

Extending the Career Path of Dance Professionals: Type and Process of Dance Curation, and Practice

Hye-Youn Park*

(Seoul National University, Korea)

The purpose of this research is to explore the types and processes of dance curation, which is a job of dance curator, as a way to expand career path as a dance expert, and to establish a practical basis for the professionalization of dance curator. For this purpose, theoretical and academic discussions on curation in dance and other fields, and various practices of current curation were conducted. First, types of dance curation are classified into ‘docent type, educator type and creative type’. Second, preparation process of dance curation can be structured 8 steps model, ‘selecting, researching, focusing, sorting, organizing, performing and evaluating’. Third, the practice of dance curation is curation centered on the ‘2017 PADAF(Play Act Dance Art-Tech Film Festival)’ held in Seoul, Korea. It was conducted in the form of ‘the docent type’ and was structured in eight steps. Based on this research, I suggest the activation of theoretical and empirical research on dance curator and dance curation, the diversification and systematization of training for dance curator.

Key words: dance professional, dance education, dance curator, dance curation

Introduction

Recently, universities are making great changes. The evaluation of each major is centered on the employment rate, and there is a situation in which the departments whose employment rate is low due to restructuring are closed down. The main target of restructuring is ‘humanities and arts’. Those who have a long history and tradition are losing ground in accordance with the economic logic, despite being a basic discipline exploring human beings and culture. This is not the only

* chumgun82@hanmail.net

situation in Korea. The University of Wisconsin, a prestigious university in the Midwest, announced that it would abolish cultural and arts subjects including humanities, and give full support to subjects and departments that will help with employment(Washington Post, March 21, 2018). It is reported that this situation is depriving of the opportunity to learn essential liberal arts courses and students strongly oppose them. Universities around the world have assessed the importance of their majors, centering on their social utility, and are thus determined to determine their existence. Among them, this phenomenon is remarkable in the major of dance in Korea. There are a lot of universities, such as the national university in local which has a long history, and the private university in the Seoul metropolitan area. There is a problem of eliminating the major because of the economic logic and efficiency in the university, but it can't be avoided. In the field of arts, including the dance department, it is time to take more serious concerns about creating jobs that can contribute to society.

So far, it has been very limited if we look at the path of experts that dancers can enter. In the dance department of university, the focus is on developing dancers and choreographers. Only a handful of dance graduates who graduate from college will enter this pathway, and many of them also wander after retirement(Bennett & Bridgstock, 2015; Jeffri & Throsby, 2006). The path and form of dance professionals are very limited. And there are other routes related to dance, such as dancers and fitness leaders, arts managers who are responsible for planning and marketing, and specialists such as makeup, costumes, and stage production specialists, but these are only a few. Most dancers and graduates are often in a position to choose other courses that are not related to dance or to give up their careers(Jang & Park & Choi, 2018)

Meanwhile, recently social interest in arts and culture is increasing. The increase in leisure time and income led to their' composure of time and economy, and people became interested in ways to improve the quality of life naturally. Various cultural arts including sports are attracting attention. In particular, art has been widely seen as something for the specific people in the past, but the culture of learning and enjoying the arts has been established(Park, 2017). Especially, in Korea recently, various programs related to dance are organized through the media, so that the masses who are naturally interested in dance are increasing.

But for the masses, dance is still far away. Dance performances of various genres around the world are small and large, but the public is vague about what performances to choose and what elements to enjoy in the flood of these performances. Also, because the majority of performances are at a high level compared to the public eye level, it is plausible that the performances do not lead to continuous enjoyment but stop at a short-sighted viewing. Especially in Korea, because there is less chance of dance education in school education, it is very difficult to understand the work because of lack of background in the whole dance, and it is very difficult to appreciate enough.

It is a time when it is urgently necessary to nurture experts to select, combine, and make the public feel close to dance in a variety of dance contents, including performances, exhibitions, broadcasts, and books.

