance in their original training—to discuss and problematize and appropriate *knowledge in dance* (Godoy, 2013). Sgarbi (2009) points out that "continuing training can provide a survey of teachers' needs, problematizing them with a critical stance on their own work" (p. 27).

Highlighting only training, in the broadest sense of the word, assumes a process in constant transformation, and in need of frequent updates. Larrosa (2010) points out that the formation of the individual is an integral and continuous development of inclinations and possibilities. In this respect, exchanges and relations with choice options occur during a period that does not end but which harmonizes and disorganizes according to the possibilities that the subject in training faces—more specifically, according to experience.

In other words, teacher training is not limited to the years that the future professional passes in the university, although this is a period of openness of the individual to language, or of absorbing experience according to Larrosa (2002). Based on this perspective, training occurs in school (college, university, among others) and also in various other places, just as there are multiple learning opportunities that provide us with different spaces designed or not for education.

At a lecture held at PUC/SP in August, 1997, invited by the Graduate Program in Psychology of Education, Professor António Nóvoa said that the teacher is one of the professionals who, upon arriving at the training course, brings a practical and theoretical framework to the "chosen" profession, because he/she spent at least eight years of their life in schools, having contact with the school structure and experiencing the teacher-student relationship, knowing their learning methods and the teaching dynamics that have brought significant contributions and those that bring bad memories. In short, the teacher knows what needs to be revisited, valued, and explored. In this way, Professor Nóvoa brings a proposal of teacher training that values the knowledge of experience as well as the specialized knowledge in education and the knowledge of the subjects.

In the training of teachers in art, these types of knowledge can complement each other, since the student-artists who will become teachers, most of the time, have passed through artistic experiences that defined the chosen language, as well as formal lessons. Experience, in this case, strengthens the training of the artist and the teacher.

The research of Fernanda Sgarbi (2009) and Claudia de Souza Rosa Cravo (2011) analyzed the professional profile of art teachers. The presence of non-formal, informal and formal courses (university courses) and continuing education were identified in the data presented in the professional profile, which shows the exchange of experiences as this knowledge is built up throughout the teacher's professional career path.

Beyond this discussion, it would be up to the initial training courses to theoretically subsidize these experiences, and also to connect the contents of the various disciplines to the reflective practice that can generate an educational action. In the curricular field, the repertoire of previous knowledge of the teachers in training is not always considered in the planning and development of pedagogical actions. Recent studies, such as that of Rosana Pimenta (2016), deal with the dance curricula of Brazilian higher education institutions and reflect on the conceptions of art, culture and education that underlie them. The research reveals that the curricula are not yet thought to support a broad reflection on human teaching and education and still lack an interconnection between the different disciplines in the curricular contents. In addition, there are few pedagogical projects that are concerned with working under the multidisciplinary perspective and with projects of educational and artistic action. From this perspective, the possibility of establishing a constant dialogue between the experiences brought by the university students and the knowledge proposed in the pedagogical projects of the courses is rarely considered in the curricula. This problem presents itself differently. One of the ways relates to the knowledge that these students possess due to their previous experiences of daily and school life. Another form occurs when the students of the initial training courses, due to different circumstances, already have experiences as teachers and, therefore, have already built up professional knowledge in practice and, even so, this knowledge ends up not being considered and approached as a topic in their training process (CNE/CP, September, 2001).

With regard to initial training, the studies by Paludo⁶ (2015) reinforce, among other aspects, the previous experience of undergraduates. The author emphasizes that the students present diverse references before embarking on college courses

⁶ For this article, we present a short cut of Luciana Paludo's doctoral thesis (2015), specifically regarding curriculum and training in the graduate courses in dance in Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

in dance. Upon entering, some learn to dance at the university, while others bring previous knowledge in specific dance techniques, such as ballet and modern dance, among others. They are ways of dancing that are so different that they end up generating a plurality, resulting from the meeting of what the students bring with what the teachers of these courses present, which in some cases stimulates the change of curriculum⁷.

Another aspect that stands out in the training of the professional that works with dance, as said before, is that these professionals didn't always have initial training in art or dance, but they did in pedagogy, physical education and sometimes in literature, among other areas, and risked working with dance because they experienced it in a non-formal or informal way. So one of the challenges is to reconcile one's posture as an artist with the teaching situation in the classroom. How can one establish networks of communication of knowledge and break with structures that are so formalized, in order to facilitate the construction of knowledge that is sensitive? And yet, let's start with subjectivity, without disregarding the knowledge of the art, in the case of dance.

In this sense, and in order to minimize the gap between initial training and dance practices in school, the research group "Dance: Aesthetics and Education" (GP-DEE) has as one of its presuppositions the integration between teaching, research and extension, also through ongoing teacher training projects.

