

## Looking back:

### Dance education in schools—learning from others

Raewyn Whyte

#### ABSTRACT

This article investigates significant issues in dance education in schools. The first section of this article begins with a reprint of an interview originally published in *Dance News* 33 (December 1985), the quarterly magazine of the New Zealand Dance Federation Inc. Raewyn Whyte interviewed dance educators Shirley Ririe and Joan Woodbury from Utah in the United States, who were visiting New Zealand as Fullbright artists at the time of the interview. Ririe's and Woodbury's experiences added to growing momentum in Aotearoa New Zealand for developing dance in schools and provided an opportunity for New Zealand educators to learn from others. In the second and third sections of this article, current teacher educators respond to the reprint of this interview as a 'back issue'. Liz Melchior provides an overview of dance in schools over the last thirty years and particularly considers the development of dance education in the years following the introduction of The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000, 2007). Sue Cheesman offers reflections and insights into the challenges and successes of the new curriculum as it has been implemented into schools. Further consideration is given to the future of dance education, including specific issues relating to the role of artists working in schools.

#### LOOKING BACK<sup>1</sup>

The early 1980s were a period of increasing advocacy for dance in the New Zealand school curriculum, outside of physical education. This pressure was coming from classroom teachers, dance education staff in teachers' colleges, dance and physical education advisory staff in the Department of Education, private dance studio teachers who were seeking opportunities to use their expertise to assist local schools, and touring companies who had developed school programmes. Funding for school performances was being reviewed by the Department of Education with concern for the educational value of work presented, and the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Arts Council was investigating potential funding for a pilot 'artists in residence' programme.

Following a series of Department of Education curriculum working parties during 1984 and 1985, the Dance and the Child International Conference (daCi) was

held in Auckland in 1985. The overarching theme was ‘Dance—The New Zealand Experience’, with workshops, lecture-demonstrations, panels and discussion sessions shared by 300 participants from around the world.

Among the keynote speakers at that conference were Shirley Ririe and Joan Woodbury, professors of dance at the University of Utah, widely respected as advocates for dance in the school curriculum, and also since 1964, co-directors of the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company. The company in 1970 became a charter member of the United States Endowment for the Arts Dance Touring and Artists in the Schools programs and was instrumental in establishing the acceptance of professional dancers as enrichers of the variety and quality of learning in classrooms and the community throughout Utah and the United States.

## **EDUCATION THROUGH DANCE: THE UTAH EXPERIENCE**

Shirley Ririe and Joan Woodbury of the University of Utah dance department spent two weeks in New Zealand during August 1985 sharing their skills and knowledge. Their New Zealand visit was sponsored via a Fulbright award which enabled them to work together as tutors for the New Zealand Department of Education national in-service course for thirty-two teachers of dance in New Zealand educational institutions, and to take part in the international daCi conference as keynote speakers.

During their time in New Zealand, the two spoke eloquently about the developments which have placed dance in the core curriculum of elementary and junior high schools in Utah, and of the need for dance to secure its place in the curriculum outside the ‘pigeon-holing’ of physical education.

To a large extent, the views of Ririe and Woodbury are interdependent. They have worked together for nearly thirty years and share a common commitment to making dance available to everyone, while also offering training opportunities which can upgrade the standards and understanding of dance. At the University of Utah they educate movement specialists who will become resource persons for the support of dance in the school curriculum and they develop dancers who may become members of the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company, which works extensively in dance-in-education. [What follows are quotations from Ririe and Woodbury, together from the original interview with Raewyn Whyte in 1985.]

## DANCE IN THE CURRICULUM: THE UTAH EXPERIENCE

In Utah all students aged 7 to 15 years are exposed to dance as part of their education. This has three facets. The student is a participator in dance, exploring time, shape, space, and the body in motion—exploring the elements of dance and their interrelationships. They fill out the forms they are given with their own movements and creative energies—and they discover that dancing is something that everyone can do. The student is also a creator of dances, exploring a whole new world of movement, discovering the excitement and challenges of achieving creative work. And the student is a spectator, observer and critic—an audience member who sees and evaluates dance, and writes and talks about what they have seen. That is an essential part of their aesthetic education.

Dance draws together all the human capabilities as well as all the bits of the body in developing that understanding of the subject which we recognise as education—through the involvement of the learner as participant, spectator and creator. Education involves all three of those and if you leave out any one of them, it isn't education. Such an education nourishes all the human capabilities and initiates and continues a growth process which involves all parts of the human mind and spirit and body.

Originally, in our [Utah] curriculum, as in yours [in New Zealand], dance was placed in physical education. There it was seen as particularly useful for developing agility and flexibility, for assisting the development of functional efficiency through movement. It was also seen as particularly useful for encouraging girls to exercise. Well, all of that may be useful, but it negates the aesthetic dimension which is integral to dance, and it prevents the learner discovering just what it is to dance, prevents them coming to that total understanding which we see as being educated. There was a lot of resistance to curriculum change [in Utah] but once the shift was made out of physical education and into the arts complex, the validity was recognised.

All elementary age children should have dance equally, up to age 12. From 12-14 they should be able to select, say four or five arts, and in senior high school to choose to develop just one or two of them further.

They need to have the wide foundation when they are young so they have an experience which can guide their selections, a chance to discover something they

like which is not about helping them to earn a living. Most will never become dancers, but this way they will have had some experience of what it is to dance.

