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## **Teaching Beginning Dance Classes in Higher Education: Learning to Teach from an Expert Dance Educator**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative case study examines the exemplary teaching approaches of an expert Korean dance educator who has been teaching beginning dance classes in higher education. The expert dance educator, possesses 28 years of teaching experience in higher education, is the recipient of a national award, is actively involved in professional activities, and facilitates outstanding student achievements. Data were collected using a variety of sources: interviews with the dance teacher and college students, class observations, videotaped lessons, stimulated recall techniques, and document analyses. Data analysis followed the conventions indicated by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1998). Four teaching characteristics of the expert dance educator were, through these means, discovered and emphasized: (1) reflecting and expressing students' lives through dance movements, (2) teaching beyond dance technique, (3) employing diverse teaching techniques in order to achieve diverse learning experiences, and (4) designing and implementing dance festivals and similar occasions for evaluating students' learning.

## **Introduction**

A number of people have challenged the ways in which one can reach superior performance levels in a variety of fields. This interest, and the effort to find viable answers to the questions raised, has resulted in intensive studies of performance at higher levels by scholars, specifically those in the area of psychology. Some individuals called ‘expert’ became the focus of research and their qualities, abilities, and skills were outlined through research on expertise. Starkes (1993) noted, “the term expert is only appropriate for individuals who have spent a significant part of their life in preparation and training within their domain and who perform consistently at a very high level” (p. 6). In other words, to be an expert, the condition of “consistently superior performance on a set of relevant tasks in a specific field of human activity” (Tan, 1997, p. 30) should be fully satisfied. That is, one whose abilities, acquisition of skills, and successful performance in a certain area prove to be only temporary cannot be considered an expert. In addition, a long period of experience, practice, or training over a period of ten years or more is required of individuals in top levels after they have completed the initial process of learning or acquiring a skill, developing an ability, or mastering a performance (Bloom, 1986; Brandt, 1986; Chase & Simon, 1973a, 1973b; Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Ericsson & Smith, 1991). Such qualifications and criteria suggest that the designation of “expert” can be generalized to apply to all individuals as opposed to applying only to a few people like geniuses or prodigies.

According to Ericsson and Smith (1991), studies of expertise have sought to “understand and account for what distinguishes outstanding individuals in a domain from less outstanding individuals in that domain-- as well as from people in general--” (p. 2) by describing the stable characteristics (inherited or acquired) of experts as these characteristics are demonstrated in unstable or varying conditions. In addition, they asserted that the expert characteristics are acquired, not inherited –and needed a long preparation— to acquire. Motivated by the seminal work of de Groot in 1965, cognitive psychologists have devoted much effort to identifying knowledge, thought processes, and behaviors of experts in certain areas such as chess, medicine, physics, typing etc. and have succeeded in making significant information available. This research line has been followed by educational researchers in order to identify the elements of expertise specifically relevant to teaching (Berliner, 1986, 1988). Expert teachers have been compared with novice teachers to indicate their nature, qualities, and characteristics in some academic areas such as mathematics, science, music, and physical education.

Unlike the other fields of education, dance education has not been the subject of extensive research; only a limited number of studies of outstanding and effective specialist dance teachers are available (Alter, 2000; Lord, 2001; Van Rossum, 2004). Using qualitative

methods, Chappell (2007) studied the teaching creativity of three expert specialist dance teachers in the primary level. While the dance teachers pointed out the fundamental elements in the creative process that ignited children's curiosity, including young people's openness to the unusual, they demonstrated four crucial activities in creating a dance: achieving immersion in "being the dance," that is identifying Self with the movements and meaning of the dance; utilizing the embodied way of knowing; understanding the interrelationship between generating possibilities and homing in on possibilities, and physical and dramatic imagination, and the capability to implement intuition both feeling and knowledge. In addition, this study indicated that the teachers who were examined have faced the anticipated pedagogical dilemmas in teaching creativity to children and solved these teaching problems with networks of colleagues' support and expectations from surrounding colleagues as an expert teacher in the UK. Fortin (1993) addressed the following six knowledge types for competent dance teaching: pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of students' understanding, curricular knowledge, and knowledge of instructional strategies. In addition, while indicating the knowledge gaps between the knowledge of dancers and that of dance teachers, she also pointed out the importance of what is termed "pedagogical content knowledge" proposed by Shulman (1986, 1987) for effective dance teaching. Schlaich and DuPont (1993) interviewed eleven outstanding teachers as artists from the United States and other countries and listed some parallel qualities in a technique teacher: (a) love of movement and teaching, (b) basic knowledge of dance, (c) supportive attitude, (d) clear communication, (e) musicality, and (f) focus beyond technique. Van Rossum (2004) indicates the characteristics and behaviors of an ideal dance teacher as revealed from the perspectives of 39 dance professors and their 157 college students whose aims were to become professional dancers. Using three different measures (a leadership scale, rating scales, and a questionnaire), three characteristics of an ideal dance teacher were indicated: the individual should be highly knowledgeable, should possess remarkable task orientation, and should exhibit democratic behavior.