Among them, ‘dance curation’ and ‘dance curators’ who do this work are attracting attention. The transition to the information-oriented age has increased demand for people who work and create new meaning and value by sorting and combining information in the flood-like information (Kim & Han, 2017). In this context, dance curation and curator are acknowledged for their importance, and the training for dance curator qualification has also appeared, and social practice is taking place through various paths. There is also theoretical work to conceptualize dance curation in academic terms (Kim & Han, 2017). Of course, only a few years after the serious research has been completed, the number and subject of the research have been limited (Kim & Kim, 2016; Sin & Ryu, 2017). Still, discussion and sharing of dance curation is absolutely lacking. In order to expand the career path of dance professionals, it is necessary to discuss more about dance curation in order for dance curator to be socially established. In particular, it is necessary to search for the type of dance curation and the process for preparing it based on the concept of dance curation so far. In order to practice dance curation in practice, it is important to clarify areas that can be active and to provide systematic guidelines for implementing them. If we share practical examples based on this, it will be possible to form a consensus on the possibility of realization by understanding of the job as a dance curator and providing a systematic framework.

Therefore, in this study, I explore the types and processes of dance curation, which is the job of dance curator as one of the ways to expand career path as a dance expert, and share the practice cases. It will help establish a practical basis for the professionalization of dance curator, and which is ultimate purpose of this study.

Dance Curation: the definition and content of task

Recently, social interest and demands on culture and art are increasing. Especially in Korea, since the enactment of the Act on the Promotion of Culture and Arts Education, opportunities for school dance education and life dance education have been expanded for the general public, and dance culture has been introduced through various media (Park, 2017). This interest is not limited to the contents of performances but is expanded to various contents such as exhibition, education, photography, video, books and so on. Therefore, there is an increasing need for curation that selects high quality contents and creates new types of content in accordance with the public's eye level in the explosive contents.

The definition of dancing curation can be seen through the study of conceptualization of dance curation. Kim & Han(2017, p501) defines dance curation as 'selecting and combining high quality contents related to dance to create new meaning and value'. Although it is possible to select and combine existing contents according to a specific object and purpose, it can be said that it is a very creative task to create new meaning by drawing a completely new form and contents. It is also necessary to pay attention to various 'forms of content related to dance' here. Dance-related content includes all kinds of intangible artifacts that can be processed into dance material such as exhibition, education, photography, video, books, forum, etc.,

So what is the main content of the dance curation task? In other words, what roles and functions can dance curation play? Kim & Han (2017, p501) presents six specific details as follows.

- ① Introduction to dance works, context understanding, theme creation and meaning
- ② Applying episodes that can be familiar with dance and presenting various perspectives
- ③ Presenting new contents that reorganize creative information curation, organization, dance knowledge and related information
- ④ Effective communication to help understanding at eye level of the public
- ⑤ Public-friendly introduction of dance person based on artistic and human understanding of dance group and dancer
- ⑥ Simplified experiential organization by following movements together(mime, posture, etc.)

In sum, it can be seen that the above contents include diverse tasks to interpret, select, organize and present content creatively in order to enhance understanding of cultural contents, such as dance. The curation in museums and museums has tended to be limited to introducing works and performances(George, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2016). However, it will be important for dance curation to be more comprehensive in terms of planning, guiding, educating, and researching. It is also necessary to conceptualize the type of dance curation theoretically for a clearer understanding and expanding activity area of dance curation.

The Type of Dance Curation: the docent, educator, creator type

What are the types of dance curation? After reviewing the general theoretical and academic discussions about curation in other fields including dance, and the current practice of various curation and the reality, I can structure the type of dance curation as follows.

The Docent Type

The docent type in dance curation(DTDC) means to introduce the information and knowledge about writers, characters, costumes, music, and episodes related dance content before, during and after appreciation or experience using language, and nonverbal means to help the public understand dance contents(performances, exhibitions, photographs, videos, books).

The DTDC seems to be similar to the 'docent', but there is a difference. Originally a docent is a term derived from the Latin 'docere', which is a guide receiving regular education and having some knowledge(McCoy, 1989). It helps someone to understand the exhibits by providing explanations to exhibitors and artists in museums and art museums. DTDC have expanded beyond its original meaning in dimension of goal, content, and method. In dimension of goal, if the existing docent is limited to the content of exhibition, DTDC differs not only from limited contents such as performances and exhibitions, but also from diverse contents such as photographs, videos, and books. Also, in dimension of content, if the existing docent concentrates on the superficial and public knowledge about exhibits and writers, DTDC provides various interesting and inexplicable information such as episodes and philosophy. Finally, in the dimension of method, if the existing docent introduces the information by the linguistic means, mainly docent's explanation, DTDC provides diverse and stereoscopic information by using various visual and auditory media.

