Boys Don't Dance:

an examination of attitudes towards dance in Irish primary schools.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The primary focus of this study is boys. It is about boys dancing and boys not dancing. Those who do dance, seem to really love it but they are a minority. A secondary area of focus in this study is the teachers in primary schools who teach boys and how they perceive themselves and boys in relation to dance. It is the subject of this study to look at why boys in general tend not to choose dance as an activity and to explore how primary school teachers might best be supported in approaching it as a curricular subject.

Background

Why do I want to do this project in the first place? Why not leave the boys to their football and computer games?

Firstly, as a male who did his first dance class shortly after his twenty first birthday I am acutely aware of how remote dance is from the experience of boys going through the education system, particularly an all-male one as I did. I was a typical sporty child and teenager and would never have considered dance as an activity throughout my growing up. Only when in college did I begin to develop the enjoyment I had found in social dancing and want to take it further. Since then dance has been an important part of my life and now I have a fifteen year old son who enjoys dance and shows great promise. But, more than twenty years on, little has changed. He is part of a minority of boys who are willing to attend dance classes. I would like to see that change even if it is already too late for him.

As a primary school teacher, with twenty five years of experience behind me, my motivation for this project comes from the same place as my love of teaching. It is my firm belief that the job of a teacher is to open windows of possibility to children. It saddens me to hear a ten year old who says 'I don't do that'. Of course, not everything is for everybody. Some children will never like reading as an activity no matter how adept or old they get. Others will have a lifelong

aversion to physical activity and no amount of health warnings will make them see merit in exercise.

For me teaching is about offering ideas and experiences which may connect in different ways with different children. A child's frame of reference for the world around them is based on their experiences. It is the teacher's task to provide a broad and rich frame of reference. Sometimes children are wary of the unknown but it is the teacher's duty to encourage them to embrace the possibility of new ideas and experiences. If they can truly be said to have tried an activity at its best and still find no awakened interest, no gleam of enthusiasm then maybe, and only maybe, it is not for them.

Teachers have the opportunity to catch children's imagination, set a little spark to their experience and begin a fire that may burn enthusiastically thereafter. What is regrettable is the number of sparks and ensuing fires which never caught. Unfortunately, there is the possibility that some will have their potential appreciation of something blighted by a bad first experience. This raises the question of whether no experience is preferable to having a bad one. A positive experience of dance for boys is the ultimate aim of this study.

It is my hope that the outcome of this project will be to will bring closer the ideal of every child having the best possible experience of the arts, dance in particular, during their primary school years. That the greatest number of possible windows will be opened and that the fewest number will be closed. It is not my aspiration that everyone will be a dancer but that they will admit the possibility of being one.

Aim of Project

It is the aim of this project is to recommend approaches to teaching dance to boys in the light of current evidence and in the context of the primary school curriculum and in the hope of making this vital art form more readily accessible to them.

Dance is part of the history of human movement, part of the history of human culture and part of the history of human communication. These three elements are brought together and realised through dance activity. Therefore, dance activity is an important factor in human social development. (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 1980)

Attitudes

Boys don't dance." I heard one of my third class boys say it aloud one day but it could just as easily have been a girl. While boys might use that statement as an escape clause, girls are just as likely to use it to let boys off the hook. It appears boys are afraid to dance. Perhaps because society lets them know from an early age that the boy who dances is suspect. On popular TV programmes such as Baby Ballroom (ITV) and DanceX (BBC) young men tell, as a matter of course, of the difficult time they have had at school because of their interest in dance. Why does society, in particular the peers of school boys who want to dance, wish to discourage the would be dancer?

One of the difficulties with a project on this topic is the volume of anecdotal evidence, from the parent who told her son's teacher that 'if he turns out queer' she'd blame her for teaching him Irish dancing, to my own experiences as a male who did his first dance lesson at twenty one and had to negotiate how that felt to me and those around me. My experience of wondering what people would think of me because I was interested in dance leads me to agree that

... it can be argued that boys in dance negotiate and perform their identities in self-narratives, they position themselves in relation to other people inside and outside the dance context. In addition they construct themselves in relation to the culturally prevlaent heteronormative masculinist discourse that operates in self-narratives often as an oppressive power through imagined or real 'voices' of the other. (Lehikoinen 2006, p.246)

Over twenty five years on and those 'voices' are still occasionally to be heard. There is no shortage of stories but the main reason for researching boys' attitudes is to get beyond what everyone 'knows' and find whether dance might be a real possibility for boys and their teachers.

Questions

In approaching the subject of boys dancing there are certain questions which will need to be addressed.

- What is the prevailing attitude of primary school boys to dance? Informal
 conversation about dance and boys inevitably yields anecdotes revealing
 a negative or at least ambivalent attitude. It is the intention of this project
 to record these attitudes.
- What are the factors which contribute to boys' attitude to dance? Social, psychological and developmental influences all play a part in forming these attitudes. These influences and current thinking on them will be examined.
- What is the prevailing attitude of primary school teachers to dance? If
 dance is to happen in schools then teachers' attitudes are of primary
 concern. Whatever the policies or ethos of the school the potential
 existence of dance lessons begins with the teacher.
- How competent and confident do teachers feel about teaching dance to boys? Like many subjects in the primary school curriculum, dance is a specialist area which many teachers may not feel skilled or comfortable enough to teach. This study will look at the dance content offered at colleges of education and ask those offering and receiving it for their views.
- What qualities would be appropriate for a dance programme for primary school boys? With the above factors in mind it is hoped that certain qualities can be identified which a boys' dance programme would possess.

Theoretical Framework

This research project is informed by the principles underlying the Productive Pedagogy framework developed in the University of Queensland in Australia within the QSRLS (Lingard et al.,2001)

This principal elements identified as being necessary for Productive Pedagogy to occur may be summarised as follows:

- Intellectual quality
- Connectedness
- Engagement with difference
- Supportiveness

Definition of Terms

Unless otherwise stated the term 'dance' in this study will refer to educational dance as first outlined by Laban (1948) and later developed by practitioners such as Smith-Autard (2002).

The definition of dance in the Irish Physical Education Curriculum (1999, p.3) states that

"Dance in education involves the child in creating, performing and appreciating movement as a means of expression and communication. Dance differs from the other aspects of the physical education programme in that the primary concern is with the expressive quality of movement and the enjoyment and appreciation of the aesthetic and artistic qualities of movement." (Dept. of Ed. & Science 1999a, p.3)

It draws a distinction between creative and folk dance and says that "Folk dancing is presented with an emphasis on being fully involved and enjoying the dance rather than on the movements involved in the dance." (Dept. of Ed. & Science 1999, p.3). Thus the "aesthetic and artistic qualities" are set above the more basic experience of enjoyment associated with folk dance.

The use of the word 'discourse' in this study is in keeping with Foucault's (1972) concept of discourse analysis whereby "statements – as components of discursive formations – have to be thought of primarily as *functional* units. They

do things, bring about effects rather than merely 'represent' states of affairs. (Mac Houl & Grace 1995, p.37).

Implications of the Study

Upon the successful completion of this study it should be possible to identify practices which may be considered productive or desirable in the teaching of dance. At the same time it would be beneficial to identify practices which, in the light of modern educational thinking, might no longer be considered appropriate. The recommendation of strategies and methodologies which would promote best practice would be a desired outcome of this study.

Limitations of the Study

While the attitudes surveyed are of significance the instrument used did not allow in-depth questioning of respondents' understanding and perception of dance. No definition of dance could be made and discussed with the respondents so the attitudes measured are by nature quite general. This was understood in advance of the study and while unfortunate it leaves an area of study ripe for further and more in depth exploration.

Context of the Study

Over the past two years teachers have been receiving PE in-service training and dance has been one facet of that training. September 2006 was the date for implementation of the revised PE curriculum so there is an onus on teachers to provide the sort of dance experience as laid out in the curriculum documents. Newly trained teachers will have been receiving the revised curriculum aims and objectivs as part of their pre-service training.

Although dance is placed within the PE curriculum the visual arts curriculum document alludes to it in its opening statement.

Arts education encompasses a range of activities in the visual arts, in music, in drama, in dance and in literature. These activities and experiences help the child to make sense of the world; to question, to speculate and to find solutions; to deal with feelings and to respond to creative experience. (Department of Education & Science 1999, VisArts p.2)

While the PE curriculum states that the acquistion of 'movement skills' (p.10) as an aim it also states that PE aims "to develop an appreciation of movement and the use of the body as an instrument of expression and creativity" (p.10)

The debate over the placement of dance within the PE rather than Visual Arts curriculum is set to continue for years to come and will be looked at further in this study.

It is clear from the following statements that whatever the location of dance in the curriculum the emphases are similar:-

The arts are organised expressions of ideas, feelings and experiences in images, in music, in language, in gesture and in movement. They provide for sensory, emotional, intellectual and creative enrichment and contribute to the child's holistic development. Much of what is finest in society is developed through a variety of art forms which contribute to cultural ethos and to a sense of well-being. (Dept. of Ed. & Science 1999c, p.2)

and then in the PE broad objectives.

Creative and aesthetic development

- use the body as a means of expression and communication, using a range and variety of stimuli
- create and perform simple dances
- develop artistic and aesthetic understanding within and through movement (Dept. of Ed. & Science 1999a, p.12)

Dance is clearly being presented a means for children to relate and respond to their world by developing their creativity and aesthetic awareness. The aims and objectives are clear. Some of the challenges presented in trying to achieve them are the subject matter of this study.

Chapter 2 Methodology

This chapter explores the methodology selected and the instruments used to collect data.

This study was a research inquiry into attitudes of boys and teachers in primary schools. A mixed methods approach was adopted with an interpretive emphasis as this study is a "small scale research, investigating the taken for granted and such micro concepts as individual perspective, personal constructs" and "negotiated meanings" as identified by Cohen and Manion (1994, p.39) as the key areas of focus of a survey.

Three of the four data gathering techniques typical of the survey method (Cohen & Manion 1994) were used :- self-completion questionnaires, attitudes scales and semi-structured interviews.

The primary research instrument was a survey in the form of two questionnaires. One was distributed to teachers in 6 boys' primary schools in Dublin schools and the other to boys attending those schools in 2nd to 5th class. The questionnaires used Likert scales to measure attitudes to dance.

The sample was non-probability and purposive, drawn from teachers who teach in boys' schools. Initial contact was established in 5 of the 6 schools through acquaintances who then approached colleagues, following the 'snowball sampling' method identified by Cohen and Manion (1994). In the sixth school the principal was contacted by phone and agreed to facilitate the study.

The secondary research method was the use of semi-structured interviews with lecturers in a number of colleges of education. A list of questions was drawn up dealing with issues of teacher education in the area of dance.

As well as the gathering of data a review of relevant literature was conducted.

Interview with PE lecturers in Colleges of Education

The task set before teachers in asking them to teach dance leads us to consider the amount of dance education they've had when attending college. As in the school context, Physical Education is just one of many subjects to be covered and, within that, dance is yet another subset. It was therefore considered worthwhile to explore the perceptions and attitudes of some PE lecturers. I chose semi-structured interviews as I wanted to give them the freedom to expand on whatever opinions they might have on what they are expected to realistically achieve in the course they give. The interviews were conducted face to face and over the phone. Field notes and recordings were taken and a list of questions was posed to each interviewee. (See Appendix A)

Review of Literature

There are a number of disparate factors feeding into this research topic. Boys who are being encouraged to dance are influenced by a variety of forces – psychological, developmental and social. Current thinking on gender identity and masculinity discourses was examined with reference to the writings of Foucault (1972) and Connell (2000) among others. The work of Lehikoinen (2005) and his analyses of discourses at work in dance education for males in Finland was particularly useful when applied to the Irish context.

In colleges of education the approach to dance in education has been informed by significant practitioners and theoreticians during the course of the twentieth century. Starting with the work of Laban (1963) and progressing to the continued work and writings of Smith-Autard (2002) approaches and methodologies have developed over the years. In reviewing the writings of these and others the intention was to find some common threads which would inform the proposed approach to dance for boys which this project hopes to arrive at.

