

A Study on the Path to Improve the Ability of Primary School Dance Teachers in Diversified Teaching Modes

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Abstract

The comprehensive ability of dance teachers includes solid professional skills, rich stage experience, advanced artistic aesthetics, and skilled teaching techniques. China attaches great importance to the cultivation of art education talents, and the construction of art and physical education teachers in primary and secondary schools is a long and arduous process. Primary school dance teachers have long been faced with problems such as talent shortage, outdated methods and vague goals. This study aims to explore the teaching methods of primary school dance teachers, and to understand the current status of dance teaching in China's basic education stage by consulting literature and interviewing dance teachers. Based on the survey results, strategies such as talent training, teaching material development, rational use of multimedia, and subject integration are proposed, with multiple teaching strategies as the research pathway, in the hope of providing effective assistance for the development of the professional teaching abilities of primary school dance teachers.

Keywords: Primary School Dance Teachers, Diversified Teaching Models, Teacher Capacity Improvement

Introduction

Teachers must have effective teaching methods in the teaching process. Traditional dance teaching usually adopts the method of "Oral and Hands-on Teaching"; that is, the teacher teaches the movements and the students imitate as much as possible. Therefore, dance teaching in my country has long been teacher-centered, thus ignoring the physical, mental and intellectual development of students in the process of learning dance. Professor Lv Yisheng (a Chinese dance educator) once mentioned in "Dance Education": "In the process of dance teaching, dance teachers are the executors of educational policies, implementers of teaching plans, disseminators of dance knowledge, trainers of dance skills, and organizers of teaching activities. He (or she) is always in a dominant position." In 2020, the Ministry of Education of China mentioned in the "Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era": "Aesthetic education is aesthetic

education, sentiment education, and spiritual education. It is also an education that enriches imagination and cultivates innovative consciousness. It can improve aesthetic literacy, cultivate sentiment, warm the soul, and stimulate innovation and creativity." In 2021, the introduction of the "double reduction" policy has reduced the pressure of learning for students in basic education, and they can have more time to increase physical exercise and be exposed to the influence of art education. In just a few years, from the proposal of aesthetic education to its full implementation, China's Ministry of Education has provided sufficient social and cultural resources in terms of curriculum standards, textbook management, teacher training, and improved facilities.

Students in primary school receive a general dance education and cannot copy the professional talent training model. Their main goal is to cultivate interest, aesthetics, creativity, and physical fitness. Therefore, in today's era of vigorously improving aesthetic education, dance teaching should also make more comprehensive and diversified creations and changes in teaching models. The quality of teaching can highlight the teaching ability of dance teachers, but the way to improve the teaching ability of dance teachers in China has always been unclear. In 2024, at the dance academic forum on the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the Beijing Dance Academy (BDA), many experts pointed out that the training model of China's professional colleges is not suitable for dance classes in ordinary primary and secondary schools. Xiao Xiangrong (Dean of the School of Art and Media, Beijing Normal University) also mentioned: "In the current basic dance education, the model of professional dance education is still continued, with teachers demonstrating and students imitating as the main learning method, focusing on the learning of movements and ignoring other factors outside of dance, and not forming a dance literacy learning method with ability, knowledge, and understanding as the elements, and three-way progress" (2016). Actually, in the past, the teaching mode of teachers in primary and secondary school classrooms will inevitably affect the teaching effect, and the over-specialization requirements are not suitable for ordinary primary and secondary school students. Today, dance education in my country has a lot of room for development for students learning dance. Not only can they choose performance, creation, and historical research, but also education talents are the focus of training. Dance education talents should have the ability to perform, create, teach and research, not just teachers who teach dance skills.

This study explores the teaching methods of primary school dance teachers, aiming to improve their teaching abilities and promote the professional development of art and physical education teachers in primary and secondary schools by proposing a diversified teaching model. Through this study, the researchers hope to make a small contribution to the team building of dance education talents in the future basic education stage.