The previous studies have focused on expert or excellent dance teachers who have taught elementary school children and college dance majors, as well as professional dancers. Additionally, most of these studies have just focused on the limited aspects of the dance teachers' performance, such as teaching creativity (Chappell, 2007), teaching knowledge (Fortin, 1993), or teaching technique as an art form (Schlaich & Dupont, 1993). Thus, no single study has been conducted on the whole or holistic characteristics of expert dance teachers who have taught non-professional dancers in schools or universities. In particular, in dance education, little attention has been given to the exemplary ways of teaching how to educate beginning students without any experience in the new forms of dancing. According to some studies (Alter, 2000; Fortin, 1993; Gray, 1989), the dance teachers who fall into the

above category tend to teach by imitating their previous professional teachers because they lack formal training that would prepare them to teach non-professional dancers. Due to this problem, most dance teachers in schools and universities struggle, often unsuccessfully, to teach children or students who are not pursuing careers as professional dancers.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the exemplary teaching approaches of an expert Korean dance educator who has taught beginning dance classes in higher education. There is no question or doubt that dance teachers are eager to acquire and develop the knowledge and experience that would qualify them as experts in their field. This study will guide the development of student teaching programs, shape how in-service teacher development is approached, and aid in the assessment of the curriculum expertise of pre-service and in-service dance teachers.

### **Methods**

The purpose of this study is exploratory in that the researcher tries to describe previously unknown phenomena using a qualitative case study. According to Merriam (1988), the qualitative case study is defined as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 21). Case studies provide unique contributions when one is examining the ideal and typical nature of the phenomenon that a particular case or a multiplicity of cases possess. Thus, case studies focus on developing an in-depth analysis of a single phenomenon which the researcher wants to investigate holistically using a wide range of techniques.

### ***Participant***

An expert Korean dance educator was purposely selected as a unique subject for such a case study. According to Merriam (1998), "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). The criteria to be used for selecting the expert dance teacher include: (a) 10 or more years of teaching experience, (b) formal recognition for the quality of her dance teaching, (c) published and presented articles on dance and dance education in the professional journals and conferences, and (d) student performance and achievements. These criteria at least 10 years of teaching experience, recognition, knowledge-rich are supported by several studies (Berliner, 1986; Brandt, 1986; Schempp, Templeton, & Clark, 1998a; Tan, 1997).

Ms. Lee is a well-known dancer, dance educator, scholar, and choreographer in Korea. Her teaching experience at the university level spans 28 years. In 1997, she was appointed as "Human cultural property no. 27" by the Ministry of Culture and Sport in Korea. This award

is the highest reputational honor and award in the field of arts in Korea. Ms. Lee has published and presented a number of articles related to dance history, philosophy, movement, structure, education, and gender issue at the national and international levels. Lastly, her students' performance has been outstanding. Every year since 1991, her students have participated in the National College Dance and Play Competition in Korea. Up to this point, they have won one second-place, one third-place award, and three championships.

### ***Data Collection***

Data were collected as a means of understanding exemplary approaches in teaching Korean folk dance to non-professional students in a higher education setting. The Korean folk dances are very close to the lives of the people. These dances originated in prayers for good crops in shaman rituals, or evolved from communal forms of entertainment. In addition, they sprang from a variety of communal rituals, festive occasions, as well as from cooperative labor. While court dance aims at artistic quality and featured special sequence in choreography, the folk dances are improvisational, emotional, and animated.

Several methods were used to collect data: semi-structured interviews, observations, videotaped lessons, stimulated recall techniques, and document analysis; the data were collected during a six week period at one of the leading universities in Korea. Six sets of in-depth interviews, each lasting for 60 to 70 minutes, were formally conducted by the researcher. Probes and follow-up questions were used during interviews in an attempt to gather as much information as possible from the case teacher. The researcher also conducted college student interviews to obtain the accounts of what students perceived in regard to the subject teacher's teaching. A total of ten college students were purposely selected to be interviewed for 30 to 40 minutes on the basis of gender, grade, and major. Each interview was conducted during the last week of data collection in order to give the selected students time to get to know the case teacher.