In this way, the *Poéticas da Dança na Educação Básica* (Poetics of Dance in Primary and Secondary Education) project was built with the intention of creating teachers that are critical and who are transformers of their reality. In this context, the project intends to educate a teacher who deepens his knowledge in relation to body, movement, art and dance.

The Poetics of Dance Project in Primary and Secondary Education: A Presentation.

The project had as its objective "to develop, register and reflect on a proposal of continuing education with the language of dance integrated with the artistic lan-

⁷Paludo (2015) points out that in some cases this encounter ends up changing the curriculum, as is the case of the Federal University of Pelotas. In this dance course there was a curriculum composition in which the technical subjects were part of the complementary activities, but the desire of the students caused it to be included separately in the curriculum.

guages (theater, music and visuals) for teachers of basic education" (Godoy, 2012, p. 8). The GPDEE chose to work with the integration of languages and immersions in the area of art, teaching and reflection, as well as *knowledge in dance*, with questions about what dance teaches in the school space. Considering this context, the project was divided into three stages: the first, in 2011, when the formation of tutors/instructors⁸ took place; the second stage, in the first half of 2012, in which these tutors instructed other teachers/course participants;⁹ and, the third stage, in the second semester of 2012, when the teachers/course participants were followed up by the GPDEE team and by tutors/instructors in the development of subprojects of dance work in the school environment. Accordingly, the figure below clarifies this:



Figure 1 - Stages of the *Poéticas da Dança na Educação Básica* (Poetic Dance Project in Basic Education).

The first stage was aimed at the training of tutors/instructors and was organized to develop aspects of full-time education for primary and secondary school students through the language of dance linked to other artistic languages. In this first stage, 16 teachers (tutors/instructors) were trained to act in the second stage as multipliers. These teachers presented initial training in several areas, among them pe-

⁸ The GPDEE defined as tutors/instructors the teachers selected in the first stage of the course who worked as multipliers in the second stage.

⁹ The GPDEE defined as teachers/course participants the professionals who participated in the course taught by tutors/instructors and who worked directly in the school with the dance subprojects in the second semester of 2012.

dagogy, visual arts, physical education and dance, and work with dance in the school. At the start of the second stage, four of the 16 tutors/instructors dropped out of the project for personal reasons, so we worked with 11 teachers (tutors/instructors) selected in the first stage and divided into two groups. The groups worked to train a total of 33 teachers/students who developed the dance subprojects at the school in the second semester of 2012.

In order to start the third stage (from August to December 2012), the GPDEE proposed that each teacher/course participant present their individual dance pre-projects for school application to the collective. Subsequently, the GPDEE team focused on the reading and categorization of pre-projects by theme affinity, age group and location. Five groups were identified, divided into themes and stages of primary and secondary education, including three for early childhood education, focused on dance and storytelling; dancing games; and, aesthetic appreciation. One aimed at high school with the theme of space and dance at school, and another focused on elementary school education, encompassing dance and popular culture games.

At this point in the project we had eight tutors and 24 teachers/course participants. The tutors/instructors¹⁰ were divided among these five groups to supervise the new subprojects that emerged in order to follow the development of each of them in the school.

Of the groupings, five subprojects emerged, among them: 1) *Movimentar-se Brincando: A Dança na Educação Infantil* (Moving While Playing: Dance in Pre-School, which worked with the expansion of the motor repertoire through improvisation in dance; 2) *EM-Danças* (EM-Dances), which was intended to provide an experience of aesthetic appreciation of a contemporary dance show and discussion about the show; 3) *Brincando para Dançar* (Playing to Dance, which emphasized the body that dances as a protagonist of games originating from the popular repertoire for elementary school; 4) *Eu, eu e o outro, eu e a escola I* (Me, Me and the Other, Me and the School), which approached space, dance and the body's performance in school, for high school; 5) *O Corpo Inventa História* (The Body Invents History), which explored traditional games and *cantigas de roda* (circle songs), in order to

¹⁰ The term "tutors/course participants" appears in the text in Portuguese in the feminine because they were all female.

establish connections with the development of dance language for small children. In this article we will specifically cover the 3rd stage of the project and one of the subprojects, *O Corpo Inventa História*, which was developed in the USP-SP Day Care Center.

Before the Project Starts.

To understand the scope of this project, we present some of the assumptions of GPDEE (Research Group - Dance: Aesthetics and Education), such as: a) the understanding of dance as an artistic language in school; b) educational practices in dance in dialogue with the other languages of art; c) play and aesthetic appreciation as possibilities of teaching dance that were developed with the teachers¹¹ through the *Poéticas da Dança na Educação Básica* project.¹²

In order to work with dance teaching, in light of sensitive knowledge (Godoy, 2012), we first emphasize three presuppositions lived and experienced by the GPDEE, which we understand as important for the relationship of teaching and learning in dance: a) praxis as a premise of work; b) the effectiveness of praxis in the work process; c) sharing.

