

Efficacy of Students’ “Body Stories” on Novice Dance Students’ Training at Makerere University

*Eric Jjemba**

Abstract

Whereas both scientific and humanistic experiences are essential for effective dance teaching and learning, the lack of prior knowledge about students’ movement experience inhibits pedagogical excitement. Looking at mindfulness observation as a science to perceive, recall and develop methods for teaching and learning (about) dance, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of students’ body stories on dance teaching and learning. I precisely shared my transition from non-formal practice to dance academia. This enthused my students to write their lifelong body stories during our dance class. A systematic reflection on these qualitative inquiries illustrated an influence for authentic dance teaching and learning at Makerere University. Twenty-three students (15 females and 8 males) participated in the study.

Keywords: authentic learning, body story, dance anatomy and physiology, movement awareness and observation

* Institution: Makerere University



Introduction

Dance pedagogy in Ugandan tradition is dominated by use of stories, and applying music as a teaching aid. Through indigenous philosophies, communal random mirroring, and repetition in movements to reflect the interplay between individuals and the community, students acquire knowledge through trial-and-error methods (Mabingo, 2017). Through such techniques, students are tasked to dance over and over again in order to reach a desired standard. This is done without explaining the underlying principles which would ease teaching and learning (MacDonald, 1991). Such a methodology is common even at the Department of Performing Arts and Film (PAF) of Makerere University (the highest institution offering dance education in Uganda). In other words, the teaching approaches at Makerere University and those in the local Ugandan communities have not differed much and this seems to influence the discrepancy that hinders the pronouncement of dance in academic fields.

There are many stories that can be told about a person through examining the way s/he carries self, her/his dress code, weight, height, skin colour, character, childhood stories, and life upsets, among others. An examination of novice dance student's childhood movement experiences through body organisation, posture, body attitudes, shaping qualities, qualities of flow, weight transfer aspects and leaning challenges was done. With strong

awareness to life-long experiences, one can manage his/her negatives and capitalise on the positives during formal learning and teaching of dance. As a therapy related art form, appropriate utilisation of body stories provided psychological and cognitive attributes not only to the story-teller but also to his/her audience.

Unlike today where students are just offered a subject of dance without applying for it, during the 1980s and 1990s, students were admitted from all regions of the country to ensure indigenous teaching styles (for ethnic dance) at entry to formal education. The students had life-long ethnic dance skills which they shared along teacher's guidance. These kinds of students used to dictate an inclusive curriculum which, not only accommodated varying teaching and learning methods but also integrated academics into extensive practicum courses like People's Theatre. Such courses used to connect university staff and students to local indigenous arts practitioners where local communities would associate with university academic programs and pick interest in joining arts academia.

The unhealthy shift in administering arts education, therefore, calls for diverse adjustment in the pedagogy of dance at PAF. The academic development for dance has been further hampered by the unavailability of staff and unmotivated students that are usually admitted for dance scholarship. There has been evident shift in curriculum since 2010

when government sponsorship was removed on dance at Makerere University. Dance teaching is currently dictated by limited availability of teaching staff and the poor students attitude to the discipline. Many of the admitted students just offer dance as an opportunity for entry into Makerere University and usually exit or drop the dance module at second year. Most of these students lack prior experience and interest in the dance discipline but opt for it in fear of competition from other subjects that may require higher entry points (Sembatya, 2020).

While dance performance, along with most athletic practice, involves large amounts of repetitive training, researchers in the motor learning fields insist that it is the use of knowledge of results rather than the repetition that influences learning. In agreement with Adams (1987 as cited in Krasnow (1996), the old habits of pushing, twisting, and forcing students' bodies into aesthetically pleasing positions must be replaced by instruction in body awareness. A holistic view that emphasises dance's ability to connect mind and body is as old as the human race (Bartenief, 1980). So, observation and analysis of movement allows students to perceive, recall and develop learning methods for dance. Through experiential-personal exploration, fresh beginners in dance academics shared their body movement history, observation and awareness skills. The study thus shares a variety of students' childhood

experience to justify their body organisation, learning challenges, and movement experience.

