

Enhancing the Capabilities of Dance Majors for Effective Performance as Teaching Artists

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the essential competencies and methodical preparation process requisite for university dance major students to successfully transition into society as teaching artists. In this study, open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 dance majors enrolled at the National University of the Arts in Seoul. These students participated in a project outside of the curriculum, gaining experience as field artists. First, universities must offer subjects that enable students aspiring to become teaching artists to acquire pedagogical knowledge and skills. Second, dance majors should expand their understanding through extensive research on learners. Lastly, an internship system that connects with the field during undergraduate studies is necessary. Consequently, this study aims to propose a direction for the improvement of the existing education system by considering the educational requirements of universities for teaching artists and learners.

Key words: dance education, dance major, teaching artists, competencies, pedagogy, internship

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Introduction

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the essential competencies and methodical preparation process requisite for university dance major students to successfully transition into society as teaching artists. Teaching artists, also known as artist educators or community artists, are professional artists who supplement their incomes by teaching and integrating their art form, perspectives, and skills into a wide range of settings. Teaching artists work with schools, after school programs, community agencies, prisons, jails, and social service agencies. The arts in education movement benefited from the work of teaching artists in schools (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teaching_artist).

Eric Booth, a renowned art learning consultant, describes a teaching artist as “a practicing professional artist with the complementary skills, curiosities, and sensibilities of an educator, who can effectively engage a wide range of people in learning experiences in, through, and about the arts” (Booth, 2017). This definition encompasses professional artists across all artistic disciplines. Teaching artists have been actively involved in educational institutions and communities for an extended period. Booth contends that the essence of teaching constitutes more than 80% of the teacher's disposition, asserting that the act of teaching should be intrinsically artistic. Teaching artists are devoted to the integration of pedagogy and artistry, allowing their artistic work to inform their teaching practices, and vice versa.

Numerous university dance majors possess the talent and skillset necessary to be considered professional artists in terms of career trajectory and ability. However, their capacity to function as teaching artists in the field remains a distinct challenge. By examining case studies of dance majors who participated in the ‘Dream Dance Company’ project, organized by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Korea Arts & Culture Education Service (KACES) in 2022, this study endeavors to investigate the competencies required of teaching artists and whether a solution can be found within the university curriculum.

The ‘Dream Dance Company’ project offers programs centered on dance and movement for children and adolescents in the community. The project aims to foster holistic development by providing opportunities for cultural and artistic enjoyment, engaging in creative activities, and uncovering values, identity, and future potential (Park, 2022). The support structure for the ‘Dream Dance Company’ project in 2022 can be categorized into three primary components. The first component consists of developing a dance education model in collaboration with national and public dance institutions. The second component involves a pilot operation of dance education programs, partnering with various regional entities. Lastly, the project appointed four prominent dancers as public relations ambassadors to promote dance education activities and business initiatives

(<https://www.arte.or.kr/business/society/index.do>).

In the context of this study, dance major students from K University in Seoul, the only national art university in Korea, participated as teaching artists. A notable aspect of this project is its potential to serve as a seed capital for dance majors aspiring to transition into a career as teaching artists. As of 2022, approximately 1,500 students are projected to graduate from four-year colleges across the nation with dance department degrees. The revision of the “Support for Arts and Culture Education Act” established a legal foundation for supporting ‘teaching artists in school’, who provide professional cultural and artistic education to elementary, middle, and high school students nationwide. This development is also linked to the social advancement of numerous art majors’ post-graduation, signifying that students with professional artistic training can transition into art educators.

According to a report on the outcomes of the ‘teaching artists in school’ initiative conducted by KACES in 2021, out of a total of 5,065 teaching artists across eight fields (Korean traditional music, theater, film, dance, cartoon/animation, craft, photography, design), 1,094 were teaching artists in the dance field, making it the second-largest group. Furthermore, in 2022, 103 new teaching artists were recruited across all eight fields, with 19 of them being in the field of dance (Korea Arts & Culture Education Service, 2022).

Although universities can offer courses designed to cultivate the necessary skills for teaching artists, the reality is that few programs effectively support the transition from professional artists to teaching artists. Dance majors generally possess proficient practical skills, as they have extensive experience in their field. The challenge lies in providing education that enables them to impart their knowledge effectively to learners, thereby fostering meaningful change in their students. To achieve this, opportunities for field experience that apply the systematic methodologies taught in theory classes are essential.