## **ARTIST-TEACHERS: THE UTAH EXPERIENCE**

There are real skills needed in teaching each age group of children, as classroom teachers know well. Classroom teachers involved in dance teaching generally take every opportunity to improve their dance skills, because they know that will improve their teaching. They understand that they need to be educated about dance, to understand what they are doing so that they can translate their discoveries in such a way that students can also begin to make them.

The classroom teacher who is going to teach dance in this way needs inspiration and opportunities to explore dance, but also needs the art form to be present in their school. They may be a wonderful teacher but unable to also provide the art form, so in Utah we have explored two different solutions to that problem.

One is to bring in dance companies for residencies—we'll come back to that in a moment. The other is to develop artist-teachers who are highly skilled both as artists and as teachers. These people need to be identified and developed. They need to have been a performer and to have had in-depth experience of working with children of certain ages—also to know which age groups they work best with, and which groups they cannot work effectively with.

Until recently in the US, we had a nationally administered certification scheme for artist-teachers, with strict criteria which schools must meet (such as the provision of sprung wooden floors in a school which was to offer a residency) and a national directory listing the artist-teachers and their skills and the age groups with which they work. This scheme enabled schools to know pretty well what they were buying and also ensured that artist-teachers were top quality.

The guidelines for the scheme set a minimum commitment for the school to six weeks of dance with a specialist who [provided] daily input for students in the school and workshops for teachers. In this way, the classroom teachers could get some of the needed input and inspiration on the job, and there was insurance that dance would continue in that school as an in-depth experience. In 1982 this became a state-administered scheme, and each state has made their own decisions about the way the scheme is administered.

## RESIDENCIES: THE RIRIE-WOODBURY COMPANY EXPERIENCE

The Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company has been working since 1968 in American schools, offering residencies of up to two weeks in duration which actively involve teachers, children and parents from the school in the residency programme. The company tours from twenty-one to forty weeks each year, with international touring every third year. The company aims to increase the awareness of dance in the community, and to channel this support for dance as an integral part of community life.

Our pre-residency programme involves the principal of the school, a resource teacher from the school and an area administrator. This ensures the ongoing commitment of the school to the dance programme and an ongoing support system for dance in that school. We provide preparatory assignments for teachers and a follow-up programme which includes ongoing workshops and materials. With the involvement of several schools from one area, we also develop a network of peer and community support.

A typical residency begins with a performance, always with some audience participation so they get to move too. We then provide three teams of two dancers, male and female pairs, who each teach three daily classes. The dancers have been introduced by the performance, the parents have had a chance to see what is offered before the programme starts, and the students have been enthused by the performance and are ready to be actively involved in the classes. Each class comes to a rehearsal of the company, so they see the interiors of what we do, see us as ordinary people who work very hard to get things right, as well as performers with all the charisma we bring. We also offer lecture-demonstrations, and an assembly programme which involves up to 20 students from the school in the performance. We offer a variety of music, pace and dance qualities in our performance programmes in 5-10 minute segments which keep some challenge in for the viewer while also acknowledging children and their tastes. It is important to remember there is a gap between what children will admit to liking and what they really do enjoy. We use props and colourful costumes and within a residency programme we include a full range of performance settings from theatrical to small scale. We aim to leave each community wanting more.

Obviously, not all companies are suitable for residency programmes of this type, or even suited to provide performances for children. They need to be screened

in terms of the skills they bring to the educational setting, the types of performance they are offering and the quality of performance and workshops.

[We believe] you must give children the very best there is in the arts—they know better than anyone what quality is. And you must pay for the best too, not take the lesser skilled just because you can pay them less. Companies who choose to go into schools must also choose to accept the responsibilities which go with being there. If they are not willing to do the preparation and training which the situation requires, then they shouldn't go. I think there is a tendency to see schools performances as an easier source of income—but that ignores the purposes which schools see in having a dance company in their setting and the needs of teachers and students. Companies need to give children as much information as possible to guide their vision and aesthetic literacy. Simply showing a dance is not enough because the children aren't helped to see and understand anything.

## Looking back:

# Considering thirty years of growth in dance education in New Zealand schools

Liz Melchior

### ABSTRACT

This article investigates significant issues in dance education in schools. The first section of this article begins with a reprint of an interview originally published in *Dance News* 33 (December 1985), the quarterly magazine of the New Zealand Dance Federation Inc. Raewyn Whyte interviewed dance educators Shirley Ririe and Joan Woodbury from Utah in the United States, who were visiting New Zealand as Fullbright artists at the time of the interview. Ririe's and Woodbury's experiences added to growing momentum in Aotearoa New Zealand for developing dance in schools and provided an opportunity for New Zealand educators to learn from others. In the second and third sections of this article, current teacher educators respond to the reprint of this interview as a 'back issue'. Liz Melchior provides an overview of dance in schools over the last thirty years and particularly considers the development of dance education in the years following the introduction of The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000, 2007). Sue Cheesman offers reflections and insights into the challenges and successes of the new curriculum as it has been implemented into schools. Further consideration is given to the future of dance education, including specific issues relating to the role of artists working in schools.

## INTRODUCTION

My initial response as a dance educator to reading the reprinted interview with Shirley Ririe and Joan Woodbury (cited in Whyte in this volume) was to rejoice at how far dance in education has progressed in New Zealand since 1985. On further reflection, however, I realise that in spite of the obvious successes, many of the concerns expressed are still valid. In 2013, dance is well established as part of the arts learning area in the New Zealand curriculum, but dance educators are still struggling to ensure that dance has a visible and valued place in New Zealand schools. In primary schools, dance is often taught according to the whim or interest of individual teachers with no sense of progress or continuity across the school (McDonald & Melchior, 2007). In secondary schools, dance is not always available to students as an option for study.