The apparent lack of pedagogical knowledge in dance academia challenges teachers to invest time on studying students' learning experiences (Jjemba, 2018) and provide possibilities for production and construction of knowledge (Freire, 1998). As alternative to conventional dance teaching, a critical study of students' movement posture, shape and alignment allowed students to find 'safe ways' to manage their negative thoughts about life while studying dance. Issues, such as fear to be injured, concern of body wellness, weight control, body size and inflexibility, necessitates facilitators to design movement exercises that favour specific body types, and easy management of bodily challenges.

In order to develop a trajectory that aims at raising students' physical and cognitive awareness, childhood stories, learner's personal experience that influence attitude in movement/dance were interrogated. Historical background about the students (students' body stories) was communally examined to contextualise teaching and learning of the cultural and scientific subject of dance. With an assumption that there it is challenging to attain efficacy while teaching adult novice students, both scientific and humanistic experiences need to be considered.

Theoretical Framework

Dance teaching and learning is majorly an experiential-based exercise where both the teacher and learner use a variety of their past individual and cultural exposure to generate new knowledge. Tapping into Freire's (2010) idea that teaching is not all about transference of knowledge but providing possibility for learning; the Ubuntu ideology encourages teachers to inspire their students into respecting humanity and its naturalistic structures experience while learning. Combining *Anazina Itakumba* – a Buganda ideology which literally means that he/she who is set to dance does not have to waste time marching, the writing of this paper draws from Experiential Learning Theory by Kolb (1984) that states that learning involves the acquisition of abstract concepts that can be applied flexibly in a range of situations.

As stated by Kolb (1984), a learner has a new experience or interprets a previous experience in a new way (concrete learning), reflects on the new experience to understand what it means (reflective observation), adapts their thinking or constructs new ideas based on experience and reflection (abstract conceptualisation) and applies their new ideas to real-world situations to test whether they work and see if any changes need to be made (active experimentation).

Through experiential-personal exploration of Movement observation and Analysis; to perceive, recall, and develop methods for teaching and

learning of dance (Jjemba, 2013), I have observed that novice dance students can share their childhood experiences to justify their current body organisation, posture, learning opportunity, and challenges. In agreement with Kenneth Kaunda's statement that: "let the West have its technology and Asia its mysticism, Africa's gift to world culture must be in the realm of human relationship" (Kaunda, 1967 cited in Mabingo 2018). This paper is also guided by advocacy and curiosity during my twenty years' experience in dance academia.

Methodology

A qualitative design was employed where body stories were reviewed in focused group discussion/classroom setting. Participants' childhood experiences were engaged to connect learning to their early childhood motor development. These class discussions ensured self-trust amongst novice students allowing dynamic expression and explanation of body stories. Twenty-three students – 15 females and 8 males – participated in the study.

While as students with stage names, that is, Vicx and Jojo, were excited about allowing the author to use these stage names, those without stage names preferred their real names (for example Kilabo and Fridah) to be altered slightly but stay with some resemblance nearest to their true names while documenting and referencing identity for this paper.

Given a small number of students that offer dance under the BA Arts course at Makerere University, data from this survey can be generalised to reflect a good representation.

An ethnographic analysis of students' stories was used to collect physiological data on dancers' postures and physical attitudes. In order to harness the efficacy of adult dance learning and teaching, both scientific and humanistic experiences had to be examined. Considering the public's disconnect to knowledge in dance academia, I shared the story about my transition from non-formal to dance academia with my Movement Awareness and Observation students. This boosted their confidence to share their body stories in context. Based on my early experience as a dancer in both formal and non-formal dance settings, I asked participants to mirror my narrative and write their own story, basing on their observation and awareness to body movement experience. This approach created a safe-thematic environment for participants to write their own stories demonstrating their transition from non-formal to dance academia.

The body, action, space, time and effort aspects (BASTE) were used as a framework to situate dance's scientific and humanistic status. This framework explores 'body' as a dancer's instrument, that has lived experience; 'action' as movements of body parts in unison and sequential patterns; space as performance stage-spectrum-dimension or depth of body

action; 'time' as the rhythmical tempo of body-action-in space; and 'effort' as energy flowing with different quality of flow to determine emotions of the dance learner in the learning environment. Therefore, the technical aesthetics and educational values in dance teaching and learning were traced through mindful awareness of these five (BASTE) aspects.