Historically, most dance departments in Korea have emphasized an educational system focused on nurturing stage artists. However, since the enactment of the “Support for Arts and Culture Education Act” in 2005, policies for arts and culture education in schools and extracurricular settings have expanded. Consequently, there has been an increasing demand for cultural arts education personnel and a growing need to introduce ‘arts & culture education instructors’. In other words, there is a demand for professionals possessing both artistic expertise and the qualifications necessary to be effective educators.

Teaching artists are responsible for tasks such as planning, implementing, analyzing, evaluating, and instructing in the realm of art. As artists, they must be proficient in teaching their skills. In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, universities are emphasizing the development of ‘competencies’—fundamental skills that are highly transferable across various professions. The need

for competency-based education has been highlighted by the OECD's DeSeCo (Defining and Selecting Key Competencies) project. In response, universities are shifting their focus to competency-centered education in preparation for future societal needs. Previous studies have identified self-confidence, self-direction, communication, creativity, problem-solving ability, and leadership as core competencies for college students. These competencies are directly related to the university curriculum, as future societies necessitate the ability to adapt to diversification and short-cycle changes and to lead self-directed lives. Competency-based university education necessitates a departure from traditional educational paradigms. This shift requires a transition from knowledge accumulation to knowledge utilization, from efficiency-based to effectiveness-based performance, from instructor-centered to learner-centered curricula, from major-focused to interdisciplinary curricula, and from university self-education to lifelong education (Kim & Kim, 2017).

As specified in Article 2 of the “Lifelong Education Act”, cultural arts education represents one of the six areas of lifelong education. It is actively developed both inside and outside of schools, with the objective of fostering students' character and creativity. The personality and creativity emphasized in cultural arts education align with the common core competencies required of university students. Consequently, there is an increasing need to explore strategies for enhancing college students' core competencies through education.

This study seeks to address the career limitations faced by dance majors by focusing on strengthening their competencies. Simultaneously, it aims to assist dance department graduates in transitioning into society as competent teaching artists.

Research Methods

Research Procedure

This study was conducted between March and December 2022, with participants consisting of dance major students involved in the ‘Dream Dance Company’ project.

All courses were conducted in accordance with the academic calendar of K University, commencing in March 2022. The curriculum included a series of courses related to teaching and learning, such as subject analysis, program planning, teaching, and learning guidance design, class demonstration, evaluation, and supplementation. This approach enabled both main instructors and assistant instructors to participate systematically in the curriculum development stage. The curriculum was designed with consideration for the gender, age, region, and environment of the target demographic, and class content was composed to foster personal development and understanding of society and culture.

As suggested in ‘Dance Teaching Methods and Curriculum Design’ by Gayler and Danielle (2003),

the curriculum was structured around the target, goal, content, teaching method, and evaluation area. Learners included students from 2nd to 6th grade in elementary school, and the class was conducted for a total of 60 hours, divided into two 30-hour sessions. The two programs took place from June to July and September to October 2022. Surveys of research participants were conducted in July and October, respectively, following the completion of each program.

Participants

The study involved a total of 13 dance major students. The project's purpose was explained, and students who voluntarily expressed their interest were included as participants. Examining their detailed characteristics, the group consisted of 12 females and 1 male, with an average age of 27.15 ± 7.73 years, including 9 individuals in their 20s and 4 in their 30s. In terms of academic status, there were 7 undergraduate students, 4 graduate students, and 2 graduates. The participants' majors included Korean traditional dance (4), modern dance (4), ballet (4), and arts management (1). Of the 13 participants, 9 served as main instructors and 4 as assistant instructors. Their average educational experience was 4.38 ± 6.16 years.

Interview Design

This study aimed to identify the required competencies, preparation processes, and areas for improvement when a dance major assumes the role of a teaching artist in the field. To this end, an unstructured questionnaire was developed in alignment with the study's objectives, and supplementary face-to-face interviews were conducted for responses that required further clarification.

The survey sought to explore the professional educational competencies needed for instructors and to discuss strategies for developing these competencies. The survey questions comprised descriptive items inquiring about the professional competencies required for teaching artists, methods to enhance instructors' professional educational competencies, and areas for improvement as teaching artists. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire items, four doctoral-level researchers in dance studies and two professors who participated in the program were involved in the item development process. The unstructured questionnaire contained a total of 10 items, with some content adjusted to accommodate the circumstances during face-to-face interviews.