Literature Review

Teachers' "teaching" and students' "learning" are important elements that promote the sustainable development of teaching. In a literature review study, Sööt & Viskus (2014) summarized that the challenges of dance teaching in the 21st century are mainly reflected in the role of teachers. Teachers should play a guiding role rather than just teaching dance steps. Dance is a means to achieve goals, which is consistent with China's general dance education. Through dance, reflective and proactive teachers, dancers or choreographers are cultivated to achieve the all-round development of people. In terms of teaching methods, they believe

that the openness of teacher-student dialogue and the integration of different art forms should be adopted. Taylor & Linsen (2019) also discussed the development of dance teacher professionalization on the topic of "Dance Teaching in the 21st Century". They believe that in order to cultivate dance teachers with professional qualities, professional courses for teachers should be offered in colleges and universities. The course is mainly to support the transition from dance practitioners in the work field to the new role of higher education teachers and to promote the further development of dance teachers already working in higher education. Student-centered "creative" dance strategies have a greater positive impact on classroom atmosphere than teacher-centered "imitation" strategies (Yetti et al., 2021). The inherent potential of dance education is to use the body to express feelings and emotions. It helps with the development of movement, cognition, and social aspects, which should be taught in the classroom (Cuellar-Moreno, 2016). Vietnamese scholars Hang, Hien, & Van Tinh, (2022) believe that creative thinking is very important for children in primary school, and students should learn through play in an entertaining way to stimulate and cultivate creative thinking. Thorn (2019) developed a teaching model for a primary school in New South Wales in her master's thesis, providing dance teachers with a practical tool to cultivate children's creativity. Many researchers (Mac Donald, 1991; Lewis & Scannell, 1995; Lobo, & Winsler, 2006; Lai Keun & Hunt, 2006; Dow, 2010; Payne & Costas, 2021) have mentioned that the application of "creative dance" in preschool and primary school dance classes will be of great help to children's dance learning. In some master's theses in China in recent years, scholars (Jia, 2020; Li, 2021; Zheng, 2021; Wei, 2022; Meng, 2024) tend to use "situational teaching method", "role transformation method", "Orff teaching method", "PBL teaching method" and so on in primary and secondary school dance classes and use application or empirical research to demonstrate the feasibility of these methods.

Li Yamei (2021) used the "situational teaching method" to conduct an intervention study in "Practical Research on the Situational Teaching Method in Dance Classroom Teaching in Lower Grades of Primary Schools". An experimental group and a control group were established. Through 16 courses, the three sections of basic dance training, comprehensive dance performance, and dance improvisation were taught, respectively. Finally, the dance effect of the first-grade experimental group of primary school students in the situation was much higher than that of the control group, allowing students to master dance knowledge in a pleasant classroom atmosphere. Li Yanan (2021) applied the "role transformation teaching method" to the dance classroom of secondary vocational education in "Research on the Application of Role Transformation Teaching Method in Secondary Vocational Dance Classroom". The teaching of Chinese folk dances was carried out by teachers and students exchanging roles to improve the teaching ability and knowledge mastery of secondary vocational students. Jia Yiqi (2020) stated in the article "The Application of Orff Teaching Method Localization in Primary School Dance Teaching" that the Orff music teaching method was applied to the Naxi dance (a Chinese ethnic minority dance) of primary school. Through empirical research, it ultimately achieved a dance model that returned to the original ecology and localization. It brings students the fun of Orff music teaching method in the coordination of dance and music and the unique experience of folk culture. Meng Han (2024) and Zheng Jianbin (2021) used the "PBL teaching method" in the dance courses of first and second grade primary school and junior high school. PBL (Problem Based Learning) teaching method is a teaching method that focuses on problems, takes students as the main body, and conducts exploratory learning under the guidance of teachers. Teachers set learning content in

problems, and students conduct exploratory learning in a cooperative learning way in the context. Finally, they cooperate to solve problems and develop problem-solving skills through knowledge integration. This is different from traditional dance teaching methods. It not only cultivates students' comprehensive abilities and changes students' learning motivation but also improves the professional quality and teaching methods of dance teachers.