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) placed dance in the Physical Education realm rather than Visual Arts. A brief review of this document and earlier documents, which informed its choices, gave further insight into the qualities

which would be appropriate in a dance programme for boys. The tenets of Productive Pedagogy were examined as a theoretical basis for the educational underpinning of the study as well current writings on creativity and aesthetic education.

Teachers' questionnaire

Teachers are the ones whose attitudes and perceptions will determine whether or not dance will happen. Without their commitment and enthusiasm there is very little chance of dance being a viable activity. The PE curriculum covers a number of specialist areas and I wanted to gauge how the sample group of teachers felt about teaching dance. Did they have a positive or negative predisposition towards dance? How well equipped did they feel in terms of knowledge, training and resources. I chose a questionnaire using Likert Scales as the method of measuring these attitudes.

Likert Scales were chosen as they greatly facilitate the quantifying of responses into readily measurable data. The disadvantage with them is that they leave no room for elaboration or reflection. The option to allow space for such reflection was considered and discarded. The aim of this survey instrument was to establish a very broad perspective on the perceived importance, vialbility and desirability of dance in primary schools.

The designing of the statements required some sensitivity. It was desirable that the teachers should share their genuine feelings without showing themselves as negligent or incompetent. Previous studies (Broderick & Sheil 2000) had shown levels of commitment to teaching dance.

The statements were broken into broad categories:-

- Dance is an enjoyable activity which can be enjoyed by all.
- Dance is something I enjoy
- Dance is effectively covered in teacher training.
- Dance is an activity I feel comfortable teaching
- Dance is a subject I feel confident teaching
- Dance is a subject I teach well

Fig. 2.1 How the respondents feel about dance and dance teaching in general.

- Dance is an activity boys enjoy
- Dance is an activity girls enjoy
- Dance is a subject teachers feel equipped to teach
- Dance is a subject teachers feel confident teaching

Fig. 2.2 How the respondents feel boys, girls and fellow teachers view dance.

- I would teach dance more often if I had more training
- I would teach dance more often if I had resources and materials

Fig. 2.3 What teachers feel might improve dance teaching

- Dance is better taught by the class teacher
- Dance is better taught by specialist dance teachers

Fig. 2.4 How they feel about specialist involvement

- Dance belongs in the primary school Physical Education curriculum
- Dance belongs in the primary school Visual Arts curriculum.

Fig. 2.5 The place of dance in the primary curriculum.

Boys' questionnaire

In order to ascertain how boys view dance within the context of school a questionnaire was administered to boys in 2nd to 5th classes in boys' schools in the Dublin area. I wanted the boys' attitude to dance but without the distraction of girls in the equation. The interplay of factors at work in a mixed dance class was felt to involve too many variables.

The questions on the questionnaire put dance in the context of PE and how the boys viewed it within that school subject. The boy was asked how he felt about dance and himself as a dancer. The questionnaire was designed as a broad measure of attitudes with a view to supporting or refuting the statement "Boys Don't Dance"

These questions, while ostensibly about PE in general, have the word dance embedded in them. This meant that little focus on dance in particular was possible. The analysis therefore measures attitudes only in the broadest terms and further analysis of the data is not justified.

Most boys are good at				
•	Football			
•	Dance			
•	Swimming			
•	Tennis			
•	Basketball			

Fig. 2.6 – Sample statement from Boys' Questionnaire (See Appendix A)

Extracted from the general PE context the five statements about dance were:-

- · In PE I like to do dance
- I am a good dancer
- · Most boys are good at dance
- Most boys like dance
- · We should have more time for dance

The decision to embed the dance questions within a PE context was taken as it was desirable that the information supplied to parents and respondents was both honest and accurate. If dance were clearly the main focus there was a possiblity that the data would be tainted by the attitudes being studied.

To avoid this, information was sought about all the activities in PE. This was explained in the information sheet (Appendix B) and dance was clearly cited as one area under study.

"This project aims to look at the experience of different experiences that boys have in PE while at primary school. It will look at the teachers who are expected to teach it and examine how well they are prepared for this task in terms of training and confidence levels.

It will look at the boys and how football, gymnastics, dance and swimming etc are seen by males and how importantly they value each." (Appendix B)

Another implication of this approach was that attitudes to dance in particular were more difficult to explore without forfeiting the general PE context.

The Sample

The six schools represented in this research were all in the greater Dublin area. They were single sex, boys' schools. The selection of boys' schools was felt to be essential in obtaining a pure attitude sample, free from the influences, positive and negative, which a co-educational situtation might cause.

In data analysis no differentiation was made between the schools.

The respondents were grouped by age in five age groups.

The schools approached to help in this research schools fell into a middle to working class socio-economic bracket. The boys surveyed were from predominantly non-professional background with some falling within the disadvantaged bracket. This information was elicited orally from the contact teacher in each school. The breakdown of these factors was not measured by any questions in the questionnaire as it was not deemed sufficiently relevant.

Ethics

This study was conducted in accordance with the rules of the University of Limerick Ethics Committee. All documents related to the research survey, questionnaires, information sheets and consent forms, were submitted to the committee and approved.

Quantitative Phase

Boys

Data was collected from valid questionnaires (n=439). A small number of questionnaires were insufficiently or incorrectly filled and were discarded. The respondents were divided into 5 age brackets.

Age	6	7	8	9	10	11	>11
Please tick one box							
✓							

Fig. 2.7 Age categories

From the larger volume of responses, data from the five statements about dance were collected. Data in response to a general statement, 'I like PE', were also collected.

On a number of statements where respondents failed to mark a box or double marked then that entry was declared 'void'.

The responses to the statements about dance were graded using a descending scale of 5 – 1 from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. These scores were tabulated in Microsoft Excel and then converted to bar graphs.

The scores of each age group were separately scored and represented before being totalled and averaged. The overall scores were then converted to graphs also.

As the age groupings varied in size the use of percentages was not helpful as it failed to show proportionate representation ie. 1 boy in the 7&8 yr old group = 1.6% of sample and in the 11 yrs 0.81%. It was felt that for the individual groups raw scores were more useful when compared to the total sample.

Teachers

Data were collected from 46 Teacher Questionnaires. These were divided into two categories Male (13) and Female (33).

The responses to the 16 statements about dance, were graded using a descending scale of 5-1 from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. These scores were tabulated in Microsoft Excel. Due to the smallness of the sample the use of percentages is not appropriate. These score tables were then converted to bar graphs.

The scores of male and female respondents were kept separate and represented in table and graph form before being combined and again converted to graph.

On a number of statements where respondents failed to mark a box or double marked then that entry was discarded. The incidence of this was very low on the teacher questionnaire.

Conclusion

The aim of the survey was to assess in broad terms the attitudes of boys and teachers in boys' schools to dance and this was achieved. However, due to time constraints there was no opportunity to pilot the questionnaires which might have been beneficial in eliminiating ambiguities, particularly on the teachers' questionnaire. The lack of clear definition of a particular dance style in the questionnaires meant that again a degree of ambiguity was unavoidable.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

Purpose of chapter

This chapter will look at boys and teachers and their relationship with dance in the primary school context.

It will examine some of the challenges and difficulties which face boys in their formation of themselves as males – defining their masculinity as one of many possible masculinities, dealing in the process with peer pressure, homophobia, the dominance of sport in popular culture and their portrayal in the media as a group in crisis. It will review some of the scientific and sociological evidence, which supports and refutes some of the more common discourses related to boys.

It will look at the literature available on dance and teacher education, reviewing briefly the progression from Laban's principles to Smith-Autard's (2002) model of the *art of dance*.

Finally it will look at the principles of productive pedagogy (PP) how it might contribute to the teaching of dance in Irish primary schools.

Boys

An essentialist view of boys endeavours to reduce them to a convenient homogenous group. Television, radio, newspaper and magazines supply sound bites and headlines about boys, how they're failing and how society and schools are failing them. Populist psychology and parenting 'gurus' such as Steve Biddulph (2003) offer platitudes and advice in an effort to placate the fears of parents. In 'Raising Boys' Biddulph (ibid.) tells us that "... it's painfully clear (to anyone who opens a newspaper) that boys are hurting too." (p.iv) while Pollack (1998) in "Real Boys" relates how "the Boy Code puts boys and men into a gender straitjacket that constrains not only them but everyone else, reducing us all as human beings, and eventually making us strangers to ourselves and one another" (p.6)

According to Connell (2000) pop psychology "has constructed a fantasy of the universal 'deep masculine', which is as stereotyped as anything in Hollywood." (Connell 2000, p.5) and she insists that "We need new and more democratic

patterns in gender relations, not re-runs of discredited patriarchies." (Connell 2000, p.6)

Books such as Angela Phillips' (1994) 'The Trouble With Boys' and any number of newspaper and magazine articles offer a steady trickle of information on how disastrously boys are doing academically, socially and emotionally. Writing for the Guardian newspaper Phillips quotes the education researcher Madeleine Arnott of the Cambridge School of Education, telling us that the problem

... is not too much femininity but too much masculinity. "The evidence," she says, "is that the major problem for boys is that they are holding on to traditional masculine identities and that this is holding them back. Some are changing, but very few." (Guardian 2006)

Any essentialist view of boys as a homogeneous group consigns them to a future, predestined by a common psychology or chemistry, causing them to behave and think within narrow patterns. In fact any effort to describe boys thus is unhelpful. The binary boy/girl view is no less helpful ...

an emphasis on 'boys' versus 'girls' attainments precludes any appreciation of the differences between boys and boys and girls and girls. (Skelton & Francis 2003, p. 5)

The academic achievement of boys has regularly come into Irish media discussion in recent years - the publishing of Leaving Cert results an annual occasion to bewail the plight of young males. Phillips (2000) refutes the notion that is a new phenomenon, citing the fact that "in 1693 John Locke was bewailing the fact that boys had such trouble learning Latin while girls took so easily to French". Perhaps this reaction is a masculinist attempt to restore the balance in favour of boys.

One of the results of this pre-occupation with pupil attainment in public testing has been the identification of, and focus on, the apparent 'underachievement' of boys. Popular conjecture on this topic suggests two things:

Primary schooboys' needs aren't being met – specifically, that greater emphasis should be given to boys' preferred learning styles together with the provision of more male teachers to act as role models in order to enhance their performance. (Skelton & Francis 2003, p. 3)

And though research (Carrington & Tymms 2005) would suggest that this is not the case the calls for more male teachers continue.

Lehikoinen (2006) posits that society perpetuates masculinist norms which are heteronormative, that is, "the universal presumption of heterosexuality" (Norman 2006: 99) continually reinforcing the heterosexual viewpoint as being normal and desirable. Within this discourse there is great pressure on young males to conform. 'Acceptable' behaviour, dress, speech etc. for peer groups may be decided by an individual or individuals and those who step outside the bounds of this acceptablity run the risk of finding themselves subject to exclusion, humiliation or ostracisation.

Through this type of reaction young people in second-level schools could be described as being involved in what Duncan termed policing the boundaries of sexuality (Duncan, 1999: 106) for their school and for the wider society. This can be seen even in the way young people used words like 'gay', 'fag' and 'queer' to deride their heterosexual peers, thus ensuring that anyone who might be thinking about breaking away from the heterosexual norm will think twice before doing so. (Norman, 2006: 113)

Possible reasons behind this 'policing' of boundaries and how it impacts upon boys in general and particularly those who are interested in dance can now be examined more closely.

Boys and dance

"Boys don't dance," is a frequently encountered aphorism. An eight year old boy in my primary school classroom informed a classmate of this fact one day. I resisted the urge to challenge the statement but stored the comment away for consideration. Over subsequent weeks I watched him during warmups for drama or PE lessons and saw that he had no problem with movement sequences as long as he didn't perceive these activities as dance. When I taught a dance sequence for a Christmas presentation he learned it with little enthusiasm and absented himself at the earliest opportunity. Perhaps it is not the movement that boys tend to resist but the format and the context in which it is performed.