The first assumption is based on the ideas of Schön (apud Pimenta, 2002), who reports that it is necessary to start with practice as a way of making changes in the day to day. The concept of praxis is presented as a transforming action performed by the subject and by which he modifies himself while changing the world around him (Coutinho, 2012).

The second presupposition points to praxis as a critical-reflective perspective that leads to the reformulation of the teacher's work. That is, it is a constant recons-

¹¹The process of selecting professionals for this stage included professionals who were directly connected to grades 1-12 teachers, pedagogical coordinators, directors, project managers, etc.) and the presence of this artistic language in the body of these people was adopted as a prerequisite. For this, interested persons completed a registration form and participated in a corporal experience in dance (recorded in video and photos available in the archives of the research group).

¹²The project was presented to PROGRAD (Undergraduate Pro-Rector) through the Teaching Nucleus of the Arts Institute of UNESP, and articulated with PROEX (UNESP University Extension Pro-Rector) and had actions integrated with the Course Proposal of Continuing Education of Teachers, in accordance with the edict of the Ministry of Education, through the Secretariats of Basic Education, Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity and Special Education (published in the *Diário Oficial da União* nº 25 - Section 3, February 5, 2010, page 24), which was approved by SEB/MEC in May 2010.

truction by the observation of the process and the reprogramming of what was planned, through the teacher's later reflection together with the work team. The idea is to start from what has occurred in practice as a way of making changes in future actions, in order to make praxis effective in the work process. Consequently, the dance teacher does not present himself as a reproducer of exercises, choreographies or models of classes, focused on acquiring skills or transferring content, but rather on transposing them, that is, overcoming them and making the intention of proposing new practices feasible through mediation. To do so, we chose to work with projects. So we plot a path, with a goal to be achieved. But this trail brings surprises as long as we are willing to perceive the surroundings. It is through this journey that events unfold. The course is the most important because it has the process itself in it. How does one act in the face of these surprises that often bring great challenges? Here is learning through conscious living and from choices (experience).

The intention is to realize that this area, although fertile, can bring uncertainties, which allow us to reflect on the best way forward (Godoy, 2016, about to be published). The teacher becomes a subject of experience also in the teaching of dance, because he builds his daily practices based on previous knowledge, coming from the educational processes and the pedagogical practice itself, where he/she places him or herself as a protagonist in the process of constructing sensitive knowledge in dance.

It is worth pointing out that a dance teacher is not alone in the school environment. He is embedded in a collaborative network of education and community professionals. In this way, the last presupposition is part of the collective work, that when organized as a field of experimentation and research can be conceived as a *locus of sensitive knowledge*, through practices driven by the relationship of teachers with context.

Thus, for this knowledge to become effective it is important to share with one's peers the senses and meanings of the dance proposals in order to generate knowledge coming from the relation of theories and practices in order to establish them as a single source of knowledge.

From these experiences, teachers can appropriate knowledge in dance to build *sensitive knowledge* and, from it to share, interact, modify, identify and seek their

own references in dance. This goes beyond teachers' simple interest in teaching dance. It requires that through aesthetic and artistic experiences, dance may be incorporated, lived, experienced and transposed to the young child.

These thoughts provided us with insights to propose new strategies and, as a subject of experience, to be affected by them, through the reflections that occurred during the project and especially in the experiences of the subproject *O Corpo Inventa História*, which we describe and reflect upon in this article.

Preparing to Get to Day Care

During the third stage of the project we were able to follow and supervise the subproject *O Corpo Inventa História*, aimed at Child Education, which was developed at the USP-SP Day Care Center. This subproject explored dance through the theme of sea and the images of the book *Wave* by Suzy Lee (2008)¹³. The goal was to enable children to experience dance¹⁴ through *faz de conta* (make believe) games¹⁵, from the elements of this language like space and time, in dialogue with other artistic languages. Issues about the practice emerged from the observation of the meetings in the USP Day Care Center. Our intention with coordination was to provide support so that, after the meetings, the tutors/instructors and teachers/students would reflect and seek new strategies to help the children, because "it is possible to look retrospectively and reflect on reflection-in-action. After the lesson, the teacher can think about what happened, what he/she observed, and the meaning he/she gave to it and the eventual adoption of other meanings "(Schön 1992, 83).

This type of reflection occurred at the moment the participants proposed the experiences, which activated perception and the change in strategies during the action. In order for these changes to be discussed later, one participant always wrote down what had been done or changed for the discussions, so that we could understand the reasons for the new choices.

¹³A children 's book that served as the basis for the development of activities of the subproject: Lee, S. *A Onda*, São Paulo: Cosac and Naify, 2008.

¹⁴This term comes from reflections of GPDEE from Larrosa's concept of knowledge of the experience (2002); in this sense the experience is in the body, and is what dances. Godoy (2013) elaborates this concept in the book *Experiências Compartilhadas em Dança: formação de plateia*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Unesp Institute of Arts, 2013. v. 1. 115p.