Study Objectives

The general objective of this study was to examine students' prior knowledge at entry to dance academia. The study was guided by the following questions:

- What stories do you have about your birth and your childhood movement experience?
- How do you compare your past with current movement experiences?
- What challenges do you encounter with your body currently as a result of your past experience?

Presentation and Discussion of students' Body Stories

As an icebreaker for my students to present their body stories in view of their entry to dance academia, I first shared my experience that I generated while at Afri-Talents' and Diamonds' Ensemble theatre companies as a stage dancer in 1999. My experience relates with the belief held by novice students that dance is only for entertainment and leisure. My consciousness to such negativity fuelled my desire to pursue a diploma in Music Dance and Drama

(MDD) which (area of study) was and still is unappreciated by even learned leaders completion of this diploma, I felt bound to reflect more and, hence, sought to enrol for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in dance for more theoretical grounding.

Despite the BA in dance being a government-sponsored programme at its maiden introduction in 2001, its enrolment was very poor. I was the only one who “found sense” in applying for this course. I had to mobilise other applicants because the university could not teach only one learner on a fully funded programme. In 2002, seven other students were admitted to join me and we constituted the eight boys-pioneer BA dance graduates of Makerere University. Currently, all eight are responsible citizens: two university dons, one director of training at Uganda National Cultural Centre (UNCC), one deputy director at Uganda Police Band, two popular musicians, (two members of parliament) and one exporter of indigenous arts.

I shared my experience from this BA dance (2002-2005) programme highlighting staff and the dimensions in the different modules covered to encourage my students that studying dance has good prospects especially if handled well. The public’s negative perception to dance academia enthused my passion to creatively and aggressively negotiate the negativity but rigorously embraced the scientific dimensions in my dance study. Secondly; a well-balanced staff

of one master artist – Professor Moses Sserwadda – with profound knowledge in indigenous art, his MA students, Mr Wamala Kintu and Ms Judith Nakacwa Lubega-Tusiime, one Fulbright MAFA scholar, Jill Pribyl, from New Mexico and a German energetic practicing Dance Movement Therapists, Annette Schwalbe. This combination of teaching staff gave a strong foundation to my dance scholarship. This narrative gave my students a baseline to contextualise their stories. Whereas my experience as a stage dancer had little direct movement dimensions, it was specifically presented in such a format to lessen inhibition and stigma towards dance scholarship. I further emphasised that my early knowledge/experience in dance was further provoked by Annette’s teaching of Dance Anatomy, Kinesiology, Awareness and Dance Movement Therapy courses which pronounced the scientific dimensions of the ordinary discipline of dance.

From the students’ narratives below, it is evident that adult dance learning efficacy calls for both scientific and humanistic experiences. The experience from Annette’s courses did not only inform this study about examining students’ body stories but also affects my classroom practice, resulting in improved student appreciation of non-formal dance experience in their formal training.

Justine, one of the study participants attributes her peaceful character to her childhood thumbs

sucking traits. Being a shy girl, she hardly participated in co-curricular activities but later on she started engaging in them. She was a great admirer of one folk game called *bladder* -with stages like *kagulu kamu*; where a rope is fixed in the knee area. Her knee was bigger compared to her age-mates. So, they allowed her to put the rope at the ankle wrist thus challenging her to lift her leg up so that her ankle area was seen to be at knee level of her playmates. This gave her an opportunity to exercise more than her friends and thus improving her fattiness levels (she claimed). She also joined the school's dance clubs to disapprove her slender friends who doubted her fitness because she was very fat. Her mates started appreciating her because she could do movements that seemed hard given her body weight. Such courageous characters made her famous; resulting in winning a leadership post at school – without buying any logistics to influence her voters. Despite the above positivity in Justine's story, below are a few moments that were and still are negative as she testifies:

My mum lost a lot of blood at my birth. She almost lost her life due to my overweight. After giving birth to me, her father was very nervous to the extent of saying that I would have died instead of his daughter being in such a life-threatening condition.

At PAF, my fellow classmates underestimate my potential because of my weight.

Sometimes, dance partners find it challenging to lift me during choreography classes, but I compensate that by lifting them.

I always walk while looking down – resulting in a curved upper torso which portrays me as someone with poor physical attitude. I am aware of this negativity and working hard to change the situation.

I am very shy to the extent that I find it challenging to dance alongside people who are better than me. I always think that they will abuse me when I make any mistakes.