"Men don't dance" says Burt (1995) in 'The Male Dancer'. He then relates an anecdote during which the above statement is amended to "that's all right for Russians and pagans but not for Americans." (Burt 1995, p.101). He cites this encounter as an example of the type of thinking which militates against 'white men in the United States who go into serious theatre dance.' (ibid.) The story

relates to 1976 and now thirty years on the question being asked in this paper is whether anything has changed - is it any easier for boys who feel the urge to dance even if it is not at 'serious' professional level.

In a recent Times article (Sat. 7th April, 2007), journalist Kate Wighton muses on a poll conducted by FHM, a glamour magazine for men, in which 81% of males said they felt society was trying to feminise them and did not view this negatively. A mere 6% were happy to describe themselves as a 'macho man'. The academic weight/value of such research might be questionable but, given that the average age of those surveyed was 30 and they were subscribers to a glamour magazine, it could be argued that their honesty was perhaps greater than in a more academic or 'respectable' context where a desire to display political correctness might influence their responses. Could it be that the construct of masculinity is in a state of flux at present and that consequently there couldn't be a better time for putting forward the case for dance as a male pursuit? Lehikoinen (2006) would seem to agree.

The rise of indiviualism as a discourse in the 1990s and during the first years of the new millennium has made it more socially acceptable than ever before during the 20th century for young males to take up dance in Finland. (Lehikoinen 2006, pp.221-222)

Whether this 'optimal time for dance' scenario is the case in Ireland remains to be seen.

Homophobia

John Amaechi, former NBA basketball star relates his personal experience.

At 400ft they see a big black man and they cross the road to avoid me," he explains. "At 200ft they cross back because they realise that I'm a professional basketball player and they want a closer look." But recently, he says, they have come a bit closer and then crossed again. "At 50ft they recognise me as the gay bloke who just came out and then they cross back across the road again. (Amaechi 2007)

In the introduction to Straight Talk a 2006, Irish study of homophobia in secondlevel schools, Mac an Ghaill suggests that ...

Homophobia is undoubtedly one of the most divisive and destructive features of contemporary society and yet for a long time it has been one of the least officially recognised. (Mac an Ghaill cited in Norman 2006: vi)

Lehikoinen suggests that many of our practices in school, and in dance particularly, reinforce the heteronormative masculinist discourse.

Mac an Ghaill feels that the research carried out by Norman et al. proves that "... teacher student relationships are shaped by a broader framework of powerful forces – a framework of heteronormativity" (Norman 2006: ix)

The implications for teachers are considerable. It would appear that not only through action but inaction the heteronormative agenda is furthered. When teachers avoid subjects like dance, which they instinctively feel will meet with resistance, they are also neglecting to portray a version of society which tolerates difference. Schools then shoulder a responsibility for the values, ideals and perhaps prejudices which young males adopt.

It is clear that schools cannot solve' the problems of homophobia in society. But outside of family life, schools ar a key cultural space in the formation of young people's subjectivities and identities. (Mac an Ghaill cited in Norman 2006: ix - x)

The challenge which faces teachers is to shape the minds of their pupils not just in the words they use but in the actions they take because ...

Schools are agents of society and consequently, both in what they formally teach and often informally ignore, are key players in reproducing the dominant forms of masculinity, femininity and sexuality. Norman 2006, p.2)

What isn't taught may be just as significant as what is taught as work on the invisible curriculum (Bernstein 1975) indicates how attitudes are constantly being formed.

The bulk of research conducted on attitudes to sexuality and gender has been in the secondary school context but when the young people surveyed enter secondary level education they bring with them the values which have been forming since beginning primary school and before. One of the most powerful guides to their view of the world is their perception of what is normal.

The interrelated phenomena of heteronormativity and homophobia were found to be pervasive in the modern Irish educational experience in second-level schools ... It appears that the views of the students in particular were strongly rooted in a view of the world where normal people are perceived as heterosexual and that those who identify themselves as gay or lesbian are seen as being abnormal. (Norman 2006: 113)

While Norman is dealing specifically with second level schooling it would be naïve to believe that the phenomena he describes are not present and active at primary level. Plummer (1999) found that in Australia –

Prior to consolidating adult sexual identity, homophobic rhetoric is used frequently and with meaning, even when there is little or no concept of what a homosexual is and a definitive target in the peer group is lacking. (Plummer 1999, p.137)

The school as a reflection of society is a context where certain activities or behaviours are viewed as normal and others as not. The implications for primary school are great.

Schools, and activities associated with schooling are central to shaping homophobic experiences. While the details vary for each person interviewed, homophobia is reported by all subjects and the same general homophobic processes are described regardless of whether the subjects attended Catholic, Protestant, or government schools in urban or rural areas. (Plummer 1999, p.89)

In Ireland, at second level the Exploring Masculinities programme was designed for fourth year male students in single sex schools as a way of exploring issues of gender. During the implementing of the programme it was found that "... high levels of hostility and fear were reported by boys towards gay males in particular." (Dept. of Ed. & Science, *Teaching materials, rationale* p. vii) It is all to easy to dismiss homophobia as a nonsense which once made apparent to boys will cause them to embrace dance enthusiastically. This over-simplified view does not fit with the findings of Burt (1995) who relates how

Joseph Bristow theorises that homophobia allows men to function homosocially. "homophobia comes into operation so that men can be as close as possible – to work powerfully together in the interests of men – without ever being too (sexually) close to one another ... homophobia actually brings men into a close homosocial relation (Bristow cited in Burt 1995, p.23)

Men need homophobia to allow them certain types of behaviour (homosocial) free of suspicion.

Images of the levels of physical intimacy permissible to men come readily to mind. Rugby is a powerful example of how males in a particular sporting context are 'allowed' to be physically intimate without fear of suspicion. If boys were asked to be so physically intimate in another context, a dance class for example, there might be more reticence. The context of rugby allows a homosocial closeness which is 'safe' for boys, just as the celebratory hugs and kisses in soccer, manage to avoid the taint of homophobic suspicion. The overt nature of homophobia allows the laying of sexual orientation 'cards on the table'. This doesn't seem to be possible with dance.

Burt (1995) suggests that in the 19th century an unease developed with the specatacle of the male dancer and with the playing of male parts in travesty this set up the added unease of the gendered view of the male spectator, conflicted by whatever feelings he might feel towards the 'male' dancer. He makes a plausible argument that the homophobia was already in place before Nijinsky and gay male dancers who followed gave the viewers a target for their dislike.

Burt (1995) states that

the arguments for greater openness are surelly compelling. Not talking about something doesn't make it go away, and may insidiously make it take on greater significance than it really deserves. All male dancers are placed under suspicion with the result that, as is widely recognized, far fewer boys and men are involved in the dance world than girls or women. (Burt 1995, p. 29)

Rather than dismissing homophobia as a nonsense it needs to be accepted as a real social phenomenon, made tangible to boys in their daily lives at school and in the media.

Homophobic mechanisms channel and block our understanding and appreciation of representations of masculinity that are made by both gay and straight dance artists. It is through understanding the ways in which these mechanisms work that their effectiveness is undermined, and the possibility of positive change is brought about. (Burt 1995, p.30)

Once the pervasive influence of homophobia has been recognized the work of defining a masculinity not based on fear of otherness can begin.

Gender Identity

Dance is inextricably linked with gender identity because our bodies are literally how we embody our gender. To expect boys to dance we are expecting them to use their bodies in a way that may challenge them or at the very least make them uncomfortable. Butler (1990) maintains that rather than expressing our gender we perform it through our actions. Boys being asked to dance may feel that they are being asked to perform a gender that is not theirs and levels of discomfort at this request will vary from individual to individual. Their fear of not living up to a masculine ideal or gender role is very real. Pleck (1981) identified male discomfort or sense of failure around gender as the gender role strain paradigm. The gender role strain paradigm breaks from the long accepted gender role paradigm which saw many men fail to achieve the gender role 'assigned' them, resulting in trauma and dysfunction. It draws an important distinction between gender role identity and gender identity - the latter acknowledged as a necessary stage in the development of the child – the sense of being male or female.

In studying the play patterns of pre-school boys and early schoolers Goodenough Pitcher et al.(1983) found that young boys begin defining themselves at an early age, soon after they have realized that they are not girls. Drawing ever clearer lines of distinction becomes a significant activity in boys' efforts to establish clear sex role values.

Boys engaged in defining themselves as 'non-feminine' make statements that may in essence be questions ie. "boys don't dance". Goodenough Pitcher (1983, p.2) found that "... boys define their own sex roles more sharply than do girls." This activity of gender self-labelling is essential in the young boy's constructing of his male self. Since most of the significant figures in the early life of boys are female, particularly with the marked absence of males entering primary teaching, it is possible that boys need to define their early masculinity in terms of how they are not like the females who feature all about them.

Skelton & Francis (2003, p.3) feel that "boys and girls cannot be considered in isolation. We see gender as relational (that is where there cannot be a masculinity without a notion of femininity to compare it to, and vice-versa)."

This process of polarization which boys are engaging in an act of self-definition is further complicated by the heated debate which has been raging over the feminization of education and the neglect of boys' needs. Christina Hoff Sommers, in 2000 raised the level of debate with "The War on Boys", asserting that boys were in trouble, suffering at the hands of those who view typically male behaviours as targets for feminization. She makes a case for returning to older systems with competition to the fore and a change of attitude that would no longer view male behaviour as an array of pathologies from which they needed to be saved.

Linda Schrock Taylor (2004) agrees...

Boys most definitely **should** be allowed to be boys...and they **could** grow up more mentally and emotionally healthy...if government schools **would** stop trying to force boys – whether by the use of drugs, or the use of punishments – to act like girls. (author's emphasis) (Schrock Taylor 2004)

The language of everyday life helps young children to construct a view of the world. Even very young children, as they begin to define themselves as male or female express it in their questions and statements. "The specific verbalizations of children underline the potentially crucial role of language in sex role acquisition." (Goodenough Pitcher & Hickey Schultz 1983, p.12) This ties in with Foucault's (1972) concept of discourses which don't simply describe the social world but constitute it. Mc Houl, A. Grace, explain that "For Foucault, 'knowledge is much more a matter of the social, historical and political conditions under which, for example, statements come to count as true or false." (1995, p.29) It is in language that the child's gender world is formed rather than described. It is the teacher's task to provide guidance in the formation of gender and moderating the learning of these sex roles as

... children tend to 'overlearn' their gender, somewhat as they tend to 'overapply' a rule in language acquisition. Gender identity, ie.cognitive self-categorization as "boy" or "girl", is regarded by Kohlberg as the critical and basic organizer of sex role attitudes and the most stable of all social identities. (Goodenough Pitcher & Hickey Schultz 1983, p. 13)

Telling boys it is okay to dance is less likely to be as effective as giving them the opportunity to feel what it is to dance and providing them with language to talk about it. Since "young children are eager to identify themselves with their 'correct' gender and will go to great lengths to 'fit' what they see into their understandings of appropriate genders." (Skelton & Francis 2003, p.15), if from an early age they identify dance as part of their male experience then they are more likely to view it as appropriate gender behaviour.

Given the social nature of school it is a sensible proposition that positive dance experiences in the company of their peers whose opinion they value highly carry huge formative potential, both in the development of attitudes and physical skills. Hanna (1988) is of the opinion that -

..One of the first and key social roles ina child's repertory, sex role, is ascribed, that is, one need do nothing to be assigned it. Its public and private expressions are "scripted". Cultures add to nature's distinctions and systematically attempt to teach one set of behavior to females and another (usually opposite) set to males. Societies have specific ways – including dance – of sending messages of sexual identity, and showing us was to discriminate ourselves as male or female. (Hanna 1988,p.7)

This process of learning to "discriminate ourselves" is the foundation of our perception of self.