The Educator Type

The educator type in dance curation(ETDC) means to organize and implement various experiential activities focusing on core context related dance content before, during and after appreciation or experience using language, and nonverbal means to help the public understand dance contents(performances, exhibitions, photographs, videos, books).

ETDC is similar to a kind of 'teaching artists' in a wide range. It has a common point in terms of understanding the arts, especially in planning and conducting the related learning activities to help in-depth understanding of dance contents. However, if we look closely at the goal, there are differences in that there are many cases in which teaching artists seek understanding of dance contents but improve dance performance skill. In addition, teaching artists seek to understand the contents of dance performances mainly, but ETDC concentrates various dance contents such as exhibitions, photographs, videos, and books. Lastly, while teaching artists focus on dance language used in dance works, especially dance skills, ETDC aims to understand and sympathize with dance contents, various contexts related it can be the content of curation. Especially, if the educator thinks that it is the key part to understand the dance contents, various contexts related to contents such as theme, material, choreography, production method, character, episode can be main contents of curation.

The Creator Type

The creator type in dance curation(CTDC) means to design and develop dance contents itself (performances, exhibitions, photographs, videos, books) from a creative and convergent point of view. CTDC and ETDU also share common points in creating new value based on curator's creative viewpoints in dance contents, but CTDC is based on observing and introspecting dance contents and creating new dance contents itself.

CTDC seems to be similar to the ‘dance planner’, but there is a difference. In the dimension of goal, dance planner mainly concentrates on the designing and production of dance performances. Of course, although dance planner have recently planned exhibitions centering on specific topics, this is only a small number. CTDC also plans unique performances that have not existed before, but it differs in that it plans and produces a variety of contents such as books, forums, and videos.

The Process of Dance Curation: 8 steps model

What is the process of systematic dance curation? How can we structure the preparation process of dance curation, which can be applied to all types of dance curation? It is necessary to systematize the dance curation process in order to gain recognition of its professionalism and to expand social influence. Based on analysis of the definition, task characteristics, types of dance curation, and insight into the systematic and reflective design process in the field of instruction and design(Dick & Carey, 2005), the process of dance curation is divided into 8 steps.

Table 1. *The Process of Dance Curation: 8 steps*

| order | step | explanation |
|-------|-------------|--|
| 1 | Selecting | choosing the type of curation(docent, educator, creator), and the form & object of curation(performances, exhibitions, photographs, videos, books) |
| 2 | Researching | collecting various and detailed contents about the object of curation(writers, groups, people, history, music, places, episodes, etc.) |
| 3 | Focusing | concentrating the keywords as the central theme of curation, considering overall context and details of contents |
| 4 | Sorting | selecting, combining, and editing the key keywords picked from the various data discovered |
| 5 | Organizing | composing of table of contents, detailed contents and related activities for curation |

| order | step | explanation |
|-------|---------------|---|
| 6 | Materializing | maximizing the use of various audiovisual materials(PPT, photo, and video) for effectively conveying the contents of curation |
| 7 | Performing | acting of practicing curation(guidance, education, performance) to the audience or the public |
| 8 | Evaluating | reflecting the entire process of curation by considering its own or others' perspectives, and critically reviewing and revising and implements them |

Step 1: Selecting

Selecting refers to choosing the type of curation, the form and object of the contents. In this case, it is effective and efficient to consider the situation factors such as crowd, area, and place. For example, this curation is aimed at ordinary adults. Considering the fact that the dance photo exhibition has recently been held in our region, it will be possible to proceed with the dance photo which was submitted to the exhibition, as DTDC.

Step 2: Researching

Researching refers to collecting information from a variety of perspectives on related contents such as writers, groups, people, history, music, places, episodes, etc., about the object of curation. For example, we will examine various related contents such as writers, subjects, characters, and related episodes of photo exhibition that are the object of curation.