¹⁵*In faz de conta* games, the child recreates situations that are part of his daily life. "By means of make believe, children change the meaning of things, treat inanimate objects as animate, and substitute a real action for another action, contributing to the process of the appropriation of signs and the construction of language "(Almeida, 2013, page 48).

In this third and final stage we realized, observing the exercise, the difficulties of teachers/students in relation to the teaching of dance to the little ones. In addition, we observe how this teacher organizes, builds and applies knowledge in dance, a term worked and constructed by Godoy (2013) and constantly discussed by the GPDEE. The experiences of the third phase of the project were accompanied by these questions regarding the best way for the young child to approach dance and regarding many doubts and uncertainties in how to transpose the knowledge acquired in the previous stages of the *Poéticas da Dança* for children.

During this course, there was a preparation for teachers/course participants to attend school. Our role as coordinators was to assist in the planning and identification of difficulties, to indicate theoretical background, to suggest activities and ways of teaching, in order to expand the possibilities of each teacher's work. Sometimes these suggestions were followed, other times not. The group's decision was sovereign, even when we predicted that a certain dynamic would not happen the way we had planned.

The participants made the choices and organization of the meetings. Our action, as a team in this process, was to punctuate and present reflections that supported this re-planning, through reflective observation on the problems arising from the practice. During the meetings with the teachers/course participants, we initially tried not to interfere in the conduct of the activities, but only observe and record what was happening for later discussion in our meetings. The group had full autonomy¹⁶ in the application of the activities, which were often based on experiences that occurred in the first stage.

Our role in this moment was to seek points, after the meeting, about the contribution of activities to the training of teachers/course participants, with questions such as: *What is each activity useful for? What does this contribute to the formation of the group? How does the group respond? How do each of the teachers/course participants respond? What is this group's need?*

After the meetings the GPDEE team met, focusing on the action of the tutors/instructors and the reception of the activities by the teachers/course participants.

¹⁶The autonomy to which we refer is based on the etymology of the word that is defined as "that which establishes its own laws". In this sense, for the teaching/learning processes to establish their own laws, or for the free choice of procedures adopted, the individual starts from experience (Larrosa, 2002) for the construction of knowledge.

We also reflected on our own performance as mentors/coordinators in this ongoing formation, which allowed us to review our actions during the project, planning changes when necessary. This positioning ensured a constant change in our performance (supervisors/coordinators), providing security against the decision making necessary for the project's progress. The weekly meetings made it possible to share what happened with new referrals, generating the construction of autonomy for all participating.

The Subproject: The Body Invents History - Steps and Meetings

Our role in this stage was to assist the tutors/instructors and teachers/course participants in the organization of the subproject as to its purposes and actions, as well as to follow the planning and guide the development of the meetings at the USP daycare center. For this, we followed some procedures with the group, such as: a) planning meetings; b) a round of evaluative conversation after each meeting with the teachers/course participants; c) evaluation meetings of the actions of the teachers/course participants with the tutors/instructors; d) organization of registration materials, such as reports¹⁷, photos and videos of each meeting.

The reports explained lesson plans, thoughts, evaluations of the people involved, and impressions about working with the children. They were also used to illustrate the subproject¹⁸, as well as to guide the discussion about it.

The group organized itself and, based on the book *Wave*¹⁹, first invested in thinking of activities that involved the make-believe game, in order to facilitate the participation of the children in the proposed activities. This is because, according to Almeida,

Make believe games occupy, in particular, an important place in child development, since they are a strategy for the creation of fantasy. By means of the story, children change the meaning of things, treat inanimate objects as animate and substitute a real action for another action, contributing to the process of appropriation of signs and

¹⁷The team took care to record all the steps of the project through reports, video and photos. In this way, the subproject participants (course participants, instructors and coordinators) submitted a report for each meeting, in order to record what happened, to later reflect on the actions. In addition, the group of course participants and the tutors/instructors of each group delivered other reports at the end of the subproject.

¹⁸The statements of the participants appear, for this article, in the form of a direct quote. Although we have written permission regarding the right to use images and testimonials, we have chosen to preserve the identity of the participants.

¹⁹The group had the initial desire to work with stories. As the proposal was for young children, the idea was for an image book to make it possible to tell this story with the body. Faced with this, one of the members of the group that had already worked with the book *Wave* proposed using it in this subproject.

construction of language. This ability to evoke the absent object or the action not yet realized by means of a sign favors the passage from concrete to abstract thought (2013, 47).

In this way, the chosen work structure was to initially expose some particularities of the book, such as the relationship of the main character with the fish of the sea, the other characters, the environment and sensations, later presenting the story and the book itself. The idea was not to induce an exact representation of the book, in order to allow freedom of creation in dance experiences.