... Kohlberg shows how the development of gender identity is part of the general development of cognitive skills ... Gender self-labelling, the first step of gender identity development, acts as a filter through which other sex-related aspects of behavior and identity are assimilated. (Goodenough Pitcher & Hickey Schultz 1983, p.108)

This process of gender self-labelling is the laying of groundwork for how young boys will assess the desirablity and appropriateness of their experiences as males. It is a hugely significant period in their self development and the implications for the teaching of dance are significant. It is during this period that their perceptions of gender in general and their own gender in particular will be formed and go on to inform many of the decisions they will make for years to come.

In a sense, we see girls assigned to their status, whereas boys create theirs. In sociological terms, boys earn an "achieved" status, while girls learn an "ascribed" status. (Goodenough Pitcher & Hickey Schultz 1983, p.111)

Teachers may play a significant role in helping boys create or achieve their status as males, by helping them explore a wide range of possiblities rather than allowing them to slot into time honoured but outdated modes of thought.

Boys and sport.

Sport. The third vortex blends power, symbolism, and emotion in a particularly potent combination. Here the schools are using consumer society's key device for defining hegemonic masculinity. (Connell 2000, p.159)

In popular entertainment antipathy towards dance and a sporty disposition are frequently presented as going hand in hand – put more bluntly – "jocks" don't dance. This attitude has long been the stuff of popular entertainment. Films, "such as the 1985 Australian "Warming Up", have explored for comic effect the juxtaposition of football players and ballet, usually with the underlying message that big rugged footballers have something to gain from their immersion, however brief, in dance technique. This sort of humorous storytelling hides a pervasive discourse – that sports enthusiasts or 'real men' don't take an interest in the arts. In a New Zealand radio interview a former All Black recounted how twenty years ago the team were invited to the opening of an art gallery and while no one was forbidden to go it was made clear to one and all that attendance would send the 'wrong message' about rugby players. Attitudes seem to have changed since then, with sports stars appearing in TV and poster ads for underwear, toiletries etc. but sport continues to be an area of prevalent masculinism.

Typically the high-profile boys' sports are markedly more important in the cultural life of schools. The coaches of boys' representative teams can be important figures in a high school. Physical education teachers have an occupational culture that, on Skelton's (1993) autobiographical account, centres on a conventional masculinity that is 'not only dominant, but neutralized as natural and good, part of the expected and unquestioned nature of things.' (Connell 2000, p.160)

In the Irish context the influence of the GAA in schools and towns must be acknowledged. Hurling and football players and coaches would fall within the description given by Connell (ibid.) above. This is not to denigrate the importance of sport as the benefits that may be gained from participation in sport are well summed up by Pollack (1998)

... the activity can also transform boys by offering them a chance to excel at something that comes naturally to many of them, to achieve a newfound sense of *mastery*, and thus to boost their self-esteem. Especially for boys who find it difficult to do well academically, sports may be one of the few contexts in which they receive praise. (Pollack 1998, p. 277)

No better recommendation could be made for participation in dance. The positive aspects identified above are equally available to the young dancer in the context of the creative dance session in school.

Reflection

The patterning of ... relations within an institution (such as a school or corporation) may be called its *gender regime*. The overall patterning of a gender regimes ... may be called the *gender order* of society. (Connell 2000, p.29)

In my first year of secondary school and in my first games period I had decided that basketball was the game for me. A student teacher at primary level had introduced our class to the game and I was eager to play it. We gathered in the gym and then a Christian Brother appeared to say that the numbers were low for the Gaelic football and would a few of us come out to the playing fields. He made eye contact with me, knowing me as he did from the local GAA club, and I acquiesced. On our way to the football pitch he opined with some conviction "Sure that's only a girl's game anyway." I didn't believe him but I didn't resist either.

In that school the PE teacher was female, an international basketball player, and taught gymnastics and basketball. The 'brothers' took care of the hurling, football and running. Here was a clear example of a gender regime.

Boys Dancing on Film

Billy Elliot

Any discussion of boys dancing often leads to a mention of the film Billy Elliot which, in popular opinion, has come to represent the ultimate mainstream statement in favour of boys dancing. This is an overly simplistic viewpoint and ignores a number of discourses, particularly the masculinist heteronormative, active within this pleasing piece of entertainment.

On the one hand, Billy's 'otherness' is established early on in that he is inept and quirky in his approach to boxing, thereby showing himself as an out of the ordinary boy. The homosexuality aspect of dancers is sidestepped by the introduction of his cross-dressing male friend who thereby accords the status of acceptability or respectability to Billy. This is further developed by Billy's violent response to the comforting caress of another boy at the ballet auditions. His father and brother, so deeply immersed in the masculinist culture of coal miners coming to accept his impulse to dance and his need to train at the Royal Ballet school, is a heavy handed, if enjoyable exercise in wishful thinking. In September, 2000 on BBC's Newsnight Review programme, Germaine Green expressed her disappointment at his adoption of ballet rather than contemporary dance and choice of school, "the home of camp" the Royal Ballet. Appropriate that a feminist should perceive the gender agenda being furthered. The film's finale depicts a grown Billy starring in Matthew Bourne's male Swan Lake. This assimilation of one of the quintessential 'white ballets' of the classical era is the last straw in a well meaning but heavy handed effort at validating dance to the unconvinced male.

A popular dance project of the 1980s, Jacques d'Amboise's National Dance Institute schools project was documented in the film 'He Makes Me Feel Like Dancing'.

This documentary, directed by Emilio Ardolino about a dancing instructor in New York City, won an Academy Award for Best Documentary in 1983 and an Emmy Award for Best Children's Programming in 1984. The film and project were evidently a huge success and there is little or no reference to the challenge that faces boys who take an interest in dance. Risner (2002) while admiring the effort to popularise, believes that "these efforts and their rhetoric often obfuscate larger social issues..." and that "Destigmatization and respectability, when read more closely, actually mean: (1) minimizing the gay male population and its profound contribution to dance; (2) cultivating more "respectable" heterosexuals, "upgrading the status of male dancers"." (Risner 2002, p.65)

Despite these reservations it is the film's main achievement that it makes dancing seem very enjoyable and normal.

It is the aim of this study to look at ways of working and creating dances which will encourage a sense of dance as normal.

The word 'normal' for the purposes of this study may be defined as "conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected." (Compact Oxford English Dictionary 2007)

Lehikoinen (2006) notes that "Emphasising 'normalcy' in reference to young males who dance can be regarded as an attempt to avoid otherness and the negative connotations that are embedded in a socially marginal position of the dancing boy." (Lehikoinen 2006, p.96)

The discourse of 'normalcy' is deliberately being adopted as part of this study. However, the heteronormative agenda which is frequently at work in the normalcy discourse is acknowledged. Mac Houl and Grace (1995) point out that "which discourse is 'best can't be decided by comparing it with any real object. The 'real' object simply isn't available *for* comparison outside its discursive construction." (p.35) Since there is no stepping outside of discourse the choice available would appear to be awareness and caution.

"Due to the prevalence of the masculinist discourse, it is hardly surprising that those who want to see more boys in dance are willing to downplay negatively charged definitions of the dancing boy." (Lehikoinen 2006, p.96)

Well meaning approaches to making dance appealing or at least acceptable to boys might be, need to be examined closely for hidden discourses which might further polarise the boy dancer.

Teachers and Educational Dance

Laban's vision of what could be achieved by educational dance was all encompassing and overly ambitious. The claims he was making for the benefits of dance across the experience of life were at best unrealistic and certainly beyond the scope and aspirations of a non-specialist primary school teacher, who may or may not do five or six lessons a year. Nonetheless because of the

scope of Laban's analysis of movement any approach since owes some credit to its contribution.

In 1969 the sort of advice being offered as to how dance for boys might be approached came in this form.

On the whole, people think that strong, powerful actions is manly, and, in view of this prevailing attitude in our society, it seems sensible and strategic to use situations in which strenuous activity is involved as a starting point for any new work in movement with boys...We wish to stress, however, that we do not subscribe to the view that only powerful action is masculine: we simply make use of this attitude in order to begin to extend the range of possibilities in boys' work. (Carroll & Lofthouse 1969, p.14)

In referring to the stereotypical nature of this approach the authors show a self-consciousness which is at once slightly apologetic and somewhat defensive. Their approach might be summed up as "it might not be ideal but it works", an attitude which may still exist today. This is not an unusual standpoint and it is one that Lehikoinen (2006) raises with regard to the use of tag and boisterous games as a warm up for boys. This justification of the inclusion of activities which might be at odds with the philosophy of the programme but which 'work' requires closer examination.

Dance drama has provided many people with a successful way of arousing the effort participation of boys who were being introduced to expressive movement. Here, again, we suggest that the initial emphasis might be on the energetic and strenuous, and so situations of conflict or power or aggression could be chosen to capture the interest of boys. Battles, marching armies, warring groups, hunting and fighting give full play to the actions of thrusting and slashing and pressing and wringing ... During the battles and wars actions of powerful effort are used and then, during the the questing of safeguarding or resting, the more delicate, gentle qualities. (Carroll & Lofthouse 1969, p.200)

There must be a limit to how many dances can justifiably done about sports or wars or fights. The authors are keen to stress that they are just starting points but surely there is a danger that if the initial perception the boys develop of dance is that it is predominantly powerful or aggressive then the introduction of gentler or subtler themes might be seen as anti-climactic. On page 30 a section entitled 'Symbolic Fights' describes in vivid detail a 'dance' session where the class respond to a variety of imaginary blows delivered to them by their teacher. Perhaps the lesson would be a success but is this dance or boys' war games once removed? The fact that an activity 'works' is not sufficient justification Clearly there was a need for a more structured model of educational dance. Betty

Redfern and Valerie Preston-Dunlop provided this, editing and adapting Laban's principles within new frameworks and pioneering educational dance in Britain.

What is important is that here we have a means of ordering movements in space for the purposes of dance which takes account of the structure of the human body and the way it can move...and in the absence of any comparable system form ordering and developing the spatial elements of movement, it would be somewhat shortsighted to ignore completely what has already been evolved, and to rely exclusively, as often seems to happen in dance composition, on intuitive or hit-and-miss methods. (Redfern 1973, p.123)

Tanham records that

In preparing a case for dance as a main subject within the B.Ed degree programme at Crewe College of Education, Redfern identified weaknesses in Modern Educational Dance. The theoretical bases of the Laban framework did not yield a sufficiently robust rationale to meet the requirements of an academic council. (Tanham 2005, p.35)

The need for a more academically rigorous foundation was thus identified by Redfern. Smith-Autard's contribution in the 1970s with the proposal of the *midway* model. In *The Art of Dance in Education* she describes how educational dance became divided into two camps, one stressing creative/expressive qualitites and the other founded on the professional model, providing a sound physical dance technique often at the expense of creativity, given school time constraints.

The Smith-Autard three strand approach, Create/Perform/Appreciate, has been the backbone of educational dance in Britain for thirty years.

The need for balance between creating, performing and viewing dances, on the one hand, and an overall concern, on the other, that pupils come to appreciate dances (their own and those produced professionally) as art works, became the central organising principle of dance education in the 1980s and beyond. (Smith-Autard 2002, p.5)

It is the approach informing the 1999 Irish Primary School Curriculum but the allocation of time in colleges of education tends to militate against many preservice teachers gaining a firm grasp of the concepts involved.

Productive Pedagogy

This approach is the driving force behind the Queensland, Australia's "New Basics" curriculum reform and according to Hayes et al.

We deliberately use the term pedagogy to indicate that we are not developing an instrumentalist model of teaching, which can be implemented through a mechanistic process. This is not an attempt to de-skill teachers. Indeed the converse is true. Hence the

pluralising of pedagogy to imply that there is no one true way of teaching and that appropriate pedagogies for particular contexts need to be determined by teachers, often in conjunction with their students and local communities. (Hayes, Lingard, & Mills, 2006)

The concept of productive pedagogies emerged as a result of the School Reform Longitudinal Study (SRLS) which was conducted from 1998-2000 in Queensland schools. This large-scale study was attempted to ascertain the elements of student learning experiences, and the organisational capacities of schools and systemic supports which would contribute to improved learning and social outcomes for students. There are four elements integral to the productive pedagogy approach.

