

Dance Management in School Education in Japan: Related Organizations and an Example of Their Activities

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This paper introduces and shares cases from Japan to consider future dance management in other Asian nations. In recent years, the biggest changes in Japan have been making dance classes compulsory for both males and females in physical education in schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology declared, “Dance is made up of creative dance, folk dance, and modern rhythm dance. As an exercise that emphasizes enriched communication with others through interactions via expressions and dance that captures an image, students can put emotion into their dancing with others, and experience the joy of expressing an image of oneself.” In March 2008, the Ministry published revisions to the Junior High School Course of Study and later similarly revised the Elementary School Course of Study. Making dance compulsory gave rise to initiatives for dance in schools that incorporated community and pro dancers. In particular, this paper gathered cases of instructor licenses related to organizations that support dance in schools, dance competitions, and pro dancers. Consequently, though various forms of partnerships have started between pro dancers and dance-related organizations in recent years, there is no licensing system to fill the lack of instructors created by making dance compulsory, and this paper demonstrates that schools must rely on licenses issued by private firms and research organizations.

Key words: School based dance education, dance management, dance organization, dance competition, Instructor licenses

Introduction

The word, dance management is rarely used in Japan, or in academic papers. However, dance

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is considered a popular activity across generations, beginning as an extracurricular activity for children to a fitness activity for middle and advanced ages. There are examinations of management policies for dance not only as an art form but also as a hobby, leisure activity, and sports. In Japan, dance is centered on school education, and many studies on dance are based on a school setting. When examining management of sports and dance, school physical education cannot be ignored, especially in Asian countries such as Japan and South Korea. For discussions and practices through sharing the body of knowledge from each country, we aim to introduce Japanese cases from several perspectives to contribute to information sharing with other countries.

Chapter 1: The history of dance requirement in Japanese schools

For elementary schools, the Elementary School Order was enacted in 1881, and “play” was clearly stated in “nurturing of morality,” systematically establishing dance as a physical education subject in elementary school for the first time. At this time, dance mainly comprised only of expressive movements of arms or simple walking exercises. A likely reason for this is wearing kimono as gym clothes, which was not suitable for strenuous exercises (Kasai, 2012).

For dance education in junior high schools, the policy of “employing dance for female students” since 1883 led to dance lessons being taught at women’s higher normal schools (teachers’ training schools at the time), Tokyo Joshigakuin, and the Gakushuin. Around 1900, foreign dances were introduced, incorporating circle dance and becoming a core activity in school physical education. The vestige of this time can still be found in modern day school dances, such as a square dance, “quadrille,” commonly performed on sports day at elementary schools, and “Faust,” which is danced as a tradition at many girls’ high schools. Back then, male students were taught “marching” based on foreign step exercises instead of dance, which was called “marching play” (Nakamura, 2013).

The standard view of physical education was eliminated in the Guide to Physical Education (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1947) following the Second World War. The concept of physical education that values individuality and motivation of students and aims development of humanity through exercise was emphasized. Classification of sports was organized and dance became independent as “dance” in “physical education” from “marching play and song play” in “play and game (yugi kyogi)” (Nakamura, 2013). It established a position of “dance” within physical education, which led to an introduction of “creative dance,” wherein free expression was achieved by each child through acquisition of the standard form. At that time, dance consisted of creative dance, where one dances freely, and circle dance, where one enjoys traditional dance and rhythm based on history and culture of each country. In 1989, electives for male and female students were revised, but usually it was the teaching staff choosing the courses, and a trend of offering kendo for male and dance

for female students continued for a long time. Many teachers found it difficult to teach dance, and it was not unusual for schools not to offer any dance lessons. For example, in 20 years, since it became available for both male and female students, less than 10% of male students have taken dance (Nakamura, 2005, 2007). Since “modern rhythm dance” was newly incorporated as creative learning in 1998, target and contents continue to change with time.

In recent years, the most notable change in dance taught in Japanese schools was “requirement of dance and martial arts.” Based on the curriculum guideline published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan in 2008, dance (called expressive movements and rhythm dance in elementary schools) was introduced as a required subject in physical education in elementary schools as of 2011, junior high schools as of 2012, and high schools as of 2013. Furthermore, the importance of practicing “dancing, creating, and viewing” through various activities beyond student activities within schools has been discussed (Daigo, 2018).

In summary, Japanese dance education began with (1) play for infants and children in the lower grade in elementary schools, followed by (2) introduction of western-style dances as a subject for female students. It spread in a teaching-learning style, in which instructors taught dance that fit Japanese music (3). This changed into (4) “creative dance,” which desires independent creation by students. Dance became (5) coed elective, followed by introduction of “modern rhythm dance,” changing into (6) a requirement for both male and female students.

Chapter 2: Organizations that support dance in schools

Here, we introduce notable organizations associated with dance in Japanese schools.

Section 1: Japan Association of Physical Education for Women

In the previous chapter, we discussed that dance in Japanese schools was an activity for female students. This trend remains today in a form of “Japan Association of Physical Education for Women” being the central organization for the dance in schools. “Tokyo Association of Physical Education for Women” as a prefectural suborganization holds research conferences, summer seminars that are specialized for classroom practices and reports, and teaching license renewal seminar. It also has a function of an office.