Step 3: Focusing

Focusing refers to picking the keyword(one or two) as the central theme of curation, considering overall context and details of curation objects identified through the process of researching. For example, if a dance photo exhibition captures a meaningful moment in life by using dance movement called 'jump', we can perform curation with the keyword 'jump, life, and happiness'. And if each work is a reflection of the life and the world of the artist, a deep story about the artist centered on the keywords 'artist and work' may become the main content of curation.

Step 4: Sorting

Sorting refers to selecting, combining, and editing the key keywords picked from the various data discovered during the researching process or through a more detailed search process. For example, if you chose 'jump, life, and happiness' as the keyword of dance photography exhibition curation, you can search for and deeply explore the intention of the work and the artist, and the meaning of the jump.

Step 5: Organizing

Organizing refers to composing of table of contents, detailed contents and related activities for curation. For example, in the photo exhibition above, table of contents are concretely conceived with a focus on 'the moments of life', 'jumps and moments of life', 'jumping, life and happiness'. And Scripts can be written to explain this in a linguistic way.

Step 6: Materializing

Materializing refers to maximizing the use of various audiovisual materials such as PPT, photo, and video for effectively conveying the contents of curation. For example, you can use PPT for curation of photo exhibition above. At this time, in order to explain the intention of common jump motion, it is possible to include a short article containing philosophy about life or an interview video clip of the artist.

Step 7: Performing

Performing refers to acting of practicing curation such as guidance, education, performance to the audience or the public. For example, if you decided to perform a docent-type curation in the photo exhibition above, you could curate the contents prepared before or after the appreciation for visitors to the photo exhibition or pre-registered visitors.

Step 8: Evaluating

Evaluating refers to reflecting the entire process of curation by considering its own or others' perspectives, and critically reviewing and revising and implements them. For example, when considering the participants of curation, it is necessary to determine whether the selection of photo exhibition as a curation object was effective, and whether the content of curation was properly structured in terms of quantity and level. It can be complemented by the feedback of the self.

The Practice of Dance Curation: the docent type, 2017 PADAF

In this section, I try to confirm the possibility of a career as a dance curator by sharing practical examples based on the type and process of dance curation explored above. This case is a curation of 2017 PADAF(Play Act Dance Art-Tech Film Festival) held in Seoul, Korea, in the form of DTDC. The detailed process of preparing the curation is as follows.

Step <Selecting>: Recently interest in festival culture has been increasing, so we decided to

proceed curation around festival in dance contents. Particularly in the field of the arts, considering the situation in which a lot of mixed performances are being carried out across the field, we selected '2017 PADAF(Play Act Dance Art-Festival)' as the subject of curation, which is a performing arts festival that collaborates with various fields such as film, drama, music, fashion, fine arts, photo, video, and so on. Considering the context that the participants of the festival are general people might be various age groups and most of them would be lacking of prior knowledge and experience about dance, we decided to proceed with the DTDC.

Step <Searching & Focusing>: We conducted a diverse exploration of the overall contents of 2017 PADAF, such as the history, the intention, the participating organizations, and each piece of work of the festival. This festival, which started in 2011 and celebrated its 7th anniversary this year, has been performing a fusion performance to experiment with various art genres. It is judged that this part is the key to understand this festival as a whole. Therefore, we selected 'fusion performing arts' as a keyword.

Step <Sorting & Organizing>: We searched for more detailed information about selected topics focusing on selected keywords, 'fusion performing arts', and selected and combined contents. Also, the table of contents '1. The meaning and content of the fusion performing arts, 2. The value of the fusion performing arts, 3. History and composition of the fusion performing arts festival, 2017 PADAF, 4. The appreciation of the fusion performing arts'. In addition, the specific contents of curation were narratively written.

Step <Materializing>: In order to maximize the transmission of the contents of the curation, we used audiovisual materials such as photographs and images. Especially, in describing the meaning, content, and value of the fusion performing arts, PPT was composed mainly on photographs that symbolize text rather than text - based texts, and added only key phrases. In addition, in introducing the history and composition of the 2017 PADAF, the key images of performances that have been performed for the past seven years have been edited and inserted into the video clip.