Dance is a practical performing arts subject, whether it involves the theoretical interpretation of teaching methods or the application of these methods in practical classes. Students in primary and secondary schools should develop their comprehensive artistic qualities and combine theory with practice. Teachers are familiar with and skilled in using effective teaching strategies and methods, so that students can experience a pleasant and practical classroom atmosphere during the process of learning dance.

Methods

This study reviewed and sorted out relevant research on dance teaching methods both domestically and internationally, and initially understood the current research status of dance teaching methods at these contexts. Secondly, the researchers conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with front-line teachers regarding their background, teaching experience, methods, etc., and learned about the dance teachers' experience and views in their current teaching work. Semi-structured interviews are a flexible and open research method. Their advantage is that they give investigators autonomy to explore relevant ideas that may arise during the interview process, which can further enhance the understanding of the research object being evaluated (Adeoye-Olatunde, & Olenik, 2021). This study recruited five teachers who are teaching primary school students dance. They came from different cities in China and had more than ten years of teaching experience. The main dance subjects they taught were Chinese classical dance, ethnic folk dance, children's dance creation, and street dance. The interviews mainly revolved around their teaching methods and content. The online interviews were conducted through the Tencent conference program, and each session limited to 20 minutes. The interview content was recorded and transcribed into a manuscript. Finally, the researcher screened the interview content and identified three themes that were beneficial to this study. Thematic analysis is regarded as a fundamental method of qualitative analysis. Its advantage is that it is flexible and suitable for exploring the subjective experience and meaning construction of respondents (Braun, & Clarke, 2006).

Results

In the interview data, three themes stand out: "Dance teaching methods", "Teachers' teaching ability", and "Dilemmas in dance teaching".

Theme 1: Teaching Methods of Dance

Dance, as a stage performing art, conveys content through the body. As mentioned above, the commonly used teaching method is "oral and hands-on teaching". In recent years, learning dance has become one of the necessary skills in the basic education. There are more and more learners who start with interest, shape their bodies, and specialize in dance. Dance teachers have also changed their teaching methods:

"In my opinion, there is no child who doesn't love dancing, unless the child doesn't even enter my classroom. As long as he enters my classroom, I can make him

love dancing. When facing an unconfident child, I will encourage him to follow his interests instead of just teaching him movements." F1

"I'll incorporate small games into the class. For example, if there is a story to introduce, I'll make up a small story in advance and then guide them into this scene." F2

"During the teaching process, I'll introduce some hot topics in society. Including popular movies, songs, and dramas. This allows students to create." F3

When talking about the teaching methods used in dance courses, the aforementioned teachers said that F1 focused on students' thinking training (Thinking-Heart-Body) and was good at using encouragement, guidance, and inspiration to teach. She concentrated on cultivating students' independence and self-confidence. F2 employed situational teaching. Through story introductions and role-playing, she stimulated students' imagination and creativity and guided students aged 7 to 9 to create simple creations, such as designing dance shapes. Students in older age groups focused on developing expressiveness. F3 believed that teaching was not only about imparting skills but also about stimulating students' creativity and interest. She excelled at creating a relaxed and pleasant learning atmosphere through social hot topics and gamification teaching.

Theme 2: Teachers' Teaching Ability

The training of primary and secondary school art teachers has always been a topic of focus. Dance teachers are technically talented individuals. In my 17 years of learning and working experience, it has been found that ordinary primary and secondary schools (including off-campus training institutions) have long been short of teachers and have not paid enough attention to them. Students in remote rural areas find it even more difficult to access art education. Dance teachers in primary and secondary schools, especially in underdeveloped areas, are generally music teachers, physical education teachers, and even teachers of Chinese and other courses. Dance classes on campus are often optional, and students can choose whether to participate. They are typically used as a program for literary and artistic performances, and dance teachers are temporarily hired to choreograph these events. The lack of dance courses and dance teachers means that students can only pursue their interests and hobbies outside of school. This has hindered the professional development of teachers:

"In recent years, the quality of off-campus institutions has been uneven, and teachers with superb professional skills often cannot effectively. They only look at the final results and do not consider the students' individual situation for effective training." F4

"I hope that all basic education teachers will continue to learn. Whether it is teaching methods or aesthetics, the comprehensive quality and ability of teachers must be improved. The people we should pay the most respect to are basic dance educators because they are the core of the development of the dance industry." F5