Another source of data was a series of 12 observations in the beginning folk dance classes which served the purpose of representing the basic physical education program in a university setting. The role of the researcher was made known to the dance teacher and her students. The researcher observed the landscape of the classroom, the physical facilities and equipment, the events that occurred, and the individual acts of people in the class. Through observations, the researcher attempted to capture the attitudes, activities, languages, behaviors, gestures, and interactions of the case teacher with the students in her classes. Eight lessons were videotaped as part of the data sources, and these proved valuable to the conduct of subsequent reviews in accurately and thoroughly capturing class interactions and the context within which they took place, thereby greatly enhancing interpretation. In addition, videotaping allowed the class

events or phenomenon to be reviewed as often as the researcher desired, because it would be permanently recorded. In particular, the taped lessons became a basis for questioning and analyzing data for the stimulated recall protocol.

Stimulated recall technique has been used for the purpose of understanding a teacher's actions and decisions among educational researchers by identifying teachers' thoughts during instruction (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Griffey & Housner, 1991). As its name indicates, it enables teachers to recall their thoughts during teaching while viewing videotapes of their classes. In this study, videotape segments among eight videotapes were selected based on the relevance to the research questions. While viewing the selected segments of the videotaped lesson over a period of 40 minutes, the dance teacher was twice asked to explain how she developed instructional and managerial behaviors and events. Particular focus was given to knowledge retrieval, instructional and spontaneous behaviors, decision making processes, and the perceptions and interactions of students. The last valuable source was document analysis to support thoughts and behaviors of the dance teacher with official written and visual documents. These included the resume of the participant, professional articles and newsletters, newspapers, pamphlets, pictures, videotapes, departmental brochures, syllabi, curriculum materials, and class evaluation forms.

### ***Data Analysis***

Through a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strass, 1967; Glaser, 1998), all data were coded and grouped into initial categories after repetitive comparisons with each other. At the same time, the data were subsequently split into additional categories if other data pieces did not fit the initial categories. This process continued throughout the entire data analysis until all data had been tentatively placed in the central categories. These categories reflected the concurrent themes and regularities throughout the data. Once the central categories were identified, the data were again continually investigated for properties of each category. When no new characteristics emerged, the categories were considered to be saturated. After initial categories were named, the categories were compared to determine a relationship between categories identified in previous stages. That is, at that point, data were cross-coded for characteristics of each of the central categories. Establishing a relationship between several categories provided a better and more thorough picture of the phenomenon being investigated. After identifying and developing themes, they were refined and integrated to construct final themes of the study, by renaming the previous categories. Furthermore, subsequent intensive analysis and comparisons of the data within each category led to developing sub-properties, or sub-themes within the data.

### ***Trustworthiness***

To enhance trustworthiness, several strategies were implemented. First, multiple methods of data collection (or triangulation) were used. A member check was also done when data were taken back to the case teacher and she was asked if the data were accurate. Interview and stimulated recall transcripts were brought back to the dance teacher for her reactions. The teacher read these data and provided the researcher with feedback, changes, or additions. An "on-site" peer debriefing was used to get valuable comments of this study as it developed. In this study, the whole process of data collection was discussed with a peer at a University in Korea. The next strategy is a thick description of multiple dimensions of expertise in dance instruction through the use of the quotative interview materials, field notes, and confirmatory document analysis. Finally, an audit trail was used to describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how conclusions were reached through the inquiry.

### **Findings**

Not all teachers reach the highest level of performance. How do some teachers become "an expert?" Thus, the question arises as to what constitutes "expert" performance and how one would go about maintaining his or her extraordinary performance or "expertise" in education. The ways one achieves expertise as well as the insightful approaches to teaching expertise in beginning dance classes are presented in this section.

### ***Reflecting and Expressing Students' Lives through Dance Movements***

Certain observable differences distinguish the teaching styles of experts and novices. Most notable is the fact that experts tend to be more student-centered in regard to conveying knowledge and experience, whereas novices may become more subject-centered (Alter, 2000; Graham, French, & Woods, 1993). Expert teachers believe that all students have the potential and ability to learn something (Schempp, Tan, Manross, & Fincher, 1998b). In a sense, they are likely to teach students focusing on the characteristics of individual students rather than on the nature of a group of students in classes.

In this study, class observations revealed that Ms. Lee focused on students' learning while teaching. Ms. Lee tended to address the content knowledge of the dance area through an approach and with methods simple enough that the students with little dancing experience could understand. In class sessions at the beginning of the semester, she was likely to explain the meaning and movements of the dance by comparing these concepts to the daily life of a human being. Furthermore, she stimulated students' discussion during the class. As observations and studies (Chappell, 2007; Hanninen, 1988; Lord, 2001) reveal, the teachers

used as subjects for these studies tended to ask their students to initiate questions related to dance at the beginning of the class sessions. In like manner, Ms. Lee expressed her intentions with regard to facilitating class discussion.