Figure. *Photograph 1*

Section 2: ZENBU-REN

Next, let us discuss an organization called ZENBU-REN. The official name was “The Japanese Federation of Dancing Artists (Zennihon Buto Rengo),” which included Japan Ballet Association, Contemporary Dance Association of Japan, All Japan Children Dance Association, and The Japanese Classical Dance Association (Japanese dance as traditional dance), but this federation had disbanded already. Dance instructors affiliated with these organizations have strong ties with local communities, and occasionally visited local schools to teach dance.

For example, All Japan Children Dance Association provides training on dance recitals for teachers living in the community, and teachers of preschools and kindergartens learn through “a collection of recital dances” (Modern Dance Academy Hirata).



Figure. *Photograph 2*

Section 3: Organization of researchers

“Japanese Society for Dance Research” is the largest academic society on dance in Japan. Additionally, there are several small research organizations. For example, the national dance and expressive movement education research association mainly comprises university dance instructors and proposes dance education in books and seminars. It is closely associated with the Japan Association of Physical Education for Women discussed above, jointly offering practical training. They offer training that is open to students as well.



Figure. *Photograph 3*

Chapter 3: Dance competitions

The curriculum guideline stipulates that Japanese dance education should be based on three activities: “dancing, creating, and viewing.” Thus, let us discuss dance competitions as an opportunity to “dance and view.”

First, let us discuss “national elementary and junior high school rhythm dance FUREAI competition.” Since this competition was established under an influence of dance becoming a requirement, it is only in its sixth year. As a part of this competition, there is an “orientation for lessons” for teachers of elementary and junior high schools, which is meant to provide knowledge on dance classes for teachers who are not skilled dancers. This orientation is free of charge, and lecturers can make visits.

Next, let us introduce Japan Dance Concours for Elementary and Junior High School Children hosted by The Asahi Shimbun. This competition is supported by Japan Sports Agency and prefectural board of education, dancers can participate as part of school or under “open category.” Dance teams

under this category are more advanced. The homepage of this competition offers free videos.

Dance Stadium for dance clubs of junior high and high schools held its 11th event for high schools and seventh event for junior high schools in 2018. It is hosted by Sankei Shimbun and Street Dance Association with the support of Japan Sports Agency. There are various competitions for high school students; one of them is All Japan High School Team Dance Competition hosted by All Japan High School Dance Federation (AHDF), which is characterized by being judged by professional dancers with clearly stated technical criteria.

All Japan Dance Festival is a competition with a long history, and had its 31st event in 2018. It is a big summer event and their tickets, though some are expensive, sell out. It is organized by Japan Association of Physical Education for Women, and its judging criteria are heavily based on educational perspective.

Finally, there is “All Japan Dance Teacher Technical Competition” aimed for teachers. Their fourth event was held in 2018. There is no restriction on the type of dances, and the entry fee for video and document reviews is set at a reasonable price of 5,000 yen. For the final round, competitors teach a mock class, which is free for viewing. Generally, competitors are teaching staff, but the event also uses the large hall at the Olympic Center for guest performers, to make the event lively.

Chapter 4: Opportunities to interact with professional dancers

As discussed earlier, Japanese dance education is based on “dancing, creating, and viewing.” In Chapter 4, let us think about visits by professional dancers as opportunities to become involved with all three activities.

Section 1: DAN-KATSU

First, there is the “public hall modern dance revitalization project (DAN-KATSU)” by Japan Foundation for Regional Art Activities. The Japan Foundation for Regional Art Activities is an organization established in 1994 and affiliated with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. Its objective is to rejuvenate communities through art activities at over two thousand cultural halls across Japan. There are similar projects based on music and theater as well. Apart from fostering community theaters and artists, and discovery of new theater audiences, their main challenge is nurturing coordinators with skills in outreach and community projects. One of their activities is outreach for schools by dancers and dance groups, and collaborative activities. As the process of such projects, public halls submit their proposals to the Foundation for selection. Subsequently, the destination of artists is determined based on the presentations by the registered artists that reflect the proposal.

Dancers selected through this process hold workshops and outreach programs with schools as a community networking program. These events are to be held at least four to five times. It is expected to be an activity that is more continuous than single events, which were held at schools previously. These events are held widely from elementary schools to high schools.

Section 2:

Next, the work of an NPO called “Children Meet Artists” is presented. ASIAS, held by this organization, is an abbreviation for Artist’s Studio In A School, in which professional modern artists visit elementary schools, junior high schools, and orphanages, and teach workshop-style classes in cooperation with teachers. Their website is well designed, indicating their communication skills. The organization actively invites special education classes in public elementary and junior high schools to submit for workshops and programs.