A dance teacher and head of a training institution from Taiyuan, Shanxi (F4) shared her more than twelve years of dance teaching experience and ten years of entrepreneurial experience, hoping that national policies would pay more attention to dance education,

increase the employment rate of dance teachers, and promote the development of the dance industry. Another teacher who has been engaged in children's dance teaching for a long time (F5) called on dance teachers in the basic education stage to continuously improve their comprehensive quality and teaching ability. She is full of expectations for dance teaching in China's basic education stage in the future, emphasizes the importance of continuous learning, and believes that dance teachers are an important force in promoting the popularization and development of Chinese dance and should receive more respect and support.

Theme 3: Dilemma in Dance Teaching

Yang Min (2014) once said that China's art education is usually based on music and art, and only a few primary and secondary schools have opened dance courses. The main reason is that the general environment of exam-oriented education has made dance a utilitarian plus-point project. Dance has long been a subsidiary subject with a small number of participants, so it is difficult to achieve full popularization. The lack of attention to dance courses not only affects the professional development of teachers and the survival of dance training institutions but also manifests itself in the lack of systematic teaching materials:

"Parents in my institution do not value dance and cannot commit to it for a long time. After one or two years of study, they will allow their children concentrate on learning academic subjects." F3

"We have to cater to the needs of parents. They often make unrealistic comparisons on the Internet and require their children to reach the level in the video without considering the actual situation." F4

"The extended classes in kindergartens and numerous dance institutions will affect our student enrollment. Often, management is a problem and it is difficult to achieve comprehensive development." F2

"Because the class hours are too few and the students' personal situations are vary, I want to strengthen the training, but there is no suitable teaching material, so I can only piece it together." F1

From the interviews with teachers or institutional entrepreneurs, the researchers learned that even though the country vigorously promotes aesthetic education, the lowering of the threshold for learning dance has made the market chaotic. The survival of educational institutions, the ability of teachers, and the applicability of teaching materials are all concerns for teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

"Multi-dimensional teaching" is an optimized combination of modern teaching instruments and equipment (such as cameras, video recorders, projectors, slides, recorders, etc.) and various teaching methods, so that students' vision, hearing, touch, kinesthetic sense and other proprioceptive organs can be fully mobilized, thereby improving their efficiency in receiving and transmitting information. It is conducive to achieving teaching goals. In the teaching process, it combines the actual situation and makes full use of various equipment to enrich teaching methods and better achieve teaching results (Liu, 2015). Whether dance

teaching adopts imitation method, personal teaching method, repetition method or experience method, in order to comprehensively improve teachers' teaching ability, modern technology should be applied to the classroom. This study learned from interviews with several dance teachers that the dance teaching model is no longer confined to the traditional method. The implementation of the multi-dimensional teaching model requires dance teachers to constantly think and improve in their career paths. The improvement of dance teachers' abilities is not limited to professional skills. In order to promote professional development, it is necessary to find effective ways in the current difficulties. The researchers put forward the following corresponding countermeasures to improve the teaching ability of dance teachers for reference:

Adjust the Talent Training Program

Nowadays, dance education in China has a lot of room for development for students who study dance. Not only can they choose performance, creation, and historical research, but also education talents can choose employment directions. Dance education talents should have the ability to perform, create, teach and research, not just teachers who teach dance skills. In the subject settings of colleges and universities in the past ten years, there is finally a dance education major headed by BDA. At the same time, more than a dozen comprehensive colleges and universities such as Nanjing University of the Arts, Northwest Normal University, Wenzhou University, Nanning Normal University, and Chengdu Normal University have also successively opened dance education majors. Finally, this provides a platform for the training of professional teachers in dance education and allows students who choose to study dance to have a career direction in education. However, since the establishment of this discipline has only been ten years, the training of dance teachers in the basic education stage is not yet sufficient. The dance major in China's higher education should be adjusted according to the direction of talent training. Primary and secondary schools are the most important stage for shaping students' basic skills, so dance education professionals should focus on the future primary and secondary school dance teaching system. The requirements for primary and secondary school dance teachers are different from those for teachers who teach professional dancers. In addition to mastering the required professional skills, they must also accumulate certain knowledge in pedagogy, psychology, physiology, etc.