## DANCE IN THE NEW ZEALAND CURRICULUM

For the first time in the history of New Zealand education, dance was recognised in 2000 as an arts discipline in its own right to be included (along with drama, music and the visual arts) in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (ANZC; Ministry of Education, 2000). It was mandated that every child in New Zealand would have opportunities to learn dance as part of their primary education in Years 1-8 and that secondary schools should offer dance as an option in Years 9-12. The amount of time allocated to dance education and the way it was to be taught was at the discretion of each school (Melchior, 2006). Generalist classroom teachers were mostly responsible for teaching dance in primary schools and specialist dance teachers were employed in secondary schools. Dance became an approved subject for university entrance in 2006 and by the end of 2008 it was the fastest growing curriculum subject in New Zealand schools, with the National Qualifications Authority (NZQA) describing an ‘explosion’ of dance in the senior secondary school (Bolwell, 2009). In 2010, dance was accepted as a senior scholarship subject for study in Year 13.

*The New Zealand Curriculum* (NZC) was launched in 2007, replacing all previous curriculum statements and bringing eight learning areas (English, the arts, health and physical education, learning languages, mathematics and statistics, science, social sciences and technology) together in one document. The vision of this curriculum is to develop young people as “lifelong learners who are confident and creative, connected, and actively involved” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 4). There is one double page spread for the arts learning area explaining what it is about and how the learning is structured. The introduction to dance is contained in one paragraph. At each of the curriculum levels (1-8) the achievement objectives for each of the four strands indicate what students are expected to learn and be able to do in dance. Dance is defined as “expressive movement that has intent, purpose, and form” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20) and the concept of dance literacy is explained:

Students develop literacy in dance as they learn about, and develop skills in, performing, choreographing, and responding to a variety of genres from a range of historical and contemporary contexts. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20)

These literacies, or key areas of learning, encompass all four arts disciplines and are developed through four interrelated strands: Understanding the arts (dance) in



context; Developing practical knowledge; Developing ideas; Communicating and interpreting. Students develop an awareness and understanding of dance in historical and contemporary contexts. They develop and extend their personal movement vocabularies as they explore dance elements and a variety of dance forms. Students explore and use choreographic processes, using their imagination to express ideas and feelings derived from a range of sources. They share dance in a variety of formal and informal settings (as performers and as viewers), evaluating and responding to their own and others' dance (Ministry of Education, 2000, 2007).

New Zealand curriculum exemplars provide a Dance Matrix of progress indicators for curriculum levels 1-5 that show the interrelatedness of the strands through five key aspects of learning: Exploring dance, Choreographing dance, Performing dance, Interpreting dance and Contextualizing dance. For each progress indicator, a related exemplar can be viewed on Te Kete Ipurangi: The Online Learning Centre (<http://www.tki.org.nz>). A Dance Matrix for the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) Levels 1-3 (aligned with Curriculum Levels 6-8) groups Achievement Standards at each level under the headings Dance Choreography, Dance Performance and Dance Perspectives.

Teaching and learning dance in the classroom involves developing movement concepts within social and cultural contexts. Through dance, students explore and express their own and others' cultural identities, sharing ideas and experiences in ways other than through the spoken and written word (Melchior, 2006). The following statement in the NZC endorses this:

In dance education students engage in ways that integrate thinking, moving and feeling. They explore and use dance elements, vocabularies, processes, and technologies to express personal, group and cultural identities, to convey and interpret artistic ideas, and to strengthen social interaction (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20).

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS**

Given the ANZC (2000) and subsequent NZC (2007), schools throughout New Zealand were able to request and receive teacher professional development in dance through regional Ministry of Education contracts with the universities, the main providers of pre-service teacher education. Part of my role as dance lecturer in primary and secondary teacher education at Victoria University of Wellington (College of

Education) throughout the period 2000-2009 was to be dance facilitator in the Wellington region. Most of the primary teachers I worked with had no specialist training in dance and were apprehensive about their ability to teach it. However, they were really positive about the inclusion of dance in the curriculum when they realised the potential for dance to enrich and enhance their students' learning (Melchior, 2006). Experiencing the creative process themselves through practical workshops, observing experts working with their students, and engaging in professional conversations about teaching and learning were significant factors in inspiring and motivating teachers to include dance in their classroom programme. Teachers who lacked confidence to teach dance wanted resources that gave them 'recipes' to follow. In my experience as a dance adviser, I found that material resources, such as instructional handbooks and videos, have little real value for non-specialist teachers without practical demonstration and professional guidance in how to use them and adapt the content to suit the needs and interests of their students. As they practised teaching dance they became more confident to access and use resources (Melchior, 2006).

The Ministry of Education also funded the production of a variety of valuable teaching resources for dance. Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) Arts Online has a wealth of information and teaching materials for dance at all levels of the curriculum. Resources published by Learning Media in Wellington—*Dancing the Long White Cloud: Teaching Dance in Years 1-10* (two videos and a booklet); *Wall Charts for Classroom Dance Years 1-10*; and *Discovering Dance: Dance Styles in Aotearoa New Zealand* (DVD with support material on TKI)—were sent out to every school in the country.