The meetings with the children lasted 45 minutes and had a structure previously organized in three parts: warming up, development of the theme and completion of it with a game or relaxation. This organization was interesting because it partially repeated the classroom structure that the instructors applied with the teachers/course participants, but with the appropriate adaptations, taking into account the group and the context. In this way, they enabled new ways of experiencing the *knowledge of dance* directed towards this age group. Another aspect that stands out from this organization is the importance of learning with practice for the construction of a reflexive teacher—the teacher who acts by transforming his/her practices continuously, which implies a constant reflection on his or her actions (Schön, 1992).

They noted this attribute as follows: “the after-class time for conversation and insight was very useful, because in daily practice we can neither assess our work nor discuss it with other peers” (teachers/course participants’ final report, 11/24/2012).

In the previous stage, the instructors repeated the course they received from the GPDEE, without the proper adjustments to the context. However, at that stage, they were careful enough to, along with the teachers/course participants, think about reorganizing the course. Accordingly, new approaches were developed and actions were restructured based on the concerns raised at the day care meetings.

The teachers/course participants, as well as the tutors/instructors at the previous stage, could experience some autonomy, inserting the characteristics of the teaching and learning processes in the teaching context.

The experiences that encompassed the knowledge in this initiative were essential to train the teachers/course participants and instructors, enabling them to give

children the opportunity to experience dance as an artistic language and area of knowledge. For illustration purposes, we describe below the meetings held at the USP day care center.

First Meeting

This meeting focused on the space-movement factor (Laban, 1978). The group decided to work on this topic first because they believed it could enable the children to experience expressive possibilities of the body in movement – especially the actions of walking, running, jumping, and rolling – in relation to the sea setting, as shown in the aforementioned book *Wave*. The purpose of the meeting was to develop activities involving space, and at the same time focus on raising the children's awareness of the possibilities of using body movements. However, those actions were not explicit in the teachers'/course participants' performance, body or explanation. This fact revealed to GPDEE's team and to the instructors that the teachers/course participants were not yet adequately (em)bodied in this theme.

At this initial stage, we continued to value the autonomy of the decisions, based on the experience of the teachers/course participants and, as applicable, we would introduce, at a later stage, a one-off intervention in relation to the development of the chosen movement factor. The activities showed us that the teachers/course participants favored the imagination, as they believed that:

[...] Children systematically develop their imagination based on what they observe, experience, hear, and interpret from their life experience, while the situations they imagine allow them to understand what they observe, interpreting new situations and experimenting them in a fictitious manner, until they incorporate them as a lived and interpreted experience. (Sarmiento, 2003, p. 14).

Coming up with activities that involved the world of fantasy was critical to involvement and facilitated the engagement of children in the proposed activities. However, this meeting did not include interacting this aspect with dance, which we will point out in the meetings that followed.

Second Meeting

Space remained as the central theme in this meeting. We started our activity by asking who had already been to the beach. Inspired by the images in the book *Wave*, the teachers/course participants told their experiences involving the sea and encouraged the children to share their own stories. Then they invited the chil-

dren to go to the “beach.” A scene representing the beach – with blue, white and yellow fabrics and other scenic objects – had been set up in the day care center’s cafeteria. It is worth mentioning that the setting’s design was thought out with a view to exploring the space and the handouts. The fabrics played several roles, depending on the game. How the space was organized allowed the children to imagine and build plots.



Figure 2 – A Sea Setting in the subproject *O Corpo Inventa História* (*The Body Invents Stories*).

Another relevant aspect was that an object could become many things. The fabrics had different roles at all times according to the creative process implemented by the child. Assigning the quality of movement from animate beings to inanimate objects made it easier for younger children to explore the body movement.

This was the highlight of the day, as the importance of organizing a playful approach to *Dance Themes* (Andrade, 2016) with children became clear to the teachers/course participants. They also realized that the games, toys, and other props may help this type of learning, as children discover other ways of moving the body, by imitating characters and animals with their gestures, poses, expressions.

Restoring the imagination facilitated the creative process, enabling children to live and experience many movements that could become, or acquire the characteristics of, dance language, that is, could turn into dance depending on how the teachers/course participants taught it.

When the time came for assessing the day’s work, using our and the instructors’ notes, the teachers/course participants concluded that they could have used the-

mes that emphatically explored the space movement factor. This is because the children were more concerned with imitating the characters and “playing at sea” than exploring *Dance Themes*. In this process, the teachers/course participants started to identify some problems:

[...]...we used the image of an animal to make the children explore a certain action, telling them to imitate a crab, but we did not explain the dance element embedded in this action, in this case the average level. (teachers'/course participants' final report, 11/24/2012).

Here we notice an aspect that stands out, in this case the movement was explored without any purpose and without any relation with dance language. Imitating creatures of the sea was important for the children, because they assigned meanings and sought references for the movement of animals in their figurative repertoire, but this in itself does not qualify as the language of the dance. The concept of concrete did shift into the concept of abstract, that is, from the image of the crab into the imitation of the movement of the crab. However, the movement of the crab was not associated with the concrete action of dancing like the crab. And this “crab dance” is different for each child because the crab has a different meaning for each one.