Establish Systematic Teaching Materials

Dance teaching materials should be developed in stages according to the age, psychology and physical development of students. There are many types of dance, and the training of basic skills, the study of folk dance, and the development of dance creation should be established separately. China's systematic dance teaching materials are ultimately BDA's professional teaching materials, and only Lv's "Quality Education Dance" course is relatively practical for ordinary dance teaching. The development of a discipline is inseparable from policy support, abundant talents and stable teaching materials. The teaching materials for basic dance instruction on the market today are of varying quality, and the only dance teaching material that can be included in China's compulsory education curriculum is "Art·Dance" edited by dance educator XU Rui in 2024. Due to the emergence of the "new three subjects" (dance, drama, and film and television), dance finally has a unified set of dance teaching material like music and art. However, this is far from enough. This is only for grades 8 to 9, and the teaching materials for grades 1 to 7 are still to be developed. Dance teaching materials are important raw materials for promoting the implementation of teaching

methods. Under the guidance of teaching materials, teachers can implement a variety of teaching methods with high quality, enabling them to truly teach students in accordance with their aptitude. There are many dance books from preschool to higher education, but it is difficult to choose targeted teaching materials for primary and secondary schools. Dance is a visual and auditory performing art. Multimedia videos and audios in dance books can make them more enjoyable and convenient. Only through intuitive practice can we test whether the teaching materials are practical.

Reasonable Use of Multimedia Technology

We are in the era of media integration. Dance media integration is the deep integration of dance art with various media forms (such as video, live broadcast, social media, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc.). Through communication and interaction, new modes of dance creation, performance, communication, experience and teaching are created. The intervention of multimedia has made dance no longer an unfathomable art. People can learn about dance and even learn independently through online platforms such as TikTok, Red Book, and YouTube. Dance teachers can also collect comprehensive teaching content and cultural background anytime and anywhere when teaching. Teachers show dance videos and animations in class, which can make students feel the specific form of a certain dance more intuitively; online dance courses combined with AI movement correction can improve students' learning efficiency; teachers can play current TV shows or movies about dance while teaching, such as "Dance Millennium" and "Street Dance of China", so that students can learn common sense and theoretical knowledge of dance in a relaxed environment.

Flexible Establishment of Interdisciplinary Integration

Interdisciplinary curriculum design is a concrete manifestation of the integration of dance and pedagogy. Integrating dance into mathematics can be expressed as representing geometric figures or numbers through body language; combining dance with language can be expressed as piecing together Chinese characters through body language; integrating dance with natural sciences can inspire students to express plants and animals with body language; integrating dance with history can be achieved through teachers telling historical events and watching related dance works. Interdisciplinary integration is an important form of breaking traditional dance teaching. It is an innovative expression of dance art. In addition to promoting the development of dance art, it can also promote academic research. The interdisciplinary integration of dance teaching can enable primary school students to establish figurative dance thinking within the existing knowledge scope, which helps to develop students' creativity and imagination. The interdisciplinary integration of dance is not just the superposition of technology, but also inspires new possibilities through cross-domain dialogue, making dance a "dynamic medium" connecting science, the humanities and society, which is of great help to the cultivation of students and the professional ability of teachers.

In summary, this study proposes ways to help improve teachers' teaching abilities from the aspects of talent cultivation, teaching materials, integrated media, and subject integration in dance education, hoping to provide help for the current backward teaching methods and limited dance teachers' abilities. The development of dance education will surely flourish under the policy of the "New Curriculum Standards", and the development of dance in the basic education stage must have teachers who can take on the task. Based on the literature and practical experience of previous years, we have been able to find some problems and are on the road to improvement. This study has theoretical reference value for aesthetic

education and provides selective teaching methods for dance. For future research on dance education in primary and secondary schools, the researchers believe that while improving the teaching model of teachers, dance curriculum setting, teaching material design, and development methods are also worthy of further discussion.

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