Table 1. Unstructured survey content

No.	Survey Questions
1	Please describe the preparation process for the Dream Dance Company program.
2	What were your experiences while preparing for the Dream Dance Company program?
3	What do you consider the most crucial aspect of the teaching-learning process?
4	What were your experiences while facilitating the dance program?
5	What challenges did you encounter as an instructor, and why?
6	What professional competencies are required for instructors participating in dance programs?
7	Please discuss the necessary preparation courses at the university level to ensure the professional competency of instructors participating in the dance program.
8	What type of educational environment (e.g., educational facilities, administrative support, etc.) is needed to efficiently execute the dance program?
9	What skills do you believe should be developed for future work as a teaching artist?
10	Please share your experiences and areas of improvement while participating in this program as a teaching artist.

Results

Bridging Artists and Educators: The Necessity of Pedagogy-Based Dance Education

A teaching artist is an individual who effectively combines artistic professionalism with pedagogical knowledge to deliver art education tailored to their target audience (Huddy & Stevens, 2011). Consequently, pedagogical knowledge is essential. Teaching artists must possess the ability to plan, develop, and execute programs independently. To achieve this, they need a foundation in humanities and the capacity to utilize various educational content, such as art, theater, and video. In the context of teaching various subjects outside of school settings, teaching artists should have the ability to employ diverse educational media, including humanities, art, music, and engineering, in addition to dance, and gain relevant experience through university curricula.

When questioned about the most critical competency for a teaching artist, numerous participants responded that knowledge of education and a sense of vocation as educators were essential.

Participant 4: Fundamentally, education should be organized based on a philosophical understanding of education, not merely viewing dance as an art form. A teaching plan encompassing the meaning of dance education is necessary. When expressed through learners, the capacity to guide with individuality in mind is crucial.

Participant 11: I believe dance instructors need the ability to restructure existing dance education. Most dance instructors have undergone professional dance training. To achieve the goal of dance education, I perceive that a shift in mindset and a focus on fostering interest and cultural appreciation are necessary.

Participant 6: In reality, without completing a teaching profession, it is challenging to take courses related to education in the dance department. Without knowledge of pedagogy, understanding how to teach and what to prepare seems somewhat ambiguous.

Research participants expressed disappointment that classes related to dance education were less prevalent than practical subjects in university curricula. Furthermore, it was determined that a diverse range of curricula, encompassing the development of dance programs and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, is required to cultivate professionalism in dance education.

Expanding the Understanding of Learners

The interviews revealed that dance majors require the ability to comprehend learners' characteristics and provide appropriate guidance tailored to each characteristic and learning level. The need for a program that deviates from the traditional unilateral education method was emphasized, with sufficient understanding and preparation for learners being of utmost importance. Even students without prior dance experience should be intrigued by movement. Research participants devised an active and autonomous class by conducting weekly meetings and discussions to complete the program. They discovered that they needed to prepare an overview of the class, its delivery method, and even the timing and detailed sequence.

Given that the target audience comprises elementary school students, a different approach than the technical elements taught at existing dance academies is necessary (Hong, 2019). Participants responded that integrated art education is needed to facilitate creative activities in collaboration with literature, music, art, and media. The educational process utilizing various educational media such as humanities, art, music, and dance was deemed more critical than any other factor.

Participant 1: I considered three aspects as crucial in organizing the content of the class: first, free thinking should not be hindered; second, students should not perceive movements as special and exclusively cool; and third, they should be able to experience the process of composing and presenting choreography in collaboration with a team.

Participant 8: The essential ballet movements were adapted into easy and enjoyable activities suited to elementary school students' perspective. For instance, a jeté was described as jumping over a puddle, and a sauté as leaping to reach an overhead balloon. The students communicated solely through ballet mimes and matched the stories they created.

Participant 2: I designed a teaching plan based on students expressing their individuality through dance, appreciating it in the process of sharing, understanding others, and eventually getting to know themselves again.

When teaching school-age children, an advantage over private dance education is the opportunity for unrestricted interaction between instructors and students. In this regard, various situations experienced during the undergraduate course could be positively transformed into an advantage of being a young instructor who can communicate effectively with learners. This will serve as valuable initial capital when entering society as a teaching artist after graduation (Kim et al., 2017). In fact, the research participants made an effort to engage with students at their eye level even during breaks and allowed students to express themselves freely in non-authoritarian classes. Consequently, in contrast to traditional classes, the students exhibited strong rapport with the teachers and displayed positive emotional and physical reactions as classes progressed.

Internship: The Need for Field-Connected Dance Classes

The participants commonly agreed that, to enhance professional competence as a teaching artist, it is essential to gain experience in teaching in the actual field.

Participant 5: Among the subjects, the dance education subject included the process of designing the curriculum, which proved helpful. Moreover, it would be beneficial to prepare in advance for the practical training course taught in the actual field.