I don't want to put on short dresses because I think people will judge me as being indecently dressed – which is totally a different story with slim girls. It looks ok for them.

Justine's awareness to both the negatives and the positives allowed us to negotiate appropriate ways to study with her in an inclusive manner that called for socialisation and interpersonal traits. The innovative teaching motivated from students' experience is expected to produce desired results. The paper, therefore, is anchored in the quest to raise learner's physical awareness, hence, allowing an appreciation of vital body aspects during a short period on a course.

Kilabo is 19 years old, the eight child raised by a single mother. Her childhood life was so playful. In secondary school She loved dancing and sports. Apart from a few church

going outfits, she mostly wore trousers and shorts during her adolescence. Her boy-like traits enabled her to flourish in boys' dance strokes when it came to dance activities. This triggered many to refer to her as a tomboy. In her words:

As a child, I was a tomboy – talking like a boy, dressing like a boy, and even walking like a boy. I socialised so much with boys because my big sister was much older than me; so, my companions were my brothers who were of my age. This influenced my dancing. I would copy dance strokes from my brother – making me popular in my primary school. I was so stubborn that everyone in my school knew me starting from the directors to the gate keepers. I was a darling to everyone and enjoyed every bit of my tomboy traits until when I started getting isolated by fellow girls. As time passed by, my voice started changing to soft tone. I started getting a curvy body shape but my breasts delayed to develop. Every dress I put on suited me only that my conscience and the society perception on me nurtured me in a way that I couldn't wear certain clothes. Whenever I put on certain clothes, I would feel embarrassed. Dancing has shaped me and made me a better person; since at dance they do not segregate in gender. The training emphasises only your brain and movement strength (Kilabo – class comment).

The study of Movement Awareness and Observation equips its students with practical skills in observing and appreciating movements in a variety of artistic fields (Jjemba 2018). The above story highlights Kilabo's awareness of her traits and the ways she complied and fixed the challenges. In a related way, Fridah's awareness to her fears used to torment her learning but the body story experience during the movement awareness and observation class brought back her passion. Dance's nature that includes expression of joy and sorrow serves well to uplift spirits of even the most impoverished life (Muhumuza, 2010). Such constitutes therapeutic dance/movement therapy. It is evident that students improve their self-esteem through mastering their psychophysical selves. Dance is a perfect form of exercise as it necessitates muscular strength, fitness and flexibility without placing excessive stress on a single part of the body. (Jjemba 2013). In agreement, Fridah had this to say:

Mr. Jjemba's teaching of dance concepts is rooted in deep mindful awareness on how dance classes can create cooperation among people. This kind of instruction promotes self-trust which allows us to freely share our past experiences not only with movement but also with other interpersonal concerns. I have gained self-confidence after sharing my body story to my classmates and teacher.

This has particularly improved my walking posture. Being a slender girl, it was very unfortunate to walk with a forward low (tilted) face and concave-shaped upper torso that can easily be misinterpreted and associated with inferiority. I have also improved my sitting posture. By understanding my body organisation, I have developed the ability to recognise a person who has a physical or emotional challenge by only observing the body posture and physical attitude. I like my dance lecturers who keep checking on every class member who may be absent-minded. This has improved my life beyond class.

In order to develop a trajectory that aims at raising students' physical and cognitive awareness, historical backgrounds about students' body stories brought about mindfulness for students, such as Fridah and Kilabo to contextualise communal experiences in formal classroom settings. For purposes of improved teaching and learning practices, this should be encouraged especially in a cultural subject of dance. In the same vein, Jojo's description of her story points more to gender dimensions: "My story lays a fertile ground for dance training without gender segregation. In a dance class, I do lots of things like boys without any shame" (Jojo).

The body story concept contributed to appreciation of personal and general space. For example, short people discovered

that they are best at low grounding movements compared to tall people who give strong levity effects. Vicx's early childhood story compares well to those of his classmates. A third-born of four, dark-skinned among light skinned children, suffered pneumonia at three months which almost killed him. This below is Vicx's testimony:

I was born a fat baby (4 kg), but now I am 21 years with just 38 kg. I am a very small man with a height of 1.3 metres. During my lower primary, it was fine to be short, but from P4 to P7, I started being despised by fellow classmates who made fun of me saying that "... look, Kiberu is short enough to be in nursery section." Whenever I would stand up to contribute something in class, my fellows teased me by saying "... can't you stand up?" This made me feel so small and ashamed. This must be the cause of my funny posture.