I encourage students to present their ideas, opinions, and thoughts at all times. In particular, I try to give them some chance to present them. It makes students actively and voluntarily involved in their learning. This kind of activity leads to a lively and dynamic climate in the class. (Stimulated Recall)

One junior male majoring economics expressed his thoughts about Ms. Lee's teaching approach.

The class is the one to which the students could fully devote their time and effort. As one of the basic physical education classes, I liked the class because it provided the opportunity for students to design or choreograph dance movements and perform their own movements for other students. I did not have to learn something through the textbooks, but I was allowed to create the movements and to express my thoughts using my body. In particular, throughout this class, Ms. Lee enabled students to have the chance to be reflective of themselves and their lives while discussing with each other and preparing the final class.

According to the above student's statement, Ms. Lee has operated the classes with an emphasis on the students themselves. She tried to make her class student-centered, having students themselves initiate and develop the themes they would perform for others in the final class. This is consistent with two studies (Chappell, 2007; Hanninen, 1988) that found the expert teachers allowed the students to initiate and develop their interests and abilities. Through this process, Ms. Lee allowed students to have the opportunities to think for themselves, and to examine the relationships between their studies and their lives while preparing the performance in the final classes.

### ***Teaching Beyond Dance Technique***

In the development of expertise in teaching, Bell (1997) suggested that beginning teachers were rule-bound when teaching and could seldom see the overall picture of teaching. In the initial stage in her teaching career, Ms. Lee tended to teach dance techniques just as most beginning dance teachers do (Alter, 2000). That is, at that time she focused on teaching precise skills in dance movements using the same methods by which she was taught by her own previous teachers. As her teaching experience accumulated, she realized this way of teaching was not the best and came to believe that dancing was a reflection of one's mind and

body working together to express something (Dixon, 2005; Johnson, 1987). Upon examining the origin of the Korean folk dance, she noted that the dance came from daily life and human labor. Naturally, she perceived that teaching dance was not just teaching techniques. She elaborated on this point as follows:

My teaching focuses on the unification of body and mind. That is, I always encourage all students to recognize the ideological meaning of each dance movement, rather than to just acquire the technical skill. Teaching dance should not be focused on learning technique. Whatever the dance class, the basic principle has to be emphasized.

In this regard, Ms. Lee expressed her philosophy of dancing and detailed her teaching approach when working with students who lack a rich experience in dancing.

One does not have to think that the dance techniques are designed for special people. We must consider that dance is derived from the daily movements of life. I have had confidence in this matter when I taught dance at several dance schools. Even though the participants at dance schools have never had experiences in dancing before, they could easily realize and learn dance with pre-experienced knowledge and movements like labor actions and the laws of nature. That is dance.

Through interviewing several students at the university, this researcher learned that Ms. Lee has focused on her teaching beyond dance technique. An example of Ms. Lee's methods of enhancement came from a sophomore female who had learned a modern dance under other dance teacher, "In class, Ms. Lee hardly teaches arm or eye movements. Instead, the teacher stresses breathing, feeling, and expression." The female student confessed that she was aware of struggling with Ms. Lee's teaching approach during the first couple of weeks in the semester, but she later realized that ultimately the approach worked well for her. One senior female who had experiences in dancing classic ballet for a long time discussed Ms. Lee's class practices.

It was very challenging. When I entered the university, the teacher first explained how the dancer breathed while dancing and the aesthetic or philosophical meanings of the dance movements. It was very fresh. Most dance teachers mainly focus on explaining techniques first. For example, turning the body like this or pointing your finger like that.

Ms. Lee's teaching philosophy and practice as it extends beyond the dance technique was demonstrated not only in the development and implementation of classroom approaches and techniques but when assessing students' learning as well. Expert teachers come to know through training, experience, and observation what is the most important and what is the least important element in a given teaching situation (Manross & Templeton, 1997). Upon extended and focused observation of the classes of the expert teacher, Ms. Lee, it was found that she tried to indicate the causes of the students' learning difficulties, focusing on determining factors such as past experience, social contexts, physical limitations and personal attitudes, rather than eliciting and confining their attention and energies to their technical problems. Ms. Lee determined and addressed the most profound problem encountered by each student that she perceived as resulting in the visible problems the dance techniques. When explaining the underlying problem to the student, she rarely shares too much information; her restraint allowed the student an opportunity to evaluate his or her performance and to understand his or her own errors. Only in rare instances, probably when Ms Lee was keenly aware that the student or students had no background or training that might prepare them to analyze their own performance and realize where their shortcomings lay, did Ms Lee "spoon feed" members of her classes. When asked to explain her reasons for using this particular method, Ms Lee responded.