Step <Performing>: This festival consisted of symposiums, workshops and performances, thos curation focused especially those who came to see the performances. In the case of DTDC, it can be done before, during and after the performance, and both inside and outside the performance hall. In this case, it was done 'before' the performance and 'outside' the performance hall. It was performed briefly in 4 minutes before each performance, about 5 minutes per one time, and it was done in the lobby space in front of the performance hall. Especially, we tried to use the stand-type CRT and in-ear microphones to effectively carry out the contents of curation.

Step <Evaluating>: After all the curations have been completed, we systematically evaluated the subjects of curation, content, composition, transmission, and etc., through taken video, feedback from

the officials, and discussion among curators. Considering the reflection of self and the opinions of others, the evaluation was made in order to find the supplementary items and improvement plans for the next curation.

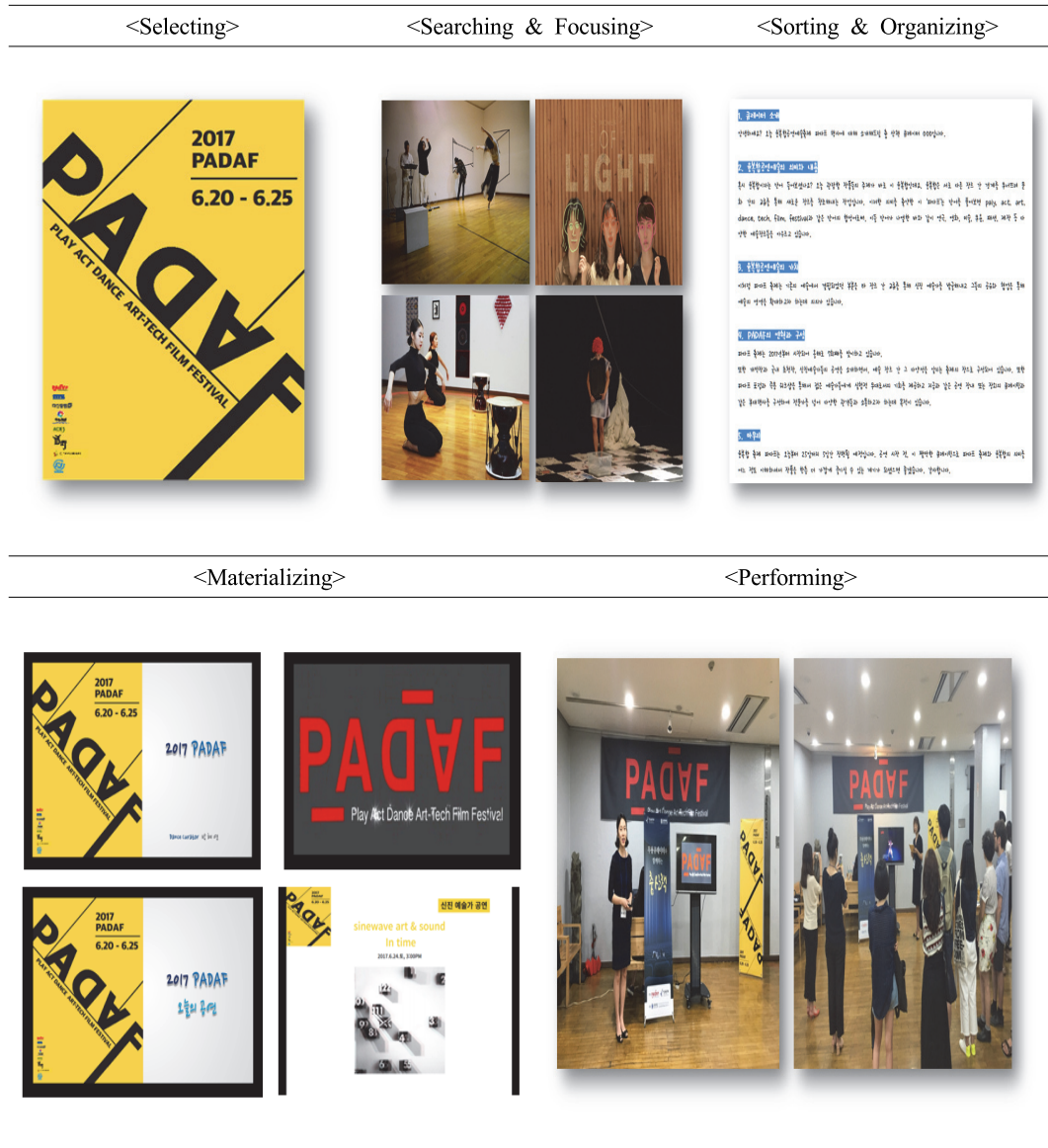


Figure 1. The Practice of Dance Curation: 2017 PADAF

Conclusion & Suggestion

The purpose of this study is to identify the possibility of dance curator as a new career of dance professional and to establish a systematic basis by exploring the types and processes of dance curation and sharing the practice cases. Through this study, it can be seen that the types of dance curation are classified into 'docent type, educator type and creative type', and preparation process of dance curation can be structured as 'selecting, researching, focusing, sorting, organizing, performing and evaluating'. This suggests that it is necessary to interpret the dance curation from the viewpoint of the existing thought about the dance curation and it is necessary to recognize and expand the possibility of the activity area of the dance curation. In addition, it should be noted that the dance curator needs more systematic preparation based on a step-by-step process in order to recognize a vocational specialty and to manifest social influence.

The suggestions for the dance curator as a way to expand the career path of dance professionals are as follows. First, the theoretical and practical research on dance curator and dance curation should be more active in research. At present, research on this subject is in its infancy. More research is needed to secure occupational justice and system. Based on the concept of dance curation so far, and the type and process covered in this study, various theoretical and practical researches should be conducted on the search