We highlighted to the group that dance has a specific role in the school environment and that it presents itself in the creation of movements, and in the use of creativity and of free expression. In addition, one of the purposes for teaching dance in Preschool Education is to allow children to evolve, expanding the possibilities of their movements by mastering their own bodies, discovering new spaces and forms, overcoming limits, and having the ability to face challenges that involve motor, social, emotional and cognitive development (Barreto, 2002). And, above all, since dance is a language it has codes that, when combined, form a phrase, a composition that is unique to each child.

In this context, we discussed the importance of children appropriating dance to ensure its relationship with make believe. Having said that, we pointed out that it was necessary to strengthen the elements of the dance, as initially proposed, because the activity ended up focusing only on storytelling. Thus, we reviewed what we would work on at the next meeting.

Third meeting

This meeting sought to continue exploring the space through levels (high, me-

dium, low) as well as to introduce the weight factor. To begin with, the teachers/course participants brought to the circle a box with various types of feathers. They opened the box and each child chose a feather in order to try the sensations the touch brought to their skin. They played carrying the feathers on different parts of the body and balancing them. The children would "fly" through space, choose different paths, spin, flip, jump, and explore levels, as they made low passes.

Then, the children danced to the rhythm of the song "Pula Piaba" (Leap, Fish) by the group "Pé no Terreiro"²⁰. First, they made the movements that the lyrics suggested²¹. Then, some children received "piabinhas" (small fish), a crepe paper toy that flies like a kite. The idea was for the children to continue dancing and exploring the paths and trajectories until they passed the "piaba" on to the next friend.

In order to contrast heavy weight with the lightness of the feather and of the "piaba," the day's activity finished off with the children building a "clay sculpture." The children lay down and relaxed their bodies on the floor like soft clay. One of the teachers/course participants turned into a fairy who liked to make clay sculptures. Encouraged by the teachers/course participants, the children began to collapse or to melt because they were in the rain. The sculptures returned to being soft clay and so the activity was repeated several times.

In the post-meeting conversation, the teachers/course participants considered that the purposes of working on space, directions, levels and weight were accomplished²². In this case, the use of imagery to explore movement factors (Laban, 1978) was directly related to the dance. During the activities, the course participants pointed out in a playful manner what the children needed to do, with instructions that included: go over, go under, carry the feather very lightly, float, spin. They thought of creating paths in diagonal, circular, and straight-line directions, and allowed the children to use the imagery to explore the movement, space and weight factors (Laban, 1978).

Finally, we believe that improvising with the heavy weight needed to be further

²⁰CD *Cacuriá Pé no Terreiro*. The group *Pé no Terreiro* brings together artists, art educators and teachers who seek to keep cultural traditions and popular expressions alive.

²¹It is worth mentioning that merely dancing to what the song suggests dissociates from the purpose of exploring weight and space in a creative way.

²² Seeking inspiration in Laban's movement factors to prepare the lesson plans came from the tutors/instructors and the teachers/course participants, as this was the author they knew and were more familiar with through other past training events.

explored, as it could be enjoyable and pleasurable for the children to sometimes repeat the created movements. In this context, Godoy (2012) points out that for building knowledge in dance, rather than merely repeating predefined movements valuing the accuracy of gestures, the idea of repeating them allows a reflexive, conscious and transforming appropriation of the movements. Accordingly, the strategy of repeating several times some dance movements created by the children themselves and mediated by the teacher would allow improving and expanding the repertoire of movements.

The theme of repetition was the highlight of the final meeting, and the group decided to further approach it in the next meetings. This shows that the course participants were alert and open to path changes based on practical events. The action-reflection-action processes (Schön, 1992) were gradually taking place as a changing element of the educational praxis, modifying the pedagogical action of the course participants.

Fourth meeting

That day started with the group making a circle, and then being asked the following question: What sounds do sea animals make? A carpet with instruments (drums, tambourines, rattles, kalimbas, tidal drums and various whistles) had been set up. The course participants played the instruments and the children said which animal the sound played brought to mind.

Then, they suggested that the children move their bodies as the animals do, based on the sound of the instruments. The children were asked a few questions, such as, "How does the fish swim?" They answered with words and not by dancing. After the intervention of one of the instructors, the course participants changed the instruction: "You have to show with your body how to do it. Show us how to do it!" (final instructors' report, 11/24/2012). The children then began to move, according to the themes suggested in class.



Figure 3 – Children and teachers in the subproject *O Corpo Inventa História* (The Body Invents Stories).

At the end of the meeting, in order to more specifically bring up levels and directions, a new story was created by the course participants, which allowed the children to discover low, medium, and high levels, and some actions of the sea animals, once again providing learning through make believe (experienced since the second meeting), but seeking direct relationships with the elements of dance and corporal actions.