In most cases, students do not recognize the essential problem in performing the dance movements. Thus, they are likely to see their own mistakes in a superficial way. But, this way is not helpful to solve their problems. Once the students understand the fundamental problems, other minor problems are being automatically solved. Thus, I just point out the fundamental problems my students have. (Stimulated Recall)

### ***Diverse Teaching toward Diverse Learning***

Effective teaching requires the use of a variety of teaching skills and strategies in classes. Based on a command of the subject matter, expert teachers tend to use multiple teaching ways in presenting information and skills that enable students to better understand and develop their skills (Manross & Templeton, 1997; Schempp, Manross, Tan, & Fincher, 1998c). Additionally, the teachers seek a diversity of student learning activities for accomplishing their teaching tasks (Housner & Griffey, 1985; Schempp et al., 1998c). In this study, Ms. Lee has made efforts to implement all possible or valuable methods and ideas for providing a myriad of learning experiences. Ms. Lee seldom taught dance theory or movements using only one or two methods. These strategies she implemented at her classes included discussion, visual learning like watching videotapes, peer teaching, imitation, presentation, choreography and performance, writing a paper, and seeing performances in addition to formal methods like

lecturing and demonstrating. The followings are two representative examples of her teaching diversity.

### *Use of Metaphorical Language*

Ms. Lee preferred to use metaphorical language whenever explaining or demonstrating the movements of dance. This approach is beneficial for students who have never experienced the physical process of dance before or who have had limited experience in certain concepts that are crucial to coordinating mind and body in performance (St. Pierre, 2002). Metaphorical language functions so that students easily grasp the image or meaning of tasks and quickly extend their thinking in the learning situation. For instance, Ms. Lee was likely to use 'nature' and 'human life' as basic sources from which language could be drawn that would enable all students to have common experiences and feelings. One of field notes indicated specific examples of how Ms. Lee anticipated using metaphor to enable students to create both visual and emotional impressions in dance. "Try to think and dance as if the flower buds are swollen to bursting" or "Try to perform the movements as if you are real soldiers a long time ago." The use of metaphor is valuable not only for beginning students in dancing but for advanced students as well. The strength and effectiveness of the use of metaphor in suggesting and implementing mood and movement in dance was proved while interviewing a female freshman from science education whose experience with modern dance was limited. The student said, "The teacher often uses a metaphor. For example, the teacher asks us to feel the principles of the sky and earth while dancing. The metaphor often makes us easily understand the meaning of the movements."

### *Open Dance Classrooms*

For optimizing conditions contributing to student learning in her classes), Ms. Lee made an effort to construct the best possible learning environment. In this regard, she did not insist upon having her classes in a formal dance classroom or dance studio only. Class observations, as well as an interview with one of her students revealed that she taught in a variety of places such as indoor and outdoor theaters, the library, an office, a studio, a museum, on the grass, and in a gymnasium when she felt a need to change the class. On all her syllabi, seeing a professional dance performance was required at least once during a semester. In addition, based on the class observation, Ms. Lee suggested that during the semester her students participate in workshops and symposiums related to the area of dance so that the students could have extensive perspectives and knowledge in dance. According to one male student who had previously taken her course "Dance and the Arts," Ms Lee had conducted the class in a restaurant in order that the students might discuss an issue that had been raised while having dinner together. The student recalled, "Her class was not over in the classroom. We met at a cafeteria to communicate and discuss the contents that were not covered in the class. This was

the first time in my life as a student that a teacher had interrelated a difficult classroom issue with more casual social interaction.” Furthermore, Ms. Lee demonstrated the modification of the existing class environment to provide her students with the best learning experience. Her reason for employing such modification is her belief that dance can be taught in any place or environment. Although Ms Lee admits that the auditorium does not lend itself to creative modification as readily as does the classroom, she nevertheless offers suggestions for certain modification strategies.

Even if the course is a dance theory, I always make students learn at least the basic dance movement. The auditorium space is not appropriate to move, but I used to change the classroom environment to be able to move all students. For example, moving some chairs somewhere, letting students stand next to their own chairs, making half of students come to the front etc. Therefore, the movements to be taught are also modified to be suitable to the space.

### ***Improvisational Teaching with Alternatives***

Teaching has been considered a complex and dynamic act, requiring a variety of roles to fit unstable and uncertain conditions (Cole, 1988; Cushing, Sabers, & Berliner, 1992; Dodds, 1994; Lampert & Clark, 1990). Teachers must be prepared at all times for unexpected events to arise or unusual cases to present themselves during the course of their teaching. Within a certain teaching framework, there exist a variety of possibilities that can influence and change the instructional actions of the teachers. Like other expert teachers, Ms. Lee obviously used a conditional strategy (Abraham & Collins, 1998) as “if or if not this, then I would do” in her class decision-making.