Participant 13: If possible, I would appreciate the opportunity to meet the target audience in person and practice with them.

In the case of research participants who took part in the 'Dream Dance Company' project as instructors, they underwent a series of educational processes, from developing a dance education program to actual field training and recognized the need for more systematic preparation beforehand.

Participant 9: It was a burden for me to demonstrate my teaching in front of people.

I was extremely nervous, thinking that the process of presenting the program before meeting the actual students was a genuine experience.

Participant 3: Before meeting the students, the instructors gathered and conducted simulations. I practiced the contents that were not outlined in the plan, but in fact, I recall being more nervous and worried than on the days when I attended meetings and wrote the program.

Discussion and Conclusion

As the societal role of arts and cultural education gains prominence and diversifies, the importance of teaching artists is on the rise. Following the enactment of the “Support for Arts and Culture Education Act”, government policies have been institutionalized, and the ‘culture & arts education instructor’, a national qualification system, has been established. This is a critical juncture wherein specific alternatives for the expertise and capacity of instructors who teach art, as well as methods for their cultivation, are required. Dance education in Korea has primarily focused on nurturing stage artists; however, the goals and targets of education must progressively expand. It is estimated that approximately 1,500 dance majors graduate annually, with a considerable number of them commencing their careers as teaching artists.

Nevertheless, many dance majors who enter society without adequate preparation face challenges. Consequently, there is an urgent need for an institutional foundation capable of fully utilizing the expertise of individuals with extensive dance backgrounds, as evidenced by numerous instances of departure from the field of dance. Through this foundation, students can prepare to design new career plans. While universities offer subjects that support the transformation of artists into art instructors, the reality is that there are limited opportunities to apply the systematic methodologies learned in theoretical classes through actual field experiences.

Teaching artists are practicing, professional artists who maintain dual careers as educators. They originate from various artistic fields—including music, dance, theater, visual arts, and writing—and work in diverse settings, ranging from schools and museums to hospitals and prisons (Van Rossum, 2004).

In this study, open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 dance majors enrolled at the National University of the Arts in Seoul. These students participated in a project outside of the curriculum, gaining experience as field artists.

First, it is essential to acknowledge that the dance department within a university is no longer

solely dedicated to practice. While practice remains crucial due to the unique characteristics and identity of the dance art genre, it is important to recognize that not all students will become dancers. In addition to dancers and choreographers, dance majors may pursue various fields, such as educators, administrators, planners, and stage personnel involved in performing arts (Park, 2015). Consequently, universities must offer subjects that enable students aspiring to become teaching artists to acquire pedagogical knowledge and skills.

Second, dance majors should expand their understanding through extensive research on learners. Dance education can target individuals of all ages, from infants to the elderly, within and outside schools, and both disabled and non-disabled individuals. The most critical variables in the teaching-learning process are the learner, the teacher, and the content. Therefore, investigating and understanding the learner is an essential attribute for a teaching artist. It is crucial to assign learners responsibility for their learning, while teachers should focus on creating an environment conducive to learning. The most effective art education presents a suitable challenge and then allows students to learn from it without interference (Dils, 2007). At times, the goal may be practical, technique-based education, while at other times, it might involve exposing students to new ways of expressing themselves emotionally and thinking creatively (Risner, 2012).

Third, an internship system that connects with the field during undergraduate studies is necessary. The gap between knowledge and action is often more significant than anticipated. Participation in projects like the 'Dream Dance Company' is a valuable opportunity for dance majors, as it enables them to recognize their own capabilities and shortcomings. These projects serve as seed capital for students to envision a career transition as artists who teach dance majors.

It is imperative to experience the integration of a student-teacher collaborative education model and field-based education within the university setting. This is due to the fact that future education will not be characterized by one-way instruction from teachers but rather an open learning environment that fosters participants' sense of adventure and spontaneity (Remer, 2003). A dance class should not merely teach basic movement patterns. Curricula that utilize diverse educational media, such as humanities, art, music, and media, are of paramount importance.

Dance educators must be able to provide a rational explanation for the benefits of dance education within an education system that is centered on knowledge acquisition and entrance examinations (Na, 2012). It has been determined that the professional competence of dance educators significantly influences trainees when they are active as teaching artists in the field.

In an environment of rapid change, comprehending the needs of the next generation demands considerable effort. Consequently, this study aims to propose a direction for the improvement of the existing education system by considering the educational requirements of universities for teaching

artists and learners. This is because it is the responsibility and desired trajectory of educational institutions and researchers to continually evolve academic research to meet the demands of contemporary society.

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