such as exploration on the professionalism of dance curation and the establishment of dance curator training system, and so on. Second, diversity of training and systematization of programs for systematic training of dance curators should be done from the practical point of view. Based on this study, it is possible to structure the lesson that can experience the theory and reality of curation by the type of dance curation. In order for dance curators to be settled as a profession, short-term training is also important. However, as a long-term and fundamental measure, it will be important that the subject related to dance curator and curation is established within the university education, which is a direct education institution to train dance professionals.

References

- Bennett, D., & Bridgstock, R. (2015). The urgent need for career preview: Student expectations and graduate realities in music and dance. *International Journal of Music Education*, 33(3), 263-277.
- Dick, W., Carey, L., & Carey, J. O. (2005). *The systematic design of instruction*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Pearson.
- George, A. (2015). *The Curator's Handbook: Museums, Commercial Galleries, Independent Spaces*. Thames & Hudson.
- Jang, S. I. & Park, H. Y. & Choi, E. C. (2018). Living like a physical education teacher: The process

- and factors of professional identity formation for dance majoring PE teachers. *Korean Journal of Sport Science*. 29(1), 138-153.
- Jeffri, J., & Throsby, D. (2006). Life after dance: Career transition of professional dancers. *International Journal of Arts Management*, 54-63.
- Kim, J. Y. & Kim, H. N. (2016). DACUM Job Analysis and Professionalization of Dance Curator. *The 97th National Sports Festival Commemoration & The 54th Korea Physical Education Conference*, 221-221.
- Kim, J. Y. & Han, S. J. (2017). A Conceptual Study on Dance Curation : A Creative Vision for the Specialization and Popularization of Dance Programming. *The Korean Journal of Physical Education*, 56(2), 493-505.
- McCoy, S. (1989). Docents in art museum education. *Museum education: History, theory, and practice*, 135-153.
- Park, H. Y. (2017). Exploring the Structure and Educational Strategy of Aesthetic Experience in Dance Education as Arts and Culture Education: Based on the Grounded Theory Paradigm Model. *The Korean Journal of Arts Studies*, 17, 275-301.
- Sin, J. Y. & Ryu, T. H.(2017). Narrative about Dance Curator experience. *The 97th National Sports Festival Commemoration & The 54th Korea Physical Education Conference*, 249-249.
- <https://www.washingtonpost.com>

Received: April 30, 2018

Reviewed: May 26, 2018

Accepted: June 23, 2018