Although the early years of dance curriculum implementation were exciting times, there were some concerns among dance educators about long-term sustainability. Ralph Buck (2003) noted that in spite of the rhetoric in support of quality teaching and learning in dance for all students, the vision of competent, confident teachers and thoroughly planned programmes was idealistic for many teachers, particularly in primary schools, where generalist teachers are responsible for implementing the dance curriculum regardless of their prior knowledge or experience. Jan Bolwell stated:

The new arts curriculum is replete with promise and potential; its visionary statements are stirring, but the proof will be whether we can look at children's literacy in dance and the other arts in ten years' time,

and be able to say that the curriculum and its delivery have been effective (2009 p. 35).

In 2013, these concerns still ring true. We have a new national curriculum and a government that has poured money into the development and implementation of national standards for reading, writing and mathematics and reduced funding for the arts. Although school-based professional development for teachers is no longer available, the government still supports training for teachers at senior secondary level, where raising achievement for Māori students is a priority. The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) runs best practice workshops for specialist secondary dance teachers. Courses run by the Teachers' Refresher Course Committee (TRCC) include a biennial national dance conference for primary and secondary teachers. These conferences, designed by dance educators around a theme that reflects current trends and issues in education, provide a variety of dance workshops, sharing of ideas, programme development and current research, with the specific needs of primary, intermediate, junior secondary and senior secondary sectors in mind. Teachers from all round the country are able to attend as TRCC has government funding to pay travel costs to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by distance.

Dance in education networks were set up by dance facilitators in their regions to support the curriculum implementation process. These networks—such as ADEN (Auckland), WAI Dance (Waikato), BOP Dance (Bay of Plenty), Well Dance (Wellington) and SIDN (South Island Dance Networks)—provided highquality professional development workshops with expert dance tutors, for primary and secondary teachers on a regular basis. Most of these organisations are still functioning to a greater or lesser degree. BOP Dance developed Fresh Moves Festival, a showcase for students to share their dance learning. ADEN continues to provide regular and successful workshops in a variety of dance styles and genres. Well Dance has been fortunate to have assistance from Dance Aotearoa New Zealand (DANZ) in accessing tutors from their Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) programme to provide workshops in choreography and Māori and Pacifica dance forms. Other organisations and individuals find creative ways to attract small amounts of funding to support dance education in schools. The University of Auckland supported the development of a Christchurch Dance Educators' Network through the 2012 Reclaiming Space Symposium in Christchurch. This provided professional

development opportunities through a series of free dance workshops for secondary teachers.

## DANCE ARTISTS IN SCHOOLS

The highly successful Artists in Schools programme funded by the Ministry of Education from 2004 to 2006, promoted community engagement as an important part of arts education (Kopytko, 2007) by providing schools with opportunities to have practising artists in residence, to work with and alongside students in dance, drama, music or visual arts. The classroom teacher was responsible for the design of the learning in relation to the curriculum with the artist teacher employed as the 'expert' resource. The programme was discontinued as part of a raft of funding cuts by the current government, much to the dismay of teachers and arts educators. The Arts Online website team responded by setting up CAFE (Community Artists For Education), an arts resource site for schools to provide teachers with direct access to practising artists and their professional work. Recently renamed Artists in Education (in 2013), the site lists profiles of **independent dance** artists and groups who are interested in working with students in schools. Although there is no formalised quality assurance, Arts Online gives guidelines and Ministry of Education requirements for visiting artists. DANZ also developed a resource in best teaching practice and basic curriculum knowledge for freelance dance artists working in schools to help them work successfully with students in the classroom (Kopytko, 2007).

DANZ also offers curriculum-based dance workshops for primary and secondary schools. Their Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) programme is supported by the Ministry of Education. LEOTC programmes are designed to complement and enhance classroom teaching, with authentic hands-on, interactive learning experiences for students. Expert dance tutors work in partnership with schools to ensure that their workshops meet the learning needs of students and support effective teaching and learning in other areas. One such focus is addressing the government's interest in raising achievement in numeracy and literacy. In Wellington, Jan Bolwell worked with primary children in the classroom exploring language features through dance. DANZ also offers workshops for students in Māori and Pasifika dance forms and other dance genres.

The Royal New Zealand Ballet Dance Explorer Programme provides curriculum-linked dance workshops taught by professional artists, using material related to the ballet company's repertoire and tours. Their aim is to increase student awareness of the ballet company's productions and to grow future audiences. Excellent digital resources and teacher support material have been developed and are available to all teachers.

Independent professional dance companies, such as Footnote Dance Company, Atamira Dance Company and Java Dance, often provide school workshops as part of their New Zealand regional performance tours. These workshops are designed to enhance young people's experiences of dance as audience members and creators of dance. Footnote has performed and facilitated dance education programmes in primary and secondary schools around the country for approximately 20 years. For the past few years, they have focused on choreographic residencies with students who are studying dance in schools with strong performing arts programmes. Under the directorship of Deirdre Tarrant, the dancers devised their programmes to suit the needs and interests of the schools and their students.

## DANCE IN THE COMMUNITY

The increasing popularity of dance as a leisure activity for young people can partly be attributed to the place of dance in schools and the number of dance festivals and cultural events involving huge numbers of participants and audience members all around the country (Kopytko, 2006). Annual dance events, festivals and competitions provide opportunities for children and young people to participate in choreographing and performing dance outside of the classroom programme. Māori and Pasifika cultural festivals celebrate New Zealand's unique bicultural nation and multicultural heritage. Polyfest involves thousands of school students, as do the primary and secondary schools Kapa Haka festivals. Choreographing and rehearsing for these performances takes a huge amount of time and dedication from the students involved, and assessment tasks in Māori dance have recently been written for NCEA Achievement Standards to enable these students to achieve recognition for their artistry, skills and knowledge.