Dance and other kinesthetic arts have the ability to connect mind and body which surely has an effect on minimising body posture challenges (Jjemba, 2013). Due to multiple life-threatening factors, the body may shape inward unconsciously; hands tend to fold around the chest, with heavy and raised shoulders; head tilting in sagittal stress forward. Such are not pleasant traits for people of younger age. These traits are signs of tension and pain along the spinal area which may cause body posture deformation. Dance training has the ability to minimise these traits

especially if the person is still in his/her youthful age.

Vicx is a small short boy who walks with a bent upper torso. It can be tempting for one to say that he feels uncomfortable or depressed particularly due to his concave shaping in the upper torso areas. He always walks with a forward low tilted face and his classmates describe him as a person with a poor physical body attitude. At the dance scene, he finds it so burdening to make head-tail connectivity because of his concave shaped body. He also finds difficulty in making a plié; keeping his chest held high-up for a longer time without his upper torso falling forward to a concave shape.

With such a narrative, participants suggested that there is a need for dance teachers to design movement exercises that favour specific body types to allow easy management of varying bodily challenges. The body stories in this discussion challenge us to engage experiential and inspirational learning for the development of teaching and learning fundamentals in dance.

Vicx's redemption narrative/story:

During my Senior One (at 13 years), I made up my mind and said, "enough is enough with being dissed". I accepted my size and body, and started to appreciate and embrace it. At this time, I resorted to luga flow rapping in order to fight against my life-long dissatisfaction. Luga flow rapping defines me and my stage name is "Vics", a symbol of resurrection. I mastered

rap art as a way to counter those who under-looked me because of my height. I have gained confidence at Makerere University (studying music and dance). Everyone at my faculty likes and respects me. In dance classes, I still feel very small when it comes to doing big shapes and shifting weight with a strong physical attitude for my choreography challenges. But I cover up this with my strength in rap because dance is accompanied by music. I spent many hours while my back was bent during baking. This could be a contributing factor for my concave upper torso shaping while walking. I love studying people; so, I get so critical looking at someone's movements, posture, shape, and alignment in whatever activity they engage in.

With such worries, students have devised means to creatively enhance their engagement in alternative activities that closely relate to dance so that they remain relevant in dance. In addition to that, dance teaching and learning in academics allows students to be mindful about their bodies in diverse perspectives. Because dance is taught as received knowledge, leaving out its scientific aspects reduces the significance of its study. For example, in modules, such as anatomy and physiology, choreography, and jazz classes, students have been taught to compare their approaches while executing a *core-distal* movement (from the middle of the body to far parts of the body) and head-tail/convex shaping, upper-lower, body-half and

the awareness of right and left side of the body, *cross lateral connectivity* (twisting the body) to enhance body flexibility and stamina. When appropriately employed, dance seems to provide a natural and exciting way to exercising the body compared to going to the gym, running, and other ways (Jjemba 2018).

Natha, 58.3kg, medium height, dark-skinned girl with natural hair grew up in a family of five. Being the second last-born among four boys, she has grown with strong instincts for boys. She remembers so many stories about her childhood but the prominent ones are thumb sucking and crying when she did not see her mother around. In her body-story sharing sessions, she demonstrates and describes her traits with a lot of pride; a strong physical attitude with a forward high upper torso body projection. This upper torso tilt and a serious face means a lot as she narrates her story to the movement awareness class as referenced below:

I usually take flamboyant steps because I do not want to be bogged down. My studies and work depend on my body story. Growing up in a boys' dominant family influenced my dress code that is why I wear jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers. I would sometimes wear my brothers' clothes and felt better in them. My friends used to call me a tomboy. It would haunt me for people to describe me as "the black girl". This made me ask rhetoric questions like, "will I get light-skinned as I grow up?" Other

students would compare me to charcoal. This would make me cry. During high school days, we would apply to be part of the ushering team but I was always scrapped off for being very dark. My friend, Sumaya, once took precaution of my concern; she said: "Natha; your skin colour is very expensive. A person can change from being dark to light skinned but no one can change from being light to dark skinned. So, you should be proud". From this positive talk, I grew into loving and appreciating myself more. As I continued growing, I embraced being dark. I now walk on the street and men just call me out *bulaka* but I just smile and continue moving (Natha).