The course participants wanted to show the instruments so that the children would then dance to the sound. However, the idea of showing the instruments called for a more contemplative attitude from the children, because they would not play the instruments. The group felt that another approach would be necessary, since contemplation led to disinterest in the movements. A new approach was adopted by using the resource of improvising a story that would guide the actions. At that point, the children were able to get involved with what was proposed by the course participants.

Thus, the participants could rely more on some “keys” for working with children—working with playfulness and the play of make-believe. According to Almeida (2013), playfulness means to play, to enjoy, and to have fun. And, amidst this fun, the children understand, experience, and recreate the world around them.

In this context, the dance-related playful activities enable the (em)bodying of new knowledge associated with the body and with the development of creativity, as well as the perception of the corporal relations with oneself, with others and with the environment. Kishimoto (1994) highlights that playfulness is a tool for developing language and imagination, and children, through the balance between reality and fantasy, can learn concepts in a meaningful way. This author believes that playfulness is

[...]of great social value, offering educational possibilities, once it favors corporal development, stimulates the psychic life and intelligence, contributes to adaptation to a group, preparing to live in society, participating and challenging assumptions of social relations (p.13).

In childhood, playfulness can be a means [way] to the learning process. As for the dance language, this results from the children’s spontaneity, once they are stimulated and guided by the teacher in the sense of building the dance vocabulary in the body of the little ones.

Fifth meeting

The course participants started out by making a conversation circle in order to finally introduce the book *Wave*. As it is a picture-only book, the children could use their imagination to create other stories from looking at the images and could establish relationships with the activities they experienced throughout the five meetings.

When the storytelling was over, the children were asked to retell the story with their bodies and to set up the beach with fabrics, buckets and sand shovels. The water and the waves would be on one side of the room, and the sand—with lighter colored fabrics—would be on the other side, together with the beach toys. The situation was a little chaotic at first, because each child picked an object to play with and did not understand that they were supposed to work in tandem on a collective construction.

In view of this, the course participants played some music with the sound of water and with the body organized a story about arriving at the beach. Thus, the characters of the book emerged: the girl diving and playing in the waves, the movements

of sea animals, like fish, sharks, crabs, octopuses and whales. They explored the space, the levels, the directions and the actions that involved rolling, dragging, running, jumping, spinning and flying, using the fabrics.

In connection with that meeting, we highlight some significant aspects regarding the *reflective practitioner of dance*²³, an assumption that is in line with the theories of Donald Schön (1992). That day, after noticing the children's confusion, the course participants repeated a resource that had been used in the previous meeting; they used the "key" that opens the door to the imagination: make-believe. The course participants realized that this "key" lead children to respond more promptly to impulses given, because

children turn what they can experience physically into symbols, and thought is first built in the form of action. They must act to understand and express meanings that exist in the historical and cultural context in which they are placed. (Garanhani, 2004, p. 40)

We believe that play brings out children's most spontaneous expressions, and therefore it must be present in this type of dance that experiences the body. However, based on the discussions held during the *Poetics of Dance* course, it became clear that it is important to show the children this learning in dance. (teachers'/course participants' final report, 11/24/2012)

In this context, the course participants were able to embrace theirs and the children's uncertainties, and went beyond by turning this moment into a new learning possibility.

Extra Meeting – Aesthetic Appreciation

Once the subproject had been completed, an aesthetic appreciation of "Sub-Texto" (Sub-Text), a contemporary dance show by the group IAdança - Núcleo INcena, took place at the 19th Cultural Festival of the USP Day Care Center, followed by a talk with the children. Their talks and their drawings were full of elements from the dance universe. They said, for instance, that they saw the dancers dancing at the high, medium, and low levels; that they saw movements on the ground and up high; that the dancers began the show fastened to fabrics and holding a rattle, among other comments. This conversation clearly showed the great capacity of the little ones to get in touch with complex ideas and with a more specific language of the dance universe itself.

²³Please note that Donald Schön does not address dance teaching. His studies approach teachers' training, and the possibilities of reflecting on and changing their educational practices. The GPDEE works to make the transpositions and analogies to start building our conception of the reflective practitioner of dance, who builds his/her knowledge from practice.

Reports on and Insights into a Continuing Education in Dance Studies Designed for Small Children.

The reflective movement carried out during the project sought to value practice as the core of continuing education. This allowed the teacher to break new ground into a new area of knowledge, as one of the course participants points out.

I really enjoyed the tutors/instructors being there. When we finished the activity, I was eager to hear their opinion. Therefore, the notes take by the whole Poetics team were in fact important so that I could rethink dance classes for the little ones. (teachers'/course participants' final report, 11/24/2012)

In this process, many questions emerged and there were moments of uncertainty during the classes. A condition that, according to Schön (2000, p. 30), must be valued, since "it is impossible to learn without being confused." The uncertainties ranged from how to develop the themes explored to noticing the children's needs.