- Intellectual quality
- Connectedness
- Engagement with difference
- Supportiveness

The approach recognizes the extent to which teacher practices may affect the levels of learning in schools and that

Teacher effects can be maximized ... by pedagogies and assessment practices that are ... simultaneously intellectually demanding, connected to the world, supportive in a demanding way, and that engage productively with differences. (Lingard 2003, p.9)

Foremost in the thinking behind Productive Pedagogy is the use of rich tasks as a teaching strategy.

The thinking behind rich tasks is best described by Luke one of the guiding lights of the productive pedagogy philosophy.

The metaphor used by Vygotskian psychologists is that learning occurs through "assisted performance" with a mentor. The mentor throws out the rope further than you currently can grasp, you stretch and with some help grasp it, or if you can't grasp it, your mentor is there to catch you or assist or model. The 'dumbing down' occurs when we throw the rope right in front of someone because, through deficit thinking, we believe they can only grab what's in front of them. (Luke 1999)

The use of rich tasks has been adopted by the Irish Junior Cycle PE support agency. It suggests that

...optimal learning occurs when students are confronted with authentic problems to solve and that the most powerful teaching situation is one which focuses on the identification, analysis and resolution of immediate problems in the learner's world. (JCPE 2007)

In designing rich tasks the teacher would have the following criteria in mind.

The task is deemed to be rich when it is constructed based on the following principles and:

- Is authentic and relevant; to the student and to the learning outcomes to be pursued
- contains transparent criteria and standards
- is multidimensional; involving more than one learning outcome
- involves acquiring, applying and evaluating knowledge
- encourages a divergent response from student and teacher
- provides opportunities for students to demonstrate subject knowledge, skills and understanding.
- assists teachers and students in determining the specific help which students may require. (JCPE 2007)

This approach makes demands on the teacher and the child to be creative both in how the subject is taught and how the children work during the process. A brief look at the concept of creativity might help clarify what would be expected of teacher and pupil. Seltzer and Bentley (1999) say that "the key challenge is to shift the focus away from what people *should* know and on to what they should be able *to do* with their knowledge. This is essential to developing creative ability." (p.25 original italics)

Craft's (2001) 'little c creativity' and its focus on the act of problem solving, moving around blockages and combining of existing elements to create unexpected results offers insight into the qualities necessary in the pursuit of creativity. She draws a distinction between the creativity associated with genius and those who have become leaders in their field through exceptional displays of creativity and the more mundane but valid everyday creativity.

Boden (2001) identifies three levels of creativity - combinational, exploratory and transformational. Combinational creativity is the most basic, where existing elements are brought together in a more or less predictable way. Exploratory allows for unexpected results within the confines or 'rules' of the medium and in transformational creativity there is the possibility of the rules recreated or laid aside in the interest of redefining the process and the product.

Chapter 4 Research Data

Anticipated Outcomes

The purpose of this research was to address the title of this project – "Boys Don't Dance" and see what actually were the attitudes of boys and teachers to dance. The questionnaires administered to the sample in six schools were designed to measure attitudes only in the broadest terms. The word dance is not defined in the questionnaire so there must be some degree of interpretation involved in the responses. This was not felt to be of undue significance given the broad nature of the questionnaire statements.

Findings

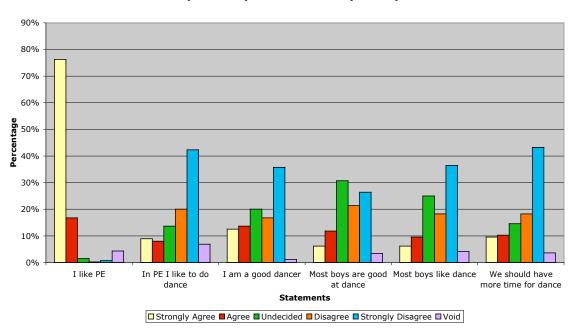
The following table illustrates the average responses to the dance statements by the 7 & 8 yr olds and the >11 age group. (A full set of data in table and graph form may be found in Appendix B.)

It was expected that there might be a variation across the age range, particularly in comparing the youngest age category 7 - 8 yrs. with the >11 yrs. In fact there was little difference.

MEAN SCORES Strongly Agree = 5 Agree = 4 Undecided = 3 Disagree = 2 Strongly Disagree = 1						
7 –8 yrs	>11 yrs	Statement				
(n=59)	(n=77)	Statement				
4.73	4.6	1. I like PE				
1.96	1.81	2. In PE I like to do dance				
2.44	2.42	3. I am a good dancer				
2.36	2.35	4. Most boys are good at dance				
2.1	1.98	5. Most boys like dance				
1.96	2.23	6. We should have more time for dance				

Fig. 4.1 Average scores from two extreme age groups surveyed.

This was at odds with what would have been the anecdotal evidence. Teachers speaking informally on the subject of boys dancing would generally express the opinion that boys find dance acceptable until 1st or 2nd class and that from then on there is resistance. As the table shows there is little or no difference in the mean response.



Boys 7 - 11 yrs. Attitudes % (n=439)

Fig. 4.2 Boys' response to survey statements.

The statements

"I like PE" – the results of this statement were tabulated and included in the final data as a comparison to the dance content of the questionnaire. The reaction to this statement was almost universally positive 76.3% agreeing strongly and 16.8% agreeing, with only 0.68% of respondents stating a 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' response. While on anecdotal evidence it might be expected that boys would view PE favourably the positive response is surprisingly high when viewed in the light of recent media coverage of growing obesity levels and sedentary lifestyles. This fits with the findings of Broderick and Sheil (2000, pp.14-15) who found that 98.5% of children were taking part in PE and 81.17% of boys stated that it was the subject they most enjoyed.

"In PE I like to do dance" – 8.88% agreed strongly and 7.97% agreed with this statement.. The percentage disagreeing ranged from strongly 42.3% – 20% disagreeing. 20% were undecided.

"I am a good dancer" 12.52% of boys strongly agreed with this statement. The 11 yr. olds showed the lowest score, only 9 out of 122 agreeing strongly. Nearly 70% of respondents disagreed with this statement

"Most boys are good at dance" 9 and 10 year olds responded well to this statement with nearly a fifth showing a positive response. The other ages were less enthusiastic with the 11 yr. and >11yr groups registering a 50% approx. average negative response.

"Most boys like dance" Only 6.15% agreed strongly and 9.56% agreed with this statement. Over a quarter of 9 yr. olds were undecided and the strongest negative reaction was from 11 yr. olds – 21.3% disagreeing and 40% strongly disagreeing.

"We should have more time for dance" 9.56% strongly agreed with this statement while 43.2% disagreed strongly, giving the highest single response to any of the dance statements in the survey.

Summary

Viewed across the full age range the attitudes of the boys yield a predominantly negative 'strongly disagree' response to all 5 five statements. Only the statement "Most boys are good at dance" showed the 'undecided' group in the majority. Again in response to "Most boys like dance" the 'undecided' response garnered 26% of the vote.

'Undecideds'

While the polar positive and negative reactions are worth comparing, the significant percentage of respondents who were undecided in their attitude, along with those who agreed or strongly agreed in the main, represent the potential for change in boys' perception of dance. In PE I like to dance (13.66%). I am a good dancer (20%) Most boys are good at dance (30.7%). Most boys like dance (25%). We should have more time for dance (14.5%).

Teachers

The survey of teachers was done in the hope of finding the general predisposition of teachers towards dance. As with the boys' survey the word dance is never fully defined and is consequently open to definition by each individual. The questionnaire's purpose is to serve as a broad measure from which very general conclusions about the future of dance in education might be drawn.

Years of service

The respondents in the main fell into two main age or experience brackets, namely the 1-5 or 20+. The imbalance was particularly strong in the male group as the majority were in the 20+ category. Broderick and Sheil (2000) found that 71% of chlildren in 5^{th} class are taught by female teachers the majority of whom have 11-20 yrs service. The implications of this are that senior classes tend to have senior teachers and are possibly less exposed to the influence of recently educated teachers with the enthusiasm and sense of 'can do' that might benefit dance in schools.

60% 50% 40% Percentage 30% 20% 10% Dance is an Dance is something Dance is effectively Dance is an activity Dance is a subject I Dance is a subject I eniovable activity feel confident I enjoy covered in teacher I feel comfortable teach well which can be training teaching. teaching enjoyed by all Statements 1 - 6

Teachers Attitudes (n=46)

Fig. 4.3 Teachers' response to survey statements 1-6.

The statements

"Dance is an enjoyable activity which can be enjoyed by all." This first statement received a very positive response with 41.3% strongly agreeing and 46% agreeing.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

"Dance is something I enjoy" Nearly 50% agreed with this statement while 37% strongly agreed.

"Dance is effectively covered in teacher training." Here over 50% disagreed and 37% were undecided

"Dance is an activity I feel comfortable teaching" High levels of comfort expressed here as over a third 39.1% agreed with this statement. Over a third disagreed or disagreed strongly.

"Dance is a subject I feel confident teaching" 37% disagreed and 10.8% disagreed strongly with this statement.

"Dance is a subject I teach well" Only 17.45% agreed with this statement, with nobody agreeing strongly while a sizeable majority at 43.4% were undecided.

70% 60% 50% Percentages 40% 30% 20% 10% 0% Dance is an activity Dance is an activity Dance is a subject Dance is a subject I would teach dance I would teach dance more often if I had more often if I had a boys enjoy girls enjoy teachers feel teachers feel equipped to teach confident teaching more training resources and materials Statements 7 - 12

Teachers' Attitudes (n=46)

Fig. 4.4 Teachers' response to survey statements 7 – 12.

"Dance is an activity boys enjoy" A surprising 50% agreed with this while only 4.3% disagreed strongly. Just over a third 34.8% remained undecided.

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

"Dance is an activity girls enjoy" Unsurprisingly 89% agreed with this statement and no respondents disagreeing.

"Dance is a subject teachers feel equipped to teach" A high percentage disagreed here (60.8%) with 6.5% strongly disagreeing. Nearly a third were undecided and only 4.3% agreed.

"Dance is a subject teachers feel confident teaching" Again a strong reaction from respondents here with over 60% disagreeing in total.

"I would teach dance more often if I had more training" The highest response percentage recorded here with 54.34% agreeing and 30.4% agreeing strongly. No respondents disagreed strongly.

"I would teach dance more often if I had resources and materials." Another very positive reaction with 50% agreeing and 26% doing so strongly. No respondents disagreed strongly although 13.04% did disagree.

Teachers' Attitudes (n=46)

60% 50% 40% Percentage 30% 20% 10% 0% Dance belongs in the PE Dance is better taught by the Dance is better taught by a Dance belongs in the primary class teacher dance specialist curriculum school Visual Arts curriculum Statements 13 - 16 ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Undecided ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

Fig. 4.5 Teachers' response to survey statements 13 – 16.

"Dance is better taught by the class teacher." A very high 54.34% undecided about this statement while only 2.2% agreed strongly.

"Dance is better taught by a dance specialist." Opinion spread almost evenly from strongly agree 26%, 24% agree to undecided 37%. 9.1% disagreed and no respondents disagreed strongly.

"Dance belongs in the primary school Physical Education curriculum" Another high positive response with 56.5% agreeing and 26% agreeing strongly. Again nobody disagreed strongly and only 8.7% were undecided.

"Dance belongs in the primary school Visual Arts curriculum."
32.6% agreed with only 2.2% agreeing strongly while 30.4% were undecided.

Conclusions

In the main the response of teachers was very positive and encouraging. Evidently they feel that there is a lack of training at college level and while there is a stated willingness to try dance they feel underskilled. There is an obvious demand for more training and resources to be made available.

The high vote for dance in the PE and Arts curriculum suggests that some voted for both. 11 of the 46 respondents agreed with both statements which either invalidates their response or, viewed more positively, suggests that they feel it has a place in both. This view was echoed in the qualitative part of the research when interviewing lecturers at third level.