In general, this expert dance teacher did not have written lesson plans for all daily classes. Instead, she tended to plan depending on her interpretation of the class contexts. At times, pre-planned activities were deleted or unplanned scenarios were added during her classes. On the first day of classes, it was observed that, in contrast to other teachers in conjunction with their classes, Ms. Lee started to teach the main content she prepared, not the basic movements. When Ms. Lee was asked to recall the situation and to explain her teaching behavior, she replied,

I tried to teach the basic dance movements like raising arms and bending knees, but I changed my mind, because the students did not look like beginners. At that moment, I felt it was ok to proceed directly to teaching more difficult movements without introducing the basic movement in Korean dance. It was a really short period of time. Suddenly, I realized that the change in teaching approach was

needed. (Stimulated Recall)

One day in another class observation indicated that Ms. Lee planned to show a videotaped recording depicting a special physical maneuver that resulted in a form of Korean dance movements. Surprisingly, the VCR did not work at that time. After trying several times to solve the problem, Ms. Lee started to demonstrate the movements by herself. Through the stimulated recall technique, the moment was explained,

The case might occur in a teaching life. In that case, I had to spontaneously do something to handle the situation. That is, when the VCR was not available at that moment, I should possibly explain and demonstrate it. Of course, I thought the visual material rather than demonstrating the movement was best in introducing the information in that case. (Stimulated Recall)

Class observations found that when students have difficulty understanding or performing the content being taught, Ms. Lee generally introduces students to alternatives. If an alternative did not work, the teacher again imported another way until the strategy fitted the situation. She commented,

When facing some problems in learning dance, it is important to perform by oneself and to devote as much time as possible. But, sometimes these methods do not work. The student needs to approach the learning situation in another way. It is useless to continue to practice movements without clues as to why the problems occurred. In this case, alternative ways are needed in learning dance. Observing the performances of other students is very helpful and can make positive use of “time outs” and rest periods. That is, I make some students sit down and observe the performances of other students. In some cases, observing allows students to realize the problems they have.

### ***Dance Festival for Evaluating Students’ Learning***

Teachers should be knowledgeable about approaches, procedures, or activities in order to assess student learning, as well as the advantages and disadvantages associated with employing a particular assessment device or technique (Fernandez-Balboa, 1997). A document analysis of her syllabi indicated that Ms. Lee has a system of evaluating students using a variety of methods such as presentations and discussion, class reports, performances, and choreography as these elements were demonstrated in the final class. However, she rarely gave students a written test. In addition, she did not put a high value on performance even in regard to activity classes. The presentation or discussion criterion implied the degree to which

students volunteered for class presentations and became willingly involved in class discussion. Some of the class reports were designed to get students to pursue further their familiarity with dance history, its terminology, its role in society, as well as, ideally, the appreciation of a professional dance performance. In the case of a final report, the format employed by Ms Lee most resembles writing a journal. Ms. Lee asked her students to report what they had learned, how they had been involved in the performance of the final class, how they felt about the performances of other students, along with similar observations, perspectives and impressions they had of the class they had taken. Performance and choreography as criteria in the final class meant that all students should perform what they had been taught or that they had created individually or within small groups. It is surely significant that this expert dance teacher insisted on transparency in the potentially volatile area of assessment. She made a point of indicating clearly the philosophy, techniques, standards and boundaries that she observed in assessing students' learning. Ms Lee offers this simple summation of the primary points that constitute her final evaluation:

Evaluation is made several ways. First, one should perform well. This does not mean that all students are able to perform as if they were professional dancers. My evaluation focuses on efforts and attitudes toward learning. I want students to dance with a devoted mind, not to dance like robots. In addition, I have students submit several reports during the semester. Finally, I ask students to create movements as a final exam and to perform them for other students.

Likewise, Ms. Lee believes that learning dance could be effectively accomplished through various experiences. For instance, a document analysis of several videotapes reflects one of Ms Lee's innovative teaching approaches to offer "memorable" learning experiences to her students. Every semester in the final class, Ms. Lee holds a special class in the gym or theater at the university so that all students are involved in the creative and performance process of dance. That is, all students from her classes come together to perform dance movements they had choreographed or learned. On the occasion when this researcher observed Ms Lee's class, most of the students appeared to be non-dancers. Consequently, the students revealed some anxiety about what to do for the final class because this would be the first time in their lives, for some, when they performed before an audience of their peers (Dustin, 2004). However, considering these students' limited dancing experience (one semester) their performances were quite adequate even though their dance techniques were not advanced. Furthermore, their creativity in performing dance and their appreciation of the performances of other students were no longer those of novice dancers. Ms. Lee explains the intentions and goals for this final class and the procedures employed to facilitate those goals.