Stage Challenge, a competition for secondary school students showcasing student-led choreography and production values, takes place throughout the country in April/May every year. In recent years, J Rock, for intermediate school students,

has been added to the mix. Although there is fierce competition between the schools, the students are also very supportive of each other. It is first and foremost a celebration of student creativity and commitment and everyone appears to have a great time! An annual Auckland regional dance festival was initiated in 2012 under the aegis of Bounce, Northern Dance Network. This is a non-competitive showcasing of choreography and performances produced by dance students from Auckland secondary schools for NCEA dance assessments and by youth companies operating outside the school system. You Dance #2 was presented in 2013 and was twice as large as the first festival, with sixteen secondary schools from as far south as Tauranga plus five youth dance companies sharing performances (R. Whyte, personal communication, June 16, 2013). It will be great to see events like this spreading to other regions.

Regional dance events for primary school students provide opportunities to share dances that have been created in the classroom (with varying degrees of input and direction from their teachers) in a non-competitive environment. They are often part of larger arts festivals for children, such as Artsplash Dance in Wellington.

## **DANCE AND THE CHILD INTERNATIONAL (daCi)**

In 2003 I attended my first daCi conference in Brazil, where I presented a paper and contributed to a panel discussion on dance in the curriculum. At each of the subsequent conferences (2006 in the Netherlands, 2009 in Jamaica and 2012 in Taiwan), New Zealand dance educators have participated in increasing numbers. Currently (2012-2015) Adrienne Sansom from Auckland University is the Chair of the daCi Executive and Advisory Board.

The 2012 Global Dance Summit: **Dance, Young People and Change** was held in Taipei in 2012.<sup>ii</sup> Hosted by Taipei National University of the Arts (TNUA) School of Dance, the Global Summit was the result of a unique collaboration between daCi and World Dance Alliance (WDA). This conference was well represented by New Zealanders, including dancers from The University of Auckland who facilitated dance workshops and performed in showcases. New Zealand dance educators presented papers and workshops, and contributed to a Curriculum in Motion panel and World Café curriculum forum. Participants exchanged information about dance education in their countries and discussed experiences, progress and issues concerning curriculum

development. It was interesting to hear from European delegates who are using the New Zealand curriculum as a model.

## REFLECTIONS

So, what has happened with dance in education since 1985? In theory, dance is firmly established in the curriculum, but in practice the ideal of dance as an integral part of every child's learning is still a long way off. The NZC describes dance in education as another way of knowing, enabling students to engage in ways that integrate thinking, feeling and moving (Ministry of Education, 2007). This is a persuasive argument for developing students' dance literacies. Instead of responding to the current government focus on national standards by narrowing the curriculum, teachers could explore ways to engage their students in dance within meaningful contexts for learning. According to New Zealand researchers Bishop and Berryman (2006), the way to improve student engagement is by creating contexts for learning where students' contributions are voiced and valued. Positive interactions with their teachers and peers encourage students to "bring who they are and how they make sense of the world" to their learning (Bishop & Berryman, 2006, p. 5). Teaching and learning dance in this way celebrates diversity and encourages students to take ownership of their learning. Through active involvement in dance, students connect their mind, body and emotions. They connect to their own and others' ideas, stories and cultural identities, expressing their learning in ways other than the spoken or written word. They develop positive relationships with each other and with dance (Melchior, 2011). Dance in the classroom has so much potential that is yet to be realised.

While we have a national curriculum in 2013, there is decreasing government funding for arts programmes and teacher professional development. With increased pressure on teachers to raise student achievement in numeracy and literacy, and changes to the way teacher education programmes are taught in the university environment, it is hardly surprising that many primary teachers lack motivation and confidence to teach dance. Dance networks and national and international conferences continue to provide excellent opportunities for professional development. Teachers are required to take responsibility for their own professional development and this can be difficult if dance is not prioritised by their school community. Specialist secondary teachers engage in debate about issues in dance education and support each other by sharing ideas and resources on Dancenet and

Teacher Resource Exchange (Arts Online). I am constantly impressed by their generosity.

DANZ continues working tirelessly to lobby the government on dance education issues and to bring dance artists, private sector dance teachers and dance educators together. DANZ also endorses and supports the Dance Subject Association (DSA). With social networking and the internet, dance teachers and dance artists across the sectors are making connections and spreading the word about their dance events. Teachers and their students are sharing dance on YouTube. This is the way of the future and we need to embrace it.

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## Looking back:

# Considering the future of dance education in New Zealand schools

Sue Cheesman

### ABSTRACT

This article investigates significant issues in dance education in schools. The first section of this article begins with a reprint of an interview originally published in *Dance News* 33 (December 1985), the quarterly magazine of the New Zealand Dance Federation Inc. Raewyn Whyte interviewed dance educators Shirley Ririe and Joan Woodbury from Utah in the United States, who were visiting New Zealand as Fulbright artists at the time of the interview. Ririe's and Woodbury's experiences added to growing momentum in Aotearoa New Zealand for developing dance in schools and provided an opportunity for New Zealand educators to learn from others. In the second and third sections of this article, current teacher educators respond to the reprint of this interview as a 'back issue'. Liz Melchior provides an overview of dance in schools over the last thirty years and particularly considers the development of dance education in the years following the introduction of The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2000, 2007). Sue Cheesman offers reflections and insights into the challenges and successes of the new curriculum as it has been implemented into schools. Further consideration is given to the future of dance education, including specific issues relating to the role of artists working in schools.