Section 3:

“School of Dance Project” has a strong tie to its community in the city of Yokohama. It is a project connecting children with contemporary dance, which began in 2004. Working dancers and choreographers offer workshops at elementary schools over 5–7 visits. Dancers are assigned at a school for a year. This year, seven artists taught various dances to about 500 children. Majority of their activities is held during physical education classes, but in some cases, they may work with a particular dance for the sports day, hold free recitals at community centers to display the results of the workshops, and provide opportunities for the community children, who were not the part of the workshop, to view dancing.

Section 4:

As an example of a pop music artist popular among youth and in collaboration with a community, we introduce a project in which the city of Fukuoka collaborated with a subsidiary of LDH. Love Dream Happiness Ltd. (LDH) is a 15-year old company with a focus on entertainment related to staging, and is lately entering into weddings and catering. There was news that an ex-member (known as ŪSA) of the dance team “EXILE,” which is an iconic team of this industry, signed an agreement to cooperate with the Fukuoka City Hall to improve dance education in elementary and junior high schools of the city. He provided free lessons to teachers. There already have been various dance projects such as management of dance schools, and production of dance TV programs for children, but there has not been a single case where a Japanese pop music dancer entered an agreement with a municipality. On the other hand, there is only one lesson this year, and creation of educational material

for dance education remains only a plan, leaving much unknown.

Chapter 5: Instructor licenses

As the dance became a requirement, both quantitative and qualitative qualifications became required for dance teachers. Discussions continue to this day regarding the assurance of the instruction quality. As an example, let us review the qualification system. Nakamura (2005:2013) published the opinions of current teachers that have been impacted by making these courses of study mandatory, stating that there are not enough opportunities to research teaching materials. With that noted, Mochizuki (2017) argued for the use of outside instructors, and there is a growing focus in these discussions on licenses granted by dance organizations. Even here, prior studies on contemporary rhythm and dance have displayed the current state of instructional content based on the lack of history compared with other types of dance, which points out the difficulty in creating licenses. In addition, there is no public system in place for dance instructor qualification in school physical education at this time.

First, let us look at the above-discussed Japan Association of Physical Education for Women. In 1983, this organization started social physical education course with the support of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, and stated that they “propose an instruction via unique ‘dance movement’ that utilizes characteristics of dance as a culture of physical expression, and works to foster instructors.” A certified qualification system for the Japan Association of Physical Education for Women dance movement instructors (JAPEW DANCE MOVEMENT INSTRUCTOR LICENSE: JAPEW-DMIL) was established in 1997. The license has three levels (A–C), which can be acquired through a training lecture, a license lecture, a license examination lecture, and registration. Each level requires 40 hours of lectures and practical training. Certification fee ranges from 10,000 to 30,000 yen, with other fees such as for lectures.

Among private organizations, companies that focus on rhythmic dances (for example, Avex) have created unique certification programs, and dispatch external instructors to school physical education classes and offer lectures.

In addition, the Japan Street Dance Authorize Council (JDAC) offers certifications for physical education at the school level. It is supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, and Japan Sports Agency, and provides dance training, written examination, and updates across Japan. Their educational contents are based on the curriculum guideline and the fundamental law of education. Although the name of the organization includes street dance, the contents cover three styles of dances (creative dance, circle dance, and modern rhythm dance) clearly stated in the instruction guideline for school dance. The first level can be acquired in one-day course, and a certification system for dance rehabilitation has

been developed.

However, attendance for these lectures and the acquisition of certification are dependent on the motivation of each instructor. Now, it is unclear whether such a certification assures quality of instructional contents or if it can be used as criteria in the employment process of external instructors. The result for instructor license is also similar to career issues of dance industry itself.

Conclusions

In this paper, we summarized the history of dances in Japanese schools toward dance as a requirement. We introduced the current situation in Japan through (1) organizations that support dances in school, (2) competitions, (3) interaction with professional dancers, and (4) certification systems.

In Organizations that Support Dance in Schools (Chapter 1), we noted that the Japan Association of Physical Education for Women, an organization that has left a deep imprint on dance education primarily for women, contributes heavily to research on practices. In Dance Competitions (Chapter 2), it was shown that there are competitions in which students can participate and win prizes and multiple competitions sponsored by the Japan Sports Agency. With competitions having a wide range of characteristics in terms of the level of dance, competition fees, and judging criteria as well as some competitions targeting teachers, we notice active steps taken to make dance compulsory even outside of schools. In relation to pro dancers, it was shown that there have been projects as part of local arts and also collaborations between school dance and regional pro dancers through the efforts of local governments. There are future issues, such as the efforts of popular artists. Finally, in Instructor Licenses (Chapter 4), the use of outside instructors, despite the many issues that still exist with creating a public licensing system, was noted as an urgent issue.

As the dance became a requirement subject, demand for the certification of teachers increased, influencing the society widely. In addition, as dance that was centered on “dancing” was clearly stipulated as dance based on “dancing, creating, and viewing,” attitude and perspective were established to spread dance not only within schools but also in the society. Continuing to share the current situation in Japan will lead to school physical education being involved with management of sports and dance. We hope that it would be useful information especially for Asian countries which has similar policy and governance for dance and which straggles curriculum design or instructors’ career issues.

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Received: October 31, 2018

Reviewed: November 30, 2018

Accepted: December 20, 2018