Qualitative Data.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewees -

Frances Murphy - PE lecturer, St. Patrick's College Drumcondra, Dublin.

Maura Coulter - PE lecturer, St. Patrick's College Drumcondra, Dublin.

Patricia Fitzpatrick – Dance elective lecturer, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin

Caitríona Cosgrave - PE lecturer, Marino Institute of Education, Marino, Dublin.

Dorothy Morrissey – lecturer Dance Elective, Mary Immaculate, Limerick.

How do students respond to the dance element of their training?

All of the interviewees reported a positive response from students, particularly on the elective courses where an initial positive predisposition would be expected. Some reticence both male and female seemed common where showing of work was involved. One lecturer reported that this seemed more marked in the female students. What preconceptions the students came with to the classes impacted upon their initial readiness to participate. Female students tended to have experience in dance and this sometimes could be a negative rather than a positive when the creative nature of the dance was encountered. Male students

Do you find a difference between male and female students' response to the dance element in the course? If yes, how would you describe that? Males tended to be ill at ease to begin with but settled in once they found it non-threatening.

One lecturer allowed the two males on her elective to work together on collaborative tasks while another felt it was more beneficial for them to be spread among the general body of the class.

Not surprisingly, the imbalance in male/female ratio was felt to be a significant factor. Those who opt to do the voluntary course tend to be enthusiastic and open minded.

Do you feel you have adequate time allocated to prepare them for the teaching of dance?

All the lecturers interviewed felt that time was a major factor in levels of preparedness for teaching dance. Only one of the respondents with fifty hours available on the dance elective was happy with the time allocation. Even Mary Immaculate college with its 50 hour elective is reaching only a small percentage of the student body and the rest are getting only minimal training (see table). In St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, the dance elective adds 10 hours to the 4 hours allocated over three years but out of a student body of 400 this elective only caters for 120. This is viewed as an introduction to dance. Post Grad. students aren't given any training as part of their course but they are offered the 10 hour weekend course and 60 of them avail of this every year. There is no course credit for this voluntary course but participants receive a certificate. Coláiste Mhuire, Marino, gives its students a total of 8 hours dance over 3 years. A dance elective has also been on offer in Marino, comprising 21 hours set dancing in 2nd year and 21 hours creative dance in 3rd year or vice versa.

What improvements would you like to see in the preparation of trainee teachers for dance teaching?

More time was the most common response.

Making resource materials available was felt to be a very positive step.

Availability of materials which are teacher/user friendly without being prescriptive was favoured by all with some reservations expressed - dependence upon materials tending not to encourage creativity is the main fear.

How important do you feel the place of dance is in the PE curriculum?

Only one was a dance specialist but all were enthusiastic about the importance of dance. One viewpoint was that dance offered an opportunity to those children who might not be competitive or particularly athletic.

Would you agree that dance would be better placed in the Arts curriculum? Why?

Only one respondent felt strongly about the presence of dance in the Arts curriculum. Others felt it wasn't that important what area it was allocated to. It was felt by some that there was a danger that, if removed from the PE curriculum, dance might receive even less attention than it does at present.

Do you feel there are particular challenges inherent in teaching dance to boys in primary school?

The 'sissy syndrome' was perceived as the biggest challenge. The concenus was that this could probably be avoided if boys' dance experience could start early and be kept as part of PE all the way up. One respondent referred to the idea of a 'buy in' to the idea and then the need for consistent exposure throughout primary school.

Are there themes or strategies which need to be used when teaching boys? Peer approval was cited as one way in which dance could be made acceptable to

the general body of the school.

Do you have any suggestions as to how dance might be made more accessible/appealling to young boys?

The need for dance in education companies with role models for boys and for children generally was highlighted. The use of themes which place emphasis on masculine archetypal scenarios as stimulii eg. warriors, sportsmen were generally felt to be unnecessary and not desirable.

Class teacher or dance specialist?

The dance specialist as support for the class teacher rather than replacement was the consensus.

Conclusions

Those interviewed were all enthusiastic, even passionate about the importance of dance within the PE curriculum. There was a general sense of frustration at the limited amount of time and resources that could be allocated to dance in the overall context of B.Ed. or H.Dip. courses but there was unlikely to be any change as this was seen a universal problem. The mood was hopeful, a sense that those who have been taking the dance electives in particular are leaving college with a positive predisposition to creative dance. However, the concensus was that unless there is an increase in pre-service and in-service dance education there is unlikely to be any great upsurge in creative dance in primary schools.

SUMMARY	SUMMARY OF HOURS ALLOCATED TO DANCE							
St. Patrick's College,	Mary Immaculate,	Coláiste Mhuire,						
Drumcondra, Dublin	Limerick	Marino, Dublin						
Dance hours over 3 yrs.	Dance hours over 3 yrs.	Dance hours over 3 yrs.						
4	5	8						
Elective option 10 hours.	Elective option 50 hours	Elective option 21 hours set dancing & 21 hours creative dance.						
Post Grads. No allocation but elective option available.								

Fig. 4.6 Time allocation to dance in colleges of education.

Chapter 5 Conclusions

At the outset of this study a number of questions were posed. In this chapter those questions will be re-addressed with a view to establishing what progress has been made towards answering them.

What is the prevailing attitude of primary school boys to dance?

It is clear from the data presented that boys do not view dance as something in which they wish to engage or which they are good at. While they did not display an across the board antipathy towards the subject here is a negative predisposition which boys bring to the notion of dance. An examination of the reasons for this helped further the analysis

What are the factors which contribute to boys' attitude to dance?

The review of literature identified the influences at work on the developing male. Growing and working within a heteronormative culture, infused with homophobia and re-inforced often by gender regimes within the family and school, boys are constantly receiving messages about what it means to be masculine. They ignore these messages at a cost and it is not surprising that for many the adoption of the prevailing masculinist discourse is the preferred option

What is the prevailing attitude of primary school teachers to dance?

The response to the research survey was positive from both male and female teachers. There is undoubtedly a positive predisposition to the idea of teaching dance but certain factors, militate against the implementation of the curriculum to the full.

How competent and confident do teachers feel about teaching dance to boys?

A significant number of the teachers, male and female, stated that they were confident and competent in teaching dance but when it was suggested to them that they have further training or, more specifically, resources provided, then the

answer was resoundingly positive. The majority of teachers surveyed in this study are clearly saying that if they had more back up and resources then they would be happy to teach dance more frequently. The issue of what form the back up and resources might take is a more complicated one.

What qualities would be appropriate for a dance programme for primary school boys?

Having looked briefly at the development of educational dance from Laban to the present day and taking into account Lehikoinen's (2006) research into discourses in dance training there are some concepts which need to be borne in mind when approaching dance for boys. The influence of sociological and psychological factors such as gender identity, homophobia etc. will also have some bearing on the approach.

Observations from findings

What kind of dance?

One of the questions asked of me as I set out on this project was "What kind of dance will you be proposing, ballet, contemporary or what?"

The answer is Modern Educational Dance. It is not lightly that the title of Laban's seminal work is adopted. According to the Compact Oxford English Dictionary (2007) 'modern' means "relating to the present or to recent times" or "characterized by or using the most up-to-date techniques or equipment".

Both these definitions fit well with what is being proposed here. It seems only

reasonable that the form of educational dance should relate to the present while reflecting the changes and developments that have occurred since Laban first proposed the term in 1948.

The modern educational dance being proposed here is a synthesis of the work of Laban in the 1940's through Redfern et al. to Smith-Autard in the 1980's and on to the present day. In essence it is educational dance as proposed in the NCCA Primary School Curriculum (1999). Tanham (2005) has examined the influence

of the Laban and Smith –Autard models on the curriculum's format and noted some aspects needing to be addressed.

While neither attributed nor referenced in documentation, the theoretical bases echoes Laban's educational framework. The educational framework is reduced to four motion factors - 'action, space, dynamics and relationship'. There is no evidence of Laban's thematic approach, his 'free dance' techniques or choric forms. The conceptual basis of the *art of dance in education midway model* - 'creating, performing, appreciating', is espoused however, the 'midway' approach - integrating educational and professional models, defined learning outcomes, planning frameworks and, importantly, resource-based teaching methodologies - are not utilised. (Tanham 2005, p.65)

The problem with the Smith Autard and Laban models is that they both require a level of skill on the part of the teacher which is not realistic in this country and is unlikely to become so. Given the time allocated to dance in colleges of education and the dearth of resources it is unlikely that the *midway model* will ever be fully realised in Irish primary schools. However, the three strand approach, Creating/Performing/Viewing, which may still be considered best practice, is in keeping with the NCCA primary school curriculum, and also accords with the tenets of Productive Pedagogy.

A Programme for Boys?

Any essentialist view of boys sets up a binary perception of them, ie. boy/girl, male/female which is not helpful for the purposes of this project. If we approach dance with a view to making a 'dance for boys' specific programme then this potentially creates further difficulties. Every approach will need to be held under this 'dance for boys' lens and judged for appropriateness. That is not what is being advocated here. The approach, methodologies or strategies should work just as well for girls with no adaptation required. This then raises the question of whether there is a need for a boys' dance programme at all. The answer appears to be no. A dance programme should be about dance and its elements.

Laban	Action	Effort/quality	Space	Time	Relationship
Primary School Curriculum (1999)	WHAT	HOW	WHERE	WHEN	WITH

Fig. 5.1 The elements of dance.

The above table shows the elements of dance as first delineated by Laban in 1948, which have been adopted by the Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) to describe educational dance in more user friendly terminology. Whether male of female the students need to be exploring the same elements.

Dance guidelines need to be broad, as every school, and every class within those schools will be a unique microcosm with its own set of dynamics, preconceptions and learning environment.

Can a generic approach to dance for boys be deveoped which will be capable of allowing for the varying contexts in which it might be used? It is highly unlikely that a scheme of work could be offered which would suit every school. An example of this is the lesson plans available on the Primary Curriculum Support Programme website. While they might suit some schools the lesson on sudden/sustained movement suggested for 3rd class which requires them to make an animal dance and then parade two by two is unlikely to have success in all schools.

It is in the presentation and methodology that sensitivity is required if boys are to be 'won over' to dance.

In planning some of the following factors would be worthy of consideration.

Masculinity

In 1969 Carroll and Lofthouse were offering suggestions which were rooted very much in a masculinity of the time.

Tough, rugged and strenuous activites are usually regarded as essential ingredients of work in physical education with men and boys. When boys crawl out of a session, bathed in perspiration, then the point is conceded by most men that the session has been a good one. (Carroll & Lofthouse 1969, p.14)

Much has changed in educational thinking since the above was written and so this is not the sort of approach being advocated in this paper.

Lehikoinen (2006) raises a similar issue with regard to the use of games like tag as a warm up and a means of getting rid of the energy which boys reputedly have in abundance. "Boys love such games" is the justifying premise, and on the first examination it would seem that any positive experiences that can be offered to boys within the dance class must be worth keeping. This, however, is based on a premise of compromise, a desire to pander to the participants for fear that if they are asked to work too hard, or in a way that isn't fun and high energy driven, then they will be lost to dance. To approach teaching boys in such a way from the outset is to place the teacher and dance in a position of weakness. The resultant watchfulness for signs of waning enthusiasm or interest can only be detrimental to dance in the long term. It's understandable but not a healthy approach. The approach needs to be more pro-active – what is the best possible way to get boys dancing so that the dance is good and their experience is positive and affirming? Certainly dance should be fun. It should be energetic, but only in the context of a full range of dynamics that would exist in any good dance lesson. It should also be gentle and calm, vigorous and elegant, and so on though the full gamut.

Homophobia

As stated in chapter three, homophobia is deeply entrenched in society generally and powerfully in the school culture. One of the characteristics of homophobic bullying is that it tends to be used to target individuals who are outside the general approved social group. A boy who attends dance classes outside of school hours might therefore be a focal point for such attention. If, however, dance were part of the general experience of boys then there is the possibility that dance could become more of a homosocial activity as is the case with most team sports.