## INTRODUCTION

I have been working extensively as a dance educator for over thirty years. Some of my main roles within the education system have included teacher, adviser, professional development manager of Arts Online and dance education lecturer. Within the artists' sector, I have worked as choreographer, community artist and dance education officer to a dance company. From my perspective and informed point of view, this response addresses the current situation, highlighting the continuities and changes in terms of the intent of Whyte's original article.

In this article I discuss and unpack what is happening now in order to indicate the substantial development, growth and change in dance education in Aotearoa New Zealand since the interview with Ririe and Woodbury in 1985. Some twenty-eight years on there are many developments to celebrate in dance in education in

this country. Years of persistence saw dance included alongside drama, music/sound arts and visual arts within *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (ANZC) from 2000 onwards. This was the first time that dance became a subject in its own right and not subsumed under the ‘pigeon-holing’ subject of physical education (PE), as Woodbury and Ririe also noted was the case in Utah (cited in Whyte). It is important to acknowledge the physical education community’s past support of dance. The change to the inclusion of dance in the ANZC meant that the focus for dance became more holistic and encompassed the breadth of the discipline. However, some dance provision has remained in PE with a more skill-based approach.

A favorable climate saw dance flourish in the early 2000s. There was growth and expansion in the range and provision of dance programmes in terms of training and education. Increasing opportunities to study dance at graduate level were developing. An overarching milestone for dance education is that now dance can be studied as a subject in its own right at all levels right through from early childhood to doctoral study without recourse to overseas educational institutions.

## DANCE IN THE CURRICULUM

Tina Hong, the main writer of the ANZC (Ministry of Education, 2000), explains how dance was being

reconceptualised as a literacy, dance as a way of knowing and as a way thinking and making meaning, emerges out of the margins and into the lattice-like structure of curriculum and connects both intrinsically and instrumentally to student’s lived-lives. In developing dance literacy through K-12 education students are invited to pursue various modes of dance inquiry, navigate diverse routes, and critically write, read and interpret the world through the multiple frames made possible through dance as a form of representation and symbolic vehicle. Dance is a literacy among multiple literacies through which students come to construct meaning out of the fragmented experiences of schooling and life. (Hong, 2002, p. 10)

However, by 2007 *The New Zealand Curriculum for English-medium teaching and learning in years 1-13* became a single document, which describes all eight Learning Areas together, across eight curriculum levels of learning. The arts, like all other learning areas, has one page of detail with the following headings: “What

are they about, why study them, how is the learning area structured” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20). The statement for dance is succinct but importantly describes literacy learning in dance.

Dance is expressive movement that has intent, purpose, and form. In dance education, students integrate thinking, moving, and feeling. They explore and use dance elements, vocabularies, processes, and technologies to express personal, group, and cultural identities, to convey and interpret artistic ideas, and to strengthen social interaction. Students develop literacy in dance as they learn about, and develop skills in, performing, choreographing, and responding to a variety of genres from a range of historical and contemporary contexts. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20)

Important to note was the introduction of *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* (Ministry of Education, 2008), the curriculum for Māori medium schools. Dance is included in Ngā Toi Māori language curriculum, encased in the performing arts strand Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia. This document runs in parallel to the English medium version and it is not a direct translation. The existence of these two parallel curriculum documents is a valuable point of difference and strength in the Ministry of Education approach to arts education in New Zealand. It is beyond the scope of this article to cover in any depth the performing arts strand Ngā Mahi a te Rēhia in relation to the original article, but this would make an interesting discussion in the future.

In 2013, dance in mainstream English medium schools stands as a discrete area of study within the arts learning area across Years 1 to 10. Literacy in dance is developed through experiencing the four interwoven strands: Practical Knowledge in Dance covers the elements of dance, learning different styles and safe dance practice; Developing Ideas in Dance covers the making of dance, Communicating and Interpreting in Dance covers performing, viewing, interpreting and evaluating dance, Understanding Dance in Context covers forms and functions, traditions and changes and traditional Māori dance. I would argue that other curriculums for dance education, including that of Utah as described by Ririe and Woodbury (cited in Whyte in this issue) were founded on three of these: student as participator, creator and spectator. However, the Understanding Dance in context strand conceptually wraps around the other three strands and is the point of difference in the NZC.

In 2001, Tina Hong, the National Coordinator for Dance, suggested that Cinderella had finally arrived at the “curriculum ball” (Hong, 2001). Twelve years on, I would agree that Cinderella did arrive at the curriculum ball but mainly as a wallflower with only the odd appearance in the limelight. She is up against some serious curriculum aristocracy, namely numeracy and literacy projects, which have stolen most of the spotlight, as well as costume, coach and one slipper on many occasions (Cheesman, 2008).

## DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

With the introduction of dance into the NZC, there seems to be general agreement that significant ground has been made in primary school dance over the preceding years. Based on my observations in primary schools, dance is being delivered in varying ways and still is very much dependent on the skill and enthusiasm of individual generalist teachers and supportive senior management. While the establishment of regional networks for teachers has evolved to promote and support quality professional development and to offer a voice for teachers of dance (Melchior in this volume), there remain challenges to the consistent quality delivery of the dance curriculum. Schools have the freedom to decide how their particular school will meet the requirements of the NZC in dance. The only guidance they are given is “that over the course of years 1-8, students will learn in all four disciplines [the four strands mentioned above]” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 20). The crucial point is that despite all this positive development, there is no indication of how much time will be allocated to dance in the primary curriculum. Does this mean a one-off workshop or performance, or planned units of work throughout the year? Advocating for sufficient time for dance in the primary curriculum in each school is a challenge facing future dance educators.

In primary and intermediate schools nationwide, it is relevant to consider how much is being taught and of what content: both quantity and quality remain debatable and this area warrants further investigation and research. I doubt, despite considerable professional development over five years accompanying the introduction of dance through the NZAC, that we have reached a critical mass of skilled and confident generalist primary teachers regularly teaching dance as part of their programme. However, the question is, how can the gains made in dance education in schools be sustained and developed to maintain and advance quality provision?

Within secondary education the provision for dance has seen substantial growth with the introduction of dance at National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) level. In 2008, dance was recognised as a university entrance subject. These changes caused an increase in the number of secondary students studying dance. This development offered an opportunity to have a critical look at how we access dance, creating a place for dance in secondary schools and status for dance in the senior school curriculum. NCEA has made it possible to give students credits for performing in the many dance festivals that have proliferated over the years, especially the Polyfest in Auckland. This festival is now recognised as an important showcase of New Zealand's diverse cultures and a celebration of youth performance. Other examples are Viva Eclectika, a biannual intercultural dance challenge fusing Asian dance and music with New Zealand's diverse cultures, the Kapa Haka regional annual competitions, Bring It On and Stage Challenge/J Rock. Yet although it may be argued that all the above provide opportunities to showcase student choreography and performance work, they present challenges in assessing the achievements against NCEA standards of assessment. There may be tensions between competition criteria and NCEA criteria. Another example of an alternative to competitions is the new You Dance festival in Auckland—a vehicle for the sharing and performing of youth dance work.

Another development worthy of note is the establishment of dance academies in some secondary schools to provide choreographic and performance experience to their accelerant students. These academies also act as a magnet for other students studying dance outside of school to join and benefit from the increased opportunities these experiences provide. These links to the wider community provide rich dance experiences for teachers and students in dance education.

The revised NZC (Ministry of Education, 2007) was centre stage brightly lit but the introduction of national standards for mathematics, reading and writing for years 1 to 8 (2010) has subsequently claimed the spotlight and left the arts, including dance, standing in the shadows. Under the current political climate, these standards seemed to have swallowed the 'dance card' of curriculum time, development and funding. It would seem that the number of students taking NCEA is now levelling out. This will likely present a challenge to teachers and schools who have invested time and resources into the establishment of dance programmes and specialist facilities in growing and sustaining student numbers into the future.

Hong noted that there was a deficit of specialist teachers of dance at senior secondary level. Dance being recognised at NCEA level has resulted in more individuals seeing secondary dance teaching as a viable career. A future challenge is that many of the new positions created by the increase in students studying NCEA Dance initially were taken by dance teachers at the beginning of their careers. Unlike other learning areas such as science, there will not be an exodus at the other end for many years, meaning fewer jobs will become available for new graduates. So in 2013, has the supply of newly trained dance teachers and the demand caught up?

Despite some tertiary programme closures, mergers, funding cutbacks and new efficiencies, there has been an increase in courses at undergraduate level which relate directly to dance in education and dance in the community, including dance artists in education. At postgraduate level, increasing opportunities to focus on research on dance in education covering a wide perspective are developing, increasing the breadth and depth of inquiry around dance education. All these developments enhance student knowledge before or after they complete teacher education programmes in dance and offer alternative career options should the demand for dance teachers be filled.

Due to the current fiscal environment, there are no longer any government-funded Dance Advisers for primary or secondary schools. These positions have been phased out over time. Professional development funded by the Ministry of Education for dance in schools for primary and lower secondary schools has been reduced to the 'one-stop shop' of Arts Online. Although this site contains a wealth of information and planning targeted at primary, secondary and NCEA levels, and does go some way to fill the needs of the sector, we have lost the very important face-to-face professional development so essential in dance. There are a few exceptions, for example, the best practice workshops in dance run by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), face-to-face advisory for NCEA on a regional basis, the Learning Experiences Outside the Classroom (LEOTC) run by DANZ, and the Teachers' Refresher Course Committee (TRCC) (Melchior in this volume). For individual dance teachers often working alone in schools, the opportunity to network through LEOTC and TRCC is invaluable, which in turn supports a greater sense of community that helps sustain momentum during times of change. The challenge facing teachers now is that dance is being 'disembodied' in terms of professional development and the loss of face-to-face contact is concerning.