I suggest they prepare the dance performance beginning in the early weeks of the semester and I involve them in creative processes like choreography, costume, music, etc. I know some students feel so strange or embarrassment, but the students could understand why the process is necessary and try to challenge their potentials, after I show them the performance videos that my previous student have followed. I do not expect them to give a professional performance. I just want them to have an opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas using a body and others. (Stimulated Recall)

### **Discussion**

The expert Korean dance educator in this study identified five approaches to teaching beginning dance classes in higher education that facilitate the development of expertise in the field: reflecting and expressing students' learning through dance movements; teaching beyond dance technique; diverse teaching toward diverse learning; improvisational teaching with alternatives; and dance festival for evaluating students learning.

Regardless of the subject matter, the curriculum should be directly relevant to the reality of students' personal lives and experiences (Ennis, 2003; Fernandez-Balboa, 1995). In order to insure that the learning process will be individualized and more meaningful, it is necessary not only to teach students how to effectively perform dance movements, but to explain why such movements are meaningful in personal life and to make learners aware of the impact performing these movements can have on their own and other societies (Ennis, 2003, 2006). In this study, the case teacher gave students various learning opportunities that were reflective of their lives and thus integrated the new art form they were mastering with past experiences and what they already knew. For instance, students were encouraged to express their own lives through original Korean folk dance movements supplied by the case study. Conversely, students' designed their own dance movements from the first through the final class. Chen (1999, cited in Lord, 2001) reported that an expert teacher was likely to integrate children's prior knowledge and life experiences with content of the lesson so that this strategy could stimulate children's desires to interpret and to generate ideas for dances.

Expert dance teachers tend to emphasize their teaching beyond dance techniques (Alter, 2000; Schlaich & Dupont, 1993). Rather than teaching only the technical aspects of dance, the expert dance educator in this study focused on teaching students to understand and feel the basic notions and meaning of dance and to have a positive attitude toward dancing (Chappell, 2007; Dunkin, 2004; Lazaroff, 2001; Lord, 2001). In addition, while presenting learning problems students have, she seldom indicated the technique aspects of the problems. That is, her diagnosis tended to be toward why their problems occurred rather than what their

problems were. According to Tan (1997), experts are likely to present problems based on underlying principles and metaphors. That is, expert teachers could discern fundamental problems from trivial ones, while non-experts are either unaware of or miss the important underlying fundamental issues (Berliner, 1988, 1994; Swanson, O'Connor, & Cooney, 1990).

Expert teachers generally make a number of instructional changes during interactive teaching, using a variety of strategies stored in memory. These changes are often based on facilitating student performance as compared to novices' changes in response to student interest cues (Griffey & Housner, 1991; Housner & Griffey, 1985; Nelson, 1988). This study revealed a myriad of teaching formats that had been developed in order to facilitate students' progress in learning dance. The finding in this area is consistent with those from two previous studies (Housner & Griffey, 1985; Lord, 2001; Schempp et al., 1998c). The first study found that experienced teachers brought a number of teaching changes to the classroom using various strategies in classes and that these changes improved student performance. The second and third studies revealed that expert teachers used a greater range of pedagogical strategies and presentation formats that facilitated effective instruction of the subject matter. In particular, expert teachers preferred to implement a lot of metaphors in explaining a whole image of a concept or a skill. This enabled students to better understand and capture the meaning and image of the content (Baker, Schempp, Hardin, & Clark, 1998; Schempp & St. Pierre, 1998; St. Pierre, 2002).

Another characteristic of diverse teaching was a creative learning environment and adequate, up to date equipment. Expert teachers are able to build creative class environments, whereas novice teachers view the learning environment as being limited (Hanninen, 1988). For example, the expert teachers implemented the existing equipment in many different and unique ways to extend the teaching effects that could optimize student learning (Griffey & Housner, 1991; Housner & Griffey, 1985; Manross & Templeton, 1997). The expert dance educator in this study provided a variety of places for learning dance beyond the regular classroom or dance studio. The students of the expert teacher thus had lively and vivid experiences that encouraged extensive and effective learning.