[...]...we talked a lot after that meeting and I emphasized the importance of using some expressions that would make instructions and children's understanding easier, which are often used in theater, namely "SHOW US instead of TELL US." To show means to use the whole body, it requires movement, whereas to tell ends up being stuck in speech and not moving. Then they (the children) managed to get involved with had been planned by the teachers/course participants (tutors'/instructors' final report, 11/24/2012).

These aspects were developed in a long process of thinking about "how and what is taught" and the "how and what is learned" with dance. In this context, the participants were introduced to how the language of dance can stimulate the education of sensitivity and creativity, and contribute to the children's awareness of their body and to using it to establish relationships involving communication and social interaction. This knowledge is relevant to the processes of building the identity and autonomy of children²⁴ (Brazil, 1998b).

The approach of creating small universes at each meeting with the children was seamless. Building playful environments, and the make-believe plays, especially with the book *Wave*, allowed a dialogue with some elements of the dance language that respected the children's universe. It may be noticed that the children understood and engaged in the continuity of the theme. (tutors'/instructors' final report, 11/24/2012)

Accordingly, we emphasize that the project enabled the participants to: a) appropriate the language of dance; b) rethink their teaching performance, through a continuous movement of action, reflection and return to action; c) and, place this

²⁴ Work axis in the scope of personal and social development.

knowledge in a broader context of education, local reality and society. The participants noted these aspects as follows:

We believe that the project ensured a relationship with the symbolic universe that served as a basis to explore the elements of dance. (teachers'/course participants' final report, 11/24/2012)

We usually just teach the class and do not stop to reflect on what was done. In our project, we took a moment of reflection after the lesson that was very productive so that we could guarantee this exchange of looks and insights. (tutors'/instructors' final report, 11/24/2012)

What we found to be very positive about the course participants was their willingness to listen, to rethink and to change their approaches, as well as their way of teaching the children, as they listened attentively to the speech they brought and even what seemed out of context at times was used in a creative way by the course participants (tutors'/instructors' final report, 11/24/2012).

This path taken by the research group through the project underpinned some work assumptions, such as valuing teachers' knowledge; using the practice as a basis to establish relationships with theoretical knowledge; providing teachers with the same experiences and procedures we use with children; valuing the teacher's knowledge, and, based on this, having a dialogue with the group's assumptions; discussing dance in relation to a broader context of education, of local reality and of society; and, exploring the integration of dance with other artistic languages (Sgarbi, 2009).

In addition, we highlight one of the assumptions of the research group: the practical dimension and importance for the teacher to experience dance in the body (Godoy, 2013). In the case of *Poetics of Dance*, it was not just a figure of speech, this actually took place, those participating in the project as subjects of the experience went across the "dance" event in the scope of the contact with children, which brought teaching and learning to another level.

The relationship among the participants was very rich for me; even the attitudes with which I did not agree made me a better human being. Besides, one of the goals I sought with the course was met, which was meeting people and discussing, thinking, arguing and playing about dance. (tutors'/instructors' final report, 11/24/2012)

I believe that this experience was important because as the meetings took place we were able to discuss how dance was reaching the children, what we understood of the elements of the dance language

ge, and how these elements could be inserted in the specific characteristics of childhood. (tutors'/instructors' final report, 11/24/2012)

The idea is to allow these experiences to be disseminated through the appropriation of language or, as Godoy (2014, p. 13) puts it, "transpose, awaken, empower, and enable the sharing of experience, and to be delighted by creation in order to build the dance-specific knowledge, whose driving force produces the enchantment of this art of movement."

This article provided us with the opportunity to reflect *on* the action, with a view to looking retrospectively at the facts for the purpose of rethinking perspectives for the teaching of dance to children. A few years after the project had been completed, the *modus operandi* of the GPDEE was gradually incorporated, experienced, and used as a strategy in the dance teaching practices that we adopted. This only occurred because in the course of this process we entitled ourselves to suspend our beliefs and to abandon the security of what was already known to us, allowing us to be subjects of the experience. Regarding this fact, Larrosa (2010) points out that these subjects are not defined by their activity, but rather by their receptivity, availability and openness to the new.

In this regard, we notice that the initial structures were disassembled in order to organize this new *knowledge and understanding*²⁵; "more and more, we have the feeling that we must learn how to think and write again, even if we have to detach ourselves from the security of the knowledge, of the methods, and of the languages we already have (and that have us)" (Larrosa, 2010, p. 7).

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²⁵In Godoy's studies (2003; 2014), knowledge is built from experience, which in the context of dance takes place in the body of an individual. And based on the sense of experience (Larrosa, 2002), the dancing subject appropriates *in-corpora* (lives through the body) the event and turns the lived event into experience.

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