Boys and sport

A strategy which has been employed successfully in the past is the use of games and athletics as source material for dance. The reasoning goes that if sports are acceptable to young boys then comparing dance to sport or making dances about, and incorporating movements from sports will also be acceptable. Not an unreasonable logic and although enjoyable dances may be created about sports, one can only wonder how many 'sports dances' can or should be composed over an eight year primary school cycle. Dance has traditionally been placed, some might say misplaced, within the physical education curriculum. As already stated, in the most recent revision of the Irish Primary School Curriculum (1999) dance remains within PE, while alluded to within the all the Visual Arts documents. This topic when raised in the research survey showed a good deal of ambivalence on the part of teachers and lecturers alike. While the role that dance occupies in the expressive and aesthetic development of all children seems generally accepted there is still no immediate likelihood of a change in its location in the curriculum. This is not necessarily a negative as long as the duality of dance's roles physical and aesthetic development are kept in mind.

Aesthetics and creativity.

The understanding of works of art in any depth is partly conditioned by knowledge of different kinds ... *knowledge how, knowledge of facts,* and *cognitive feelings for values.* (Reid 1989: p.17)

The 1985 Arts in Education report stated that a "...major aim of arts education is to provide students with an education in both making art (artistic education) and receiving art (aesthetic education). These are two complementary processes." (Curriculum & Examinations Board 1985, p.8)

A development of aesthetic awareness and creativity features highly in the 1999 primary curriculum documents also. What are the implications where boys are concerned?

The use of rich tasks, with their emphasis on collaborative problem solving, combined with the compose/perform/appreciate format proposed by Smith-Autard (2002) and recommended in the Irish physical education curriculum should make it possible for boys... "to develop an appreciation of movement and the use of the body as an instrument of expression and creativity" (Department of Education & Science 1999a, p.10) and "develop artistic and aesthetic understanding within and through movement" (Department of Education & Science 1999a, p.12)

Themes

I think the genesis of my vocabulary is sex-free. The bodies, personalities, and spirits of the people I work with influence the choreography more than gender. (Clarke 2005)

When approaching dance with boys it seems sensible and advisable that themes be as gender neutral as possible for two reasons. Firstly, themes that re-inforce a heteronormative agenda are questionable in light of the underlying Productive Pedagogy principle of recognizing and working with difference. Secondly, themes which might be perceived as feminine or 'girly' will potentially meet with resistance from those busy in the process of gender self-labelling, thus creating tensions and undermining the quality of the dance experience. There is fine line between acquiescing to preconceptions and a realistic approach, while remaining cognizant of the many discourses at play in male dance education. Each teacher will need to gauge how far and how quickly or slowly they can take their class. Accepting however, that masculinity is a construct, which may be redefined, there is hope that in small ways, progress can be made towards a definition of masculinity where dance is the most normal activity for boys.

Dance for boys needs to become ordinary. It is already extraordinary in the truest sense of the word. Dance is beyond the ordinary, beyond the frame of reference, the comfort zone of the average boy. The challenge for teachers is to bring it into the frame of reference and the comfort zone of all boys.

Teaching Approach

If the elements of dance are the same for boys as girls then what needs to be considered in the presentation of dance for boys?

Teacher Friendly

It seems evident from the data that teachers feel under-skilled or at least underresourced when it comes to dance and many would favour further training or the availability of resources. The choices as to how to alleviate this problem are:

- Training desirable but requires an investment of time and energy which may not be forthcoming.
- Resources a popular choice but the challenge is to make them such that they are not a crutch with a limited usage.
- Backup a website/forum where contact can be made with dance specialists – where ideas can be brainstormed and resulting mindmaps/ideas shared.
- Skilled peripatetic dance teachers least likely option due to financial and commitment issues.
- Combination of class and peripatetic teachers The use of dance specialists as advisors and support is an attractive option but again financially unlikely. This is an area worthy of study with a view to development in the future.

Methods

Let's dispel a myth about working with movement and dance. It is not an unstructured experience. Students enjoy solving very specific, challenging movement problems that require the utmost concentration and inspire a high level of personal expression. (Zakkai 1997, p.8)

What sort of teaching methods will provide a dance content which is at once non-threatening, based on sound dance principles and also sound pedagogically? The Irish curriculum recommends a mixture of "the direct-teaching approach, the guided-discovery approach and integrated approaches." (Dept. of Ed. & Science 1999a, p.42) The *midway model* Autard (2002) is based upon such a mix of instruction and guided discovery. Here the use of rich tasks, which call on pupils

to use problem solving, co-operative and creative skills in an atmosphere of supportiveness and collaboration, is of particular value.

What, How, Where, When, With – are the elements of dance as presented in the Irish Primary School PE Curriculum Using these key words as a starting point and following Smith-Autard's working method of Create/Perform/Appreciate the teacher has a clear starting point. The pupils need to be presented with a task which will be challenging and cause them to draw on collaborative and problem solving skills to develop their material. For a non-specialist dance teacher this process of developing material is potentially a major challenge.

It is very doubtful whether the average dance teacher will be able to compose elaborate dances without having studied the language of movement thoroughly. Moreover, it is desirable that children of higher age-groups should themselves invent their own dances. Dance taken as a part of art education in school cannot ignore the creative activity of the pupil in this fundamental art. (Laban 1963,p.50)

As stated above, the 'midway model', is unlikely to be used in its fullest form in this country. Ideally more in-depth dance education for teachers would improve matters but failing that what are the best options available? Teachers surveyed responded very favourably to the idea of increased availability of resources. The absence of resource based teaching methodologies identified by Tanham (2005) could be addressed by the use of some of the following.

- Board game in groups pupils take turns to use a counter on a board to select movements which have divided into categories shape, jumps/hops, walk/run, balance, swing, balance, gesture. A prompt sheet allows the teacher to help the pupils develop their initial movement beyond the initial instruction.
- Moving words pupils take a selection of action words (4 6) from a word bank and collaborate to combine them in a sequence.
- Dance dice 5 large format dice are rolled. 3 of the dice have movements on each of the 6 faces while 2 of them have movement qualitites.
 Pupils take these stimulii and collaborate to make phrases based upon them.

• Shape Cards – a sheet showing bodies in various shapes is given to each group. Their task is to choose a shape for themselves or their group and combine, move within, move between etc. these shapes.

(See Appendix E for sample uses of these resources)

Resources of this nature are useful in that they take the onus off the non-specialist teacher to generate dance content. Through the use of them there is the potential for both pupils and teachers alike to become more familiar with the mechanics of dance making. Abbs (1989) states that "in the teaching of the arts we need, with the right sense of tact and timing, to introduce the artistic grammar of expression, the tools, techniques and traditions of the art forms."(p.8) With this familiarity hopefully might come the confidence to apply the same strategies to making dances on themes drawn from a wider context, particularly with a view to integrating other curricular areas.

The resources option is being advocated here as it is open-ended long term with the potential for different results every time. The Arts in Education report (1985) noted that "this is not to argue that teachers should be provided with handy methodologies which can be applied in an unreflective way. On the contrary, approaches to the teaching of skills in the arts must be rooted in the *developed judgement* of the teacher." (p.8) This study would concur. The functional use of such resources is unlikely to advance beyond the combinational creativity identified by Boden (2001) but with sufficient questioning and prompting there is the potential for the process to advance towards more exploratory and perhaps even transformational creativity.

The lesson plans option offers similar support but the potential for teacher dependence is greater and the likelihood of creativity less. If dance is to become a long term integral part of boys' school experience then teachers need to become familiar and comfortable with the act of combining the ingredients of dance for their own purposes and not remain reliant on generic lessons which come from outside their context. What needs to be fostered is the teachers'

confidence in their own creativity while using inherited strategies and frameworks as an initial starting point.

Issues for Long Term implementation of dance in the curriculum.

There are a number of other issues which will potentially impact upon the full implementation of the dance strand of the curriculum.

- The culture of some boys' schools may be resistant to change in general and to the values underpinning the revised curriculum. The improvement of the status of dance in boys' schools presupposes a positive predisposition on the part of the teacher and the school they work in. These two factors along with ethos, facilities etc. will strongly influence the likelihood of dance development.
- Didactic pedagogy does not enable the full exploration of dance so teachers need to be comfortable with open ended activities where product is desirable but always in second place to process. What can be done to promote more active learning strategies in schools? More examples of rich tasks exemplars, shared successes etc. might be made available on a website which teachers could access as a resource and inspiration.
- Teachers have little training and there is a real possibility that if supplied with materials or exemplars that they will never develop the ability to move beyond these, exploring themes and ideas that arise within their teaching rather than always adopting ones from the outside. Who will provide the necessary long term stimulus? Summer and term time evening in-service courses can go some of the way towards achieving this but time and energy commitment is required from teachers already under pressure to fully implement other areas of the curriculum.
- The absence of professional models identified by Tanham (2005) is an issue which needs long term attention as there is at present no context within which boys may see themselves dancing.

Summary

It is over twenty years since Brinson (1985) and the The Curriculum and Examinations Board (1985) made observations and unequivocal recommendations with regard to the state of educational dance in Ireland. Yet there is still a dearth of training, resources and expertise in this area. There is a need for educational dance to be allocated greater time and resources if primary school children, regardless of gender are ever to have a consistently rich and valued experience of dance. The particular issue of boys and dance will be addressed implicitly if these improvements in the status of dance occur. Teachers feeling confident and enthusiastic about dance will create a context which will greatly further the 'normalising' of dance in the primary school, hopefully inculcating values and perceptions of a more democratic and open nature than are evident now.

In 1985 the Curriculum and Examinations Board declared their belief in the "intrinsic value of the arts as distinctive forms of knowing" (p.6) In 1994 Smith-Autard's *The Art of Dance in Education* and 1997 Zakkai's *Dance as a Way of Knowing* added their contributions to the case for dance as art. And yet so many children, boys in particular, continue to miss out on *knowing* - knowing the pleasure of dancing and knowing what it is dance has to offer as a way of responding to the world around them. It is my hope that this research can be one small step towards helping teachers allow boys to experience dance as a way of knowing themselves and the world around them in a unique way.

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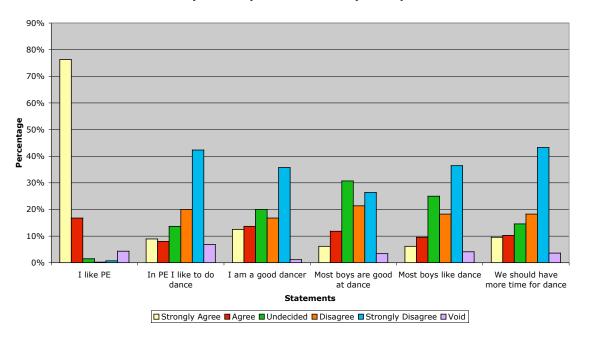
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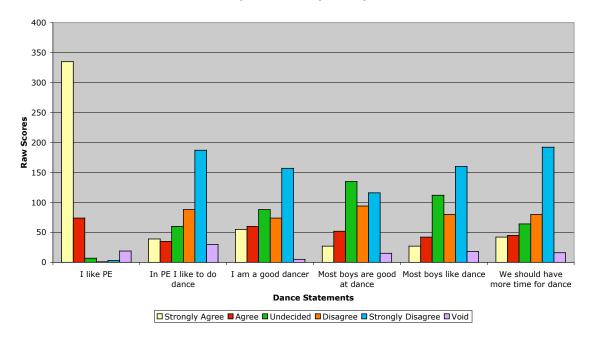
APPENDIX D

RESEARCH DATA

Boys 7 - 11 yrs. Attitudes % (n=439)



Boys Attitudes (n=439)



RAW SCORES BOYS 7 – 8 YEARS (N=59)							
	We should have more time for dance	Most boys like dance	Most boys are good at dance	I am a good dancer	In PE I like to do dance	l like PE	
Strongly Agree	5	2	4	9	6	48	
Agree	2	6	7	7	6	9	
Undecided	12	16	17	13	5	1	
Disagree	8	8	10	4	9	0	
Strongly Disagree	31	26	20	24	27	0	
Void	1	1	1	2	6	1	
•	59	59	59	59	59	59	