Flamboyant as she narrates, Natha found herself in Afro and Ugandan traditional dance forms. Her dress code improved from only jeans and t-shirts to African hand-made jewellery, colours and cloth prints that complement her skin complexion and personality to assert herself as a strong African woman. Literally the negative emotions that society imposed on her for being dark skinned helped her to redefine her purpose and claim her identity as a strong Afro contemporary dancer. Natha attributes her passionate involvement in Afro dance forms to the knowledge and awareness of people's perception on her skin colour.

Caleb (30 years) grew up alone with his mother. He was a choir member for almost all his primary

school life. He tried dancing but his umbilical cord used to protrude out making him uncomfortable in dance costumes and he did not want friends to notice it. He had a dream of becoming a doctor and his parents kept saying so in affirmation. Despite the fact that Caleb had good grades in primary school, he missed joining a good standard secondary school due to school fees challenges, and instead joined a poor standard school resulting in scoring low grades that could not allow him pursue a medical career. In his body-story testimony, Caleb says:

With my umbilical area protruding out abnormally, I hated myself and hoped that when I grew up as a medic, I would help children with such challenges. I could not imagine a child dancing with a protruding umbilical cord. I kept on dodging the choir and other MDD classes. But the umbilical grew smaller as years passed by resulting in my liking dance. When I later joined high school for a science combination, my academic results were not the best. After failing on many attempts to become a doctor, I thought that I was an academic failure. Currently, I am a student of dance at Makerere University but still pursuing my dream of becoming a doctor.

As an indispensable component of history, dance compliments human behavior, supplements communication, improves health, and fosters integration (Muhumuza 2010). Having a positive or negative

experience pushes one to either direction. The most remarkable one is working hard to battle such challenges and turned out victorious.

Mo (20 years) describes herself as a quiet, clean, small, and humble girl since her childhood. She fears trouble and was born a weak, lazy, and shy woman. Dancing would not have been her pursuit even when her mother wished good for her to become a dancer. She began dancing in P5 when she was encouraged by a trainer who spotted a talent in her. She always engaged in traditional dances, and would be selected among the top performers. In her unedited narrative:

After completing P7, I continued dancing but I was still shy until the age of 15 when I gained weight and I found it so hard to continue dancing. At this age, my breasts became very big and this made me feel funny every time I danced vigorously. The trainer chassed me out of dance resulting in hating myself. I also lost interest in participating in other activities. I pretended to be happy away from such engagements but it was hurting to see my fellow colleagues excel in MDD performances. In 2014, I was called in the staff room and made an agreement not to ever miss again. I managed my body problems. I actually noted that it wasn't only me who had adolescent traits/challenges. Many other friends of mine had similar experiences but they managed through. With my poor awareness skills to my

body developments, I almost got kicked out of school.

Laziness is still my biggest weakness yet the dance course requires long hours of hectic working and less relaxing. I am not flexible enough but the movement awareness and observation, anatomy and physiology class exercises and choreography routines are slowly helping me (Mo, class comment).

Using the movement awareness and observation concepts even outside the mandatory classes has allowed students to appreciate and manage certain practical situations related to body attitudes, shaping qualities, qualities of flow, and weight transfer challenges that are common in dance training. There is, therefore, a need for dance teachers to appreciate students' challenges so that appropriate pedagogical methods are designed to encourage engagement that can soothe the bad feeling if not cure it completely.

Below is Fad's narrative:

My name is Fad. I am a last-born. I was so fat during my early childhood, thus, retarding standing and walking abilities. After two years, I started leaning on a wall to try out walking. My mum used to call me *gweguno* but after joining Hope Nursery School at four years, my friends used to call me *small*. My big stomach discouraged me from playing children's games and make shift jumps. At home, I used to put on long trousers to hide my funny rickets.

After realising that I was not alone with such strange body traits, I got courage to join dancing. At 6-7 years, my hobby was reading texts and watching movies. This helped my brain to develop and also improved my social and communication skills. I give women much respect because I grew up with my step-mum who taught me great things. But dance training helps me to forget about my negative and capitalise on the positive.