## DANCE ARTISTS IN EDUCATION

The NZC values the exposure of students to a diverse range of knowledge, heritages and cultural dance forms. However, in the finite time available for dance education, what choices are being made and who are the learners? How do teachers operate inside schools to deliver the dance curriculum, and do they only work within their own dance knowledge, culture and background? DANZ Director Tania Kopytko points to the use of LEOTC:

Of the 4 strands, the UC strand or Understanding Dance in Context is particularly important and this knowledge is often required of, or desired in, dance teachers who are brought in to schools. UC requires information such as why the dance is performed, who performs it, where it comes from and perhaps why or how it has developed. This also means that schools are interested in a variety of dance genre, perhaps Israeli folk dance or South African Gumboot dance, Pacific Island genres, or jazz dance, depending on what the learning is focusing on. Seeing live or videoed performances of a variety of dance is also important. (Kopytko, 2007, p. 7)

Related to the inclusion of a diverse range of traditional and contemporary cultural dance forms are concerns about how different cultures are represented and which cultures are included. Depending on parents or other members of a cultural community to fill the gaps in teachers' experiences requires careful negotiation and exchange that is mutually beneficial if it is not to be perceived as exploitation (Renner, 2009, p. 117). This raises an important question: How do we offer culturally responsive learning experiences on dances outside one's own dance knowledge?

A central discussion within the interview with Ririe and Woodbury (cited in Whyte in this volume), were the possibilities for and practices of dance artists working in education. One of the primary purposes of artists' involvement in education is to make dance more accessible thereby increasing understanding. The problems of dance artists working in education are complex and continue today. I would certainly agree with the sentiments expressed in the 1985 interview that not all companies are suited for education programmes, nor should they be expected to carry them out. Ririe and Woodbury (cited in Whyte), point out that students deserve the best quality no matter the costs. They also raise issues of suitability, skills needed, types of content and performances, quality, training and

remuneration. “Who funds what?” has never been seriously addressed over the years. In school budgets, what pool of money pays the visiting dance artist or company and company resources? It seems that Creative New Zealand (CNZ) do not see it as their role and the allocation of money from Ministry of Education is sporadic and limited. Who should fund individuals and companies to do education work and produce resources? Ashley (2013) wonders

... how we operate a sustainable and ethical framework of dance education when the dances of others' cultures are at issue? After all if such practitioners are unable to sustain a livelihood through their work how can their heritages and cultural knowledge be conserved to enrich learning in the curriculum for the future? (see also Ashley, 2012)

Unfortunately, partnership in provision to support dance learning seems to be sporadic and often operating on a shoestring budget.

Should partnerships and resourcing be found for dance artists to work in schools, it is important that respect for both the dance artist's expertise and the dance educator's expertise be 'married' through productive dialogue, not in different dialects, and extensive pre-planning so that all are enriched by the experience. Tensions arise through lack of clarity from both the artist and educationalist to what is expected and the multiplicity of respective roles each contributor is expected to juggle. Crucial to successful partnerships is the importance of negotiating and respecting the diverse pedagogical practices around different dance cultures, while also recognising that the artist has something unique, special and different to offer. Marrying the variety of perspectives is not easy but is essential to a relevant and meaningful learning experience. It is important that diverse and quality projects be supported. After all, at the centre of this exchange is the enhancement of children's learning in dance. Although the NZC supports and values the use of the community as a rich source of knowledge, how this is implemented to the satisfaction of all concerned remains problematic.

## **DANCE COMPANIES IN EDUCATION**

For many years, Footnote Dance Company has run a very successful dance education programme across a wide spectrum from school matinees to one-off workshops to residencies of several days or a week in different schools across the country. In addition, many of the current professional dance companies have education as part of their focus, whether that be in the form of the standard



schools matinee or running one-off workshops. The New Zealand Royal Ballet has a dedicated Education Officer and team working alongside it to deliver their education programme. They have also been instrumental in creating very useful resources written by educationalists. Another positive development is dance companies stretching their resources to produce new DVDs and notes around selected works, which support students' study of dance in Aotearoa. Youth projects provide productive links between dance companies, individual dance artists and schools. These projects have varied time frames and attract students interested and/or studying dance in schools, providing a range of challenging, choreographic and performance experiences.

Perhaps it is time for other ways/new models of using dance in an educational context through the professional expertise residing in dance companies? We need to be expanding innovations in working practices. Creative New Zealand is interested in audience development and this raises the following question: Where are the crossover relationships between audience development and dance artists in education? How might each mutually benefit from these synergies?

It is also useful to consider what can be learned from the processes Ririe and Woodbury describe in terms of pre-residency and residency programmes (cited in Whyte in this volume). The innovative, very successful Ministry of Education Artists in School Programme (axed in 2009) used similar processes and also had the advantage of an educational mentor. At that time several dance artists worked in schools alongside dance teachers for a prolonged period of time with successful outcomes for all being generated.

Unlike Utah in the 1980s, we do not have a national certification scheme for artist educators in New Zealand. Presently the Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) certification to teach in schools is a minefield. Contentious issues, which are not new, around the presumption that all dancers, whether from the private sector or companies, can teach point to the differences in dance education and dance training. It cannot be assumed that there is an understanding of the pedagogical practices in dance education in schools without teacher qualifications. Maybe this is the next development—an artist-educators' certification programme that is accessible (perhaps modular), and affordable for artists? There are new initiatives that will allow the development of a dance-specific instruction qualification in the future (Kopytko, personal communication, June 13, 2013). We need, at the very least, to sustain the growth we have seen in dance education. Those of us who

work in dance education are passionate about dance, tenacious and adept at surviving challenge, adapting to change and creating innovative solutions. We have experienced considerable growth and development in dance education across all sectors since 1985, but like all changes there are new challenges now facing 21st century dance education.

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<sup>i</sup> In reprinting the interview from 1985, Raewyn Whyte and editor Karen Barbour have made a few

<sup>ii</sup> <http://daciwdaintaiwan.org/DailyProgram/en/0714.html>