	RAW SCORES BOYS 9 YEARS (N=92)							
I like PE	In PE I like to do dance	I am a good dancer	Most boys are good at dance	Most boys like dance	We should have more time for dance			
70	12	14	11	6	12	Strongly Agree		
18	13	15	10	13	16	Agree		
0	16	20	29	28	8	Undecided		
0	12	16	20	14	15	Disagree		
0	38	27	19	29	37	Strongly Disagree		
4	1	0	3	2	4	Void		
92	92	92	92	92	92			

	RAW SCORES BOYS 10 YEARS (N= 89)							
I like PE	In PE I like to do dance	l am a good dancer	Most boys are good at dance	Most boys like dance	We should have more time for dance			
66	10	13	2	6	9	Strongly Agree		
15	9	15	18	13	12	Agree		
1	9	12	25	22	10	Undecided		
1	22	18	21	18	23	Disagree		
2	32	30	19	26	34	Strongly Disagree		
4	7	1	4	4	1	Void		
89	89	89	89	89	89			

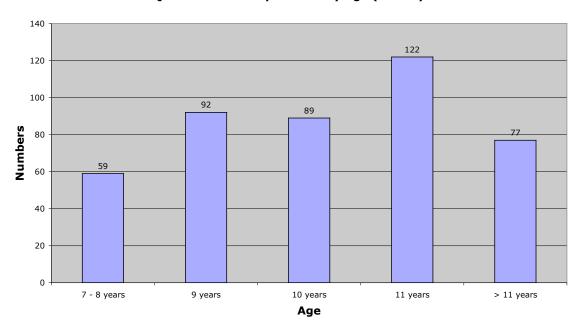
	R	AW SCORES	BOYS 11 Y	/EARS (N= 122	2)	
I like PE	In PE I like to do dance	l am a good dancer	Most boys are good at dance	Most boys like dance	We should have more time for dance	
89	5	9	8	9	4	Strongly Agree
22	4	16	8	7	10	Agree
4	20	26	36	25	20	Undecided
0	30	22	29	26	24	Disagree
0	52	47	35	49	60	Strongly Disagree
7	11	2	6	6	4	Void
122	122	122	122	122	122	

	RAW SCORES BOYS >11 YEARS (N= 77)							
l like PE	In PE I like to do dance	l am a good dancer	Most boys are good at dance	Most boys like dance	We should have more time for dance			
62	6	10	2	4	12	Strongly Agree		
10	3	7	9	3	5	Agree		
1	10	17	28	21	14	Undecided		
0	15	14	14	14	10	Disagree		
1	38	29	23	30	30	Strongly Disagree		
3	5	0	1	5	6	Void		
77	77	77	77	77	77			

	RAW SCORES BOYS TOTAL (N= 439)							
I like PE	In PE I like to do dance	l am a good dancer	Most boys are good at dance	Most boys like dance	We should have more time for dance			
335	39	55	27	27	42	Strongly Agree		
74	35	60	52	42	45	Agree		
7	60	88	135	112	64	Undecided		
1	88	74	94	80	80	Disagree		
3	187	157	116	160	192	Strongly Disagree		
19	30	5	15	18	16	Void		
439	439	439	439	439	439			

PERCENTAGES BOYS TOTAL (N= 439)							
	We should have more time for dance	Most boys like dance	Most boys are good at dance	l am a good dancer	In PE I like to do dance	l like PE	
Strongly Agree	9.56%	6.15%	6.15%	12.52%	8.88%	76.30%	
Agree	10.25%	9.56%	11.84%	13.67%	7.97%	16.80%	
Undecided	14.57%	25%	30.70%	20%	13.66%	1.50%	
Disagree	18.22%	18.22%	21.40%	16.80%	20%	0.22%	
Strongly Disagree	43.20%	36.44%	26.40%	35.76%	42.30%	0.68%	
Void	3.64%	4.10%	3.40%	1.13%	6.83%	4.32%	

Questionnaire Respondents by Age (n=439)



	RAW SCORES						
	TEACHERS -	FEMALE (n=	33) QUESTIO	NNAIRE 1-6			
Dance is an enjoyable activity which can be enjoyed by all	enjoyable Dance is a effectively activity which can be enjoy effectively covered in teacher enjoy effectively confortable comfortable teaching teac						
17	16	2	2	2	0	Strongly Agree	
13	14	2	14	11	9	Agree	
2	2	9	7	7	15	Undecided	
1	1	12	9	11	6	Disagree	
0	0	8	1	2	2	Strongly Disagree	

	RAW SCORES						
	TEACHERS -	FEMALE (n=	33) QUESTION	NAIRE 7 - 12			
Dance is an activity boys enjoy	Dance is an activity girls enjoy	Dance is a subject teachers feel equipped to teach	Dance is a subject teachers feel confident teaching	I would teach dance more often if I had more training	I would teach dance more often if I had a resources and materials		
4	14	0	1	13	11	Strongly Agree	
9	15	2	2	14	15	Agree	
15	4	8	8	5	3	Undecided	
4	0	21	20	1	4	Disagree	
1	0	2	2	0	0	Strongly Disagree	

	RAW SCORES								
TEACHERS	S - FEMALE (n=	33) QUESTIONNA	IRE 13 - 16						
Dance is better taught by the class teacher	Dance is better taught by a dance specialist	Dance belongs in the PE curriculum	Dance belongs in the primary school Visual Arts curriculum						
1	7	9		Strongly Agree					
7	5	20	10	Agree					
19	15	3	11	Undecided					
5	6	0	7	Disagree					
1	0	0	3	Strongly Disagree					

RAW SCORES							
	TEACHERS -	MALE (n=13	3) – QUESTIO	NNAIRE 1 - 6		J	
Dance is an enjoyable activity which can be enjoyed by all	Dance is something I enjoy	Dance is effectively covered in teacher training	effectively covered in teacher Dance is an activity I feel comfortable teaching tea				
2	1	0	0	0	0	Strongly Agree	
8	8	0	4	1	1	Agree	
2	1	8	0	3	5	Undecided	
1	2	1	5	6	3	Disagree	
0	1	4	3	3	4	Strongly Disagree	

RAW SCORES						
TE	EACHERS -	· MALE (n=1	3) – QUESTIC	NNAIRE 7	- 12	
Dance is an activity boys enjoy Dance is a subject teachers feel equipped to teach teaching Dance is a subject teachers feel confident teaching Dance is a subject teachers feel confident teaching I would teach dance more often if I had a resources and materials						
0	5	0	0	1	1	Strongly Agree
10	7	0	0	11	8	Agree
1	1	5	7	0	2	Undecided
1	0	7	4	1	2	Disagree
1	0	1	2	0	0	Strongly Disagree

TEACHERS -	MALE (n=13) -	QUESTIONNAI	RE 13 - 16	
Dance is better taught by the class teacher				
0	5	3	0	Strongly Agree
0	6	6	5	Agree
6	2	1	3	Undecided
5	0	3	3	Disagree
2	0	0	1	Strongly Disagree

PERCENTAGES						
	TEACHER	RS (n=46) – 0	QUESTIONNAI	RE 1-6		
Dance is an enjoyable activity which can be enjoyed by all	Dance is something I enjoy	Dance is effectively covered in teacher training	Dance is an activity I feel comfortable teaching.	Dance is a subject I feel confident teaching	Dance is a subject I teach well	
41.30%	37.00%	4.30%	4.30%	4.30%	11%	Strongly Agree
46%	48%	4.30%	39.10%	26%	22%	Agree
8.70%	6.50%	37%	15%	22.00%	43.40%	Undecided
4.30%	6.50%	28.20%	30.40%	37%	20.00%	Disagree
0%	2.20%	26%	8.70%	10.80%	13.04%	Strongly Disagree

7	TEACHERS	6 (n=46) – C	QUESTION	NAIRE 7 - 1	12	
Dance is an activity boys enjoy	Dance is an activity girls enjoy	Dance is a subject teachers feel equipped to teach	Dance is a subject teachers feel confident teaching	I would teach dance more often if I had more training	I would teach dance more often if I had a resources and materials	
8.70%	41.30%	0%	2.20%	30.40%	/h%	Strongly Agree
41.30%	48%	4.30%	4.30%	54.34%	50%	Agree
34.80%	10.80%	28.20%	32.60%	10.80%	10.80%	Undecided
10.80%	0%	60.80%	52.17%	4.30%	13.04%	Disagree
4.30%	0%	6.50%	8.70%	0%	0%	Strongly Disagree

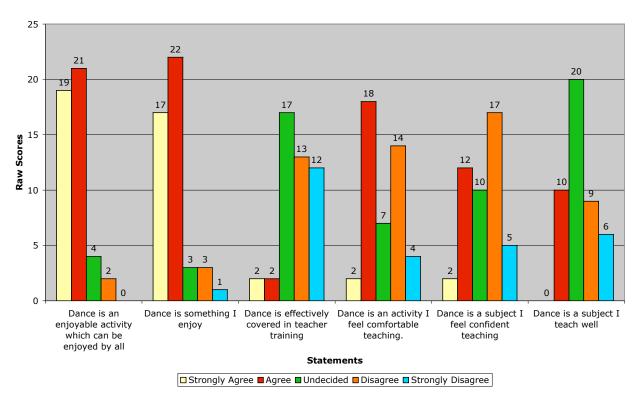
TEACHER	RS (n=46) – Q	UESTIONNA	IRE 13 - 17	
Dance is better taught by the class teacher				
2.20%	26%	26%	/ /11%	Strongly Agree
15%	24%	56.50%	32.60%	Agree
54.34%	37%	8.70%	30.40%	Undecided
22%	13.04%	6.50%	22%	Disagree
6.50%	0%	0%	8.70%	Strongly Disagree

	TEACHERS MALE AND FEMALE (N=46)							
MEAN SCORES Strongly Agree = 5 Agree = 4 Undecided = 3 Disagree = 2 Strongly Disagree = 1								
Dance is an enjoyable activity which can be enjoyed by all	Dance is something I enjoy	Dance is effectively covered in teacher training	Dance is an activity I feel comfortable teaching.	Dance is a subject I feel confident teaching	Dance is a subject I teach well			
4.239	4.109	2.326	2.935	2.761	2.696			

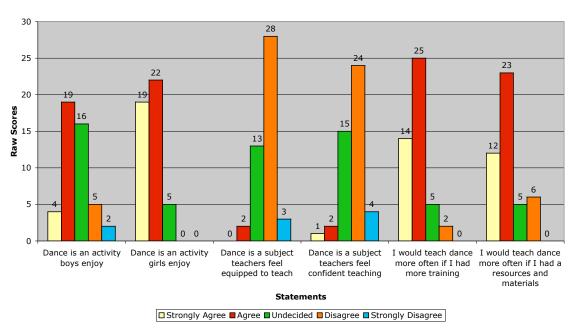
TEACHERS MALE AND FEMALE (N=46)								
MEAN SCOR	MEAN SCORES							
Strongl	Strongly Agree = 5 Agree = 4 Undecided = 3 Disagree = 2 Strongly Disagree = 1							
Dance is an activity boys enjoy	Dance is an activity girls enjoy	Dance is a subject teachers feel equipped to teach	Dance is a subject teachers feel confident teaching	I would teach dance more often if I had more training	often if I had			
3.565	4.304	2.304	2.391	4.109	3.891			

TEACHERS MALE AND FEMALE (N=46)								
	MEANS SCORES							
Strongly Agree = 5 Agree = 4 Undecided = 3 Disagree = 2 Strongly Disagree = 1								
Dance is better taught by the class teacher	Dance is better taught by a dance specialist	Dance belongs in the PE curriculum	Dance belongs in the primary school Visual Arts curriculum					
2.848	3.63	3.957	2.848					

Teachers Attitudes (n=46)



Teachers' Attitudes n= 46



Teachers Attitudes n= 46