Fad's story does not differ from Pius' body story. He was born very short and up to now is still short. When young, his mother told him that he used to like dancing and whenever music played, he excitedly jumped up to uncoordinated rhythmical moves. With an assumption that "dance is an art form that requires one to be emotionally and physically fit", Pius' vast informal dance experience was filled with dancing in churches, clubs, and promotions of different companies. His body is strong, energetic, and flexible. He learns very fast and has interest in teaching his classmates. With his past experience in training young children, he seems to grow into a strong dance teacher. With his short body, he thinks that dance movements in high levels are very challenging for him to execute than those in low and middle levels.

To find meaningful trajectory, the Movement Awareness and Observation class located students' life-long aspirations in teaching, learning, and work philosophies. For example, many of Alfred's dance

movements start with the left leg. This challenges him since most dance instructors start their illustrations starting with the right foot. When he makes his first step on a left foot, it contradicts with other dancers who start on right – labelling him as a poor learner. He also noticed that short people excel in low grounding movements compared to tall people who give levity effects in their movements. He is in a transition to perform movement starting with his right foot like his classmate which, hopefully, will improve his dance learning.

Some of the students' biographical narratives highlight meaningful insights that simplify learning and consolidate best teaching methods. Engaging in life stories not only provokes curiosity but also amplifies developmental patterns; resulting in a more fulfilling learning experience. Studying how, when, and where students acquired interesting experiences allowed the minds to re-align with their bodies; thus, informing teaching and learning.

The year 1997 is remembered as a sweet and bitter year for Imi (20 years). This is a year she was born, and coinciding with the loss of her father. Raised by her mother, she experienced a lot of difficulty. Her sister and brother did not like her because she commanded greater love from many family relatives since she was born on Christmas day. In her redemption testimony, she has this to say:

My siblings did not want to play with me; neither did they show care for me. They used to leave me alone, hungry in the house and this resulted in hurting my forehead as I tried to look for food. I still have a scar on my forehead as a result of this. This experience tortured me for long and I began keeping silent even when something hurt me. I hardly share my problems due to the insecurity I had with my siblings at home. With profound awareness to this negativity, I grew up a tough woman who always isolated myself unless if someone showed extreme interest in working with me (Imi, class confession).

Such detestation from Imi's brother and sister was compared to a situation where students come to study dance and meet a strange context different to what they expect. Therefore, designing dance teaching and learning with awareness to students' expectations and experience allows a smooth transition that can boost interest. Dance, as a kinesthetic art, also contributes to the development and enhancement of critical neurobiological systems (Jensen, 2010). Thus, engaging student's body stories during teaching and learning is important. Vibrant innovations like the use of body stories are inevitable in re-imagining dance pedagogy because such can lessen learner's tension during their maiden formal classes of an artistic subject (dance) that has vast scientific dimensions. These body stories can be used as

inspirational learning materials for dance education and practice. This purposeful pedagogy can lead to production of multi-dimensional consequences.

Conclusion

This study avers that dance pedagogy goes beyond mere teaching of body movement through teachers' instructions but should encompass a system that illuminates knowing, thinking, doing, being and becoming because it is not only about teaching students to become artists (Mabingo, 2015). The study concludes that a dynamic analysis of learner's body story leads to pronouncement of awareness to body attitudes, shaping qualities, qualities of flow, and weight transfer aspects that provokes curiosity in teaching and learning of dance. Therefore, teachers' appreciation to learner's awareness is appropriate in encouraging organic dance teaching at Makerere University.

The interplay between individuals and community experience ought to be reflected for university education to contextualise, conceptualise, and activate appropriate knowledge expansion for students. From the

study experience, I now have a clear understanding of the students' experience and how to use it to improve teaching methods. This analysis of students' life-long stories feeds into crafting relationships between non-formal and formal education. The innovative way of preparing students relates, influences and impacts classroom practice and responsibilities.

This learning experience has influenced the editing of the Movement Awareness and Observation, Anatomy and Kinesiology courses at the Department of Performing Arts and Film, allowing teaching and learning to start at a known point of view for better results (Mugimu 2019). This study has also enhanced self-trust amongst novice students allowing dynamic expressions in choreography and performance areas.

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