Conditional or opportunistic teaching is a distinction of expert teachers (Berliner, 1994; DeMarco, 1998; Hanninen, 1988; Housner & Griffey, 1985; Schempp et al., 2002). Expert teachers involve conditional adaptations to situational complexities in many instances, by using their personal cues to seek the signals that guide their spontaneous actions. That is, the expert teachers have the abilities to read situation cues that might be "right" only for that particular situation, at that time, and under those circumstance (Cole, 1988). So expert teachers have more conditional strategies for class problems than non-experts (Abraham &

Collins, 1998; Carter, Cushing, Sabers, Stein, & Berliner, 1987; Carter, Sabers, Cushing, Pinnegar, & Berliner, 1988; Swanson et al., 1990). That is, experts implement a strategy of, “if this were the case, then I would do that.” For example, “if my teaching approach does not work in this situation, then I would approach it differently to fit that situation.” Indeed, sound judgment and a practical, workable approach to problem solving may be regarded as a requirement for any teacher to qualify as “expert.” When students have trouble understanding the information taught, the expert dance teacher is expected to change the previous content or modify the teaching approach. Based on the quality of the pedagogical schemata, the expert teacher could quickly interpret what is going on in the classes and take improvisational actions to fit the existing phenomenon.

The classes of expert teachers are exciting, challenging, and variable, because expert teachers have provided a multiplicity of activities which have been outlined in rich detail (Hanninen, 1988; Lazaroff, 2001; Lord, 2001; Schempp et al., 1998c; Schempp et al., 2002). The expert dance educator in this study employed a variety of assessment techniques to thoroughly evaluate students’ learning, and which were designed to accommodate the different ways in which students learn. As a tool to assess students’ learning, the case teacher implemented the dance festival with the creative processes and produces of the college students. Lazaroff (2001) explained that the performance at the festival was an imaginary goal that creatively shaped and built students’ in-class activities. Even though the case teacher is conducting classes at the higher education level, most of her students are beginners in the study of dance, so the case teacher’s use of the festival for creative performance is very similar to the approaches of expert teachers in teaching creativity to elementary school children (Chappell, 2007). According to the findings of this study, the assessment itself would be a learning experience as well; the festival during the case teacher’s final class provides a dynamic vehicle through which everyone could demonstrate what they have learned and enjoy the preparation of the festival.

### **Summary and Suggestions**

In regard to teaching and teacher education, knowing insightful characteristics of expert teaching in beginning dance classes can guide all dance educators’ decisions about how to teach. Expert teaching is developed through continuous efforts and through time spent in practicing performances. The expert dance teacher possesses elaborate pedagogical content knowledge (Fortin, 1993; Shulman, 1986, 1987) and yet continues to seek new knowledge for improving their teaching. In this study, research indicates that the expert dance teacher prioritizes “teaching students” and focuses less on teaching subject matter, thus achieving a more constructive or continuous learning for her novice learners. The expert dance teacher who is the subject of this case study has implemented a variety of teaching strategies and

skills that will enable her and other teachers in the field to inspire and motivate students and to bring dynamic and challenging dance classes to their classrooms.

Two suggestions are made for future research in the areas of teaching and teacher preparation and training in the field of dance education. The first suggestion is that a number of projects involving extensive case studies of the various aspects of the teaching of dance in higher education need to be conducted to facilitate articulation and documentation. Studies of outstanding cases of expertise in dance instruction enable dance educators in all levels to access easily what has been discovered through experience and to use effectively concepts and methods that have proven workable in shaping their own teaching practice. Depicting multiple cases or examples within a given unit of study would positively influence beginning dance teachers as well as pre-service dance teachers by encouraging them to apply an effective approach at the right time and in the right context to ensure effective teaching. In particular, beginning dance educators in all school and university levels need to be encouraged to learn from expert teachers so that they may free themselves from fixed ideas and attitudes in teaching (Buck, 2007). Two studies (Chappell, 2007; Jeff, 1980) pointed out that limitless imagination is needed for dance teachers and also suggested that imagination must be implemented in a variety ways in order to reach students.

A second suggestion is that more research should be conducted involving novice dance learners in order to provide a wider variety of perspectives and approaches and thus facilitate advanced research on dance education in higher education. Recently, Dunkin (2004) suggested that the educational and training programs designed for teachers of dance must be able to accommodate and inspire the novice learners in higher education who appear in many physical sizes, many stages of physical fitness, and many degrees of interest and attitude toward dancing. In most of the countries that provide physical education or dance education in the schools, dance in the elementary school has been taught by elementary classroom teachers (Dunkin, 2004). However, it is important to point out that, regardless of students' age, there are many groups of older students throughout the world who have never experienced or learned dancing in their lives. One can certainly argue that these adults might benefit from the efforts of an expert dance instructor just as do younger children, and that the social and psychological enrichment that might result from creating and implementing such programs would be well worth the investment. In anticipation of this kind of progress, understanding how older students perceive and experience dancing would be a meaningful project for the research community to pursue since such understanding would be crucial to providing the community with dance education.

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