Dance Education as Social Studies Education

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Measurement of formal education success excludes arts education and focuses instead on reading, mathematics and science. In a world filled with differences between people, geography, backgrounds, customs, religions and sense of self, the only subject that approaches this knowledge is social studies. This discipline is not tested in the Programme for International Student Assessment, but is tested tangentially in the United States. In general, consideration of separate subjects in formal schooling does not encourage focus on what creates the holistic human beings who occupy this complex world. Within the United States, social studies emphasises citizenship and participation in democracy. The purpose of this article is to clearly articulate how dance education, a comprehensive education that enables young people to work in and encounter the world around them, can include social studies. An online survey of dance education practitioners results in ideas that cannot be implemented through the efforts of dance education alone, but require education policy decisions to enable implementation.

Keywords: dance education, social studies education, holistic education, integration

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Plesna vzgoja kot del družboslovnega izobraževanja

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∾   Merjenje uspešnosti formalnega izobraževanja izključuje umetnostno vzgojo ter se namesto tega osredinja na branje, matematiko in na naravoslovje. V svetu, ki ga zaznamujejo razlike med ljudmi, zemljepisnimi značilnostmi, izvori, običaji, verstvi in samopodobami, je edini predmet, ki se približuje temu znanju, predmet družboslovja. Ta sicer ni del mednarodne raziskave PISA (Program za mednarodno ocenjevanje učencev), ampak se v Združenih državah Amerike preverja le posredno. Splošno gledano, razdeljenost predmetov v formalnem izobraževanju ne spodbuja osredinjenosti na tiste vidike, ki prispevajo k oblikovanju celostnega človeškega bitja, ki deluje v tem kompleksnem svetu. V Združenih državah Amerike družboslovje poudarja državljanstvo in aktivno sodelovanje v demokraciji. Namen tega članka je jasno predstaviti, kako lahko plesna vzgoja, celostna oblika izobraževanja, ki mladim omogoča delovanje v svetu in spoprijemanje z njim, vključuje tudi družboslovje. Rezultat spletne ankete med izvajalci plesne vzgoje ponuja zamisli, ki pa jih ni mogoče uresničiti samo s prizadevanji znotraj plesne vzgoje, ampak so za njihovo uvajanje v prakso potrebne odločitve na področju izobraževalne politike.

Ključne besede: plesna vzgoja, družboslovno izobraževanje, celostno izobraževanje, integracija

Introduction

Anecdotal discussions question the value of interdisciplinary education because there is no formal governmental measurement of this type of education. However, this does not prevent recognising ways in which disciplines are already aligned to some extent. Arts education practitioners have focused on interdisciplinary connections to describe their value in the curriculum (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015; Allen, 2023). This article presents the context for this discussion and examines specifically the implementation of integrated dance education and social studies education in order to make it visible and encourage this type of interdisciplinary education.

Measurement of formal education success internationally excludes arts education and focuses instead on reading, mathematics and science, claiming that this narrow focus creates the "knowledge and skills to meet real life challenges" (OECD, n.d., para. 1). In a world filled with differences between people, geography, backgrounds, customs, religions and sense of self, the only subject that approaches this knowledge is social studies. This discipline is not tested in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), but is tested tangentially in the United States. In general, consideration of separate subjects in formal schooling does not encourage focus on what makes us the holistic human beings who occupy this complex world. As one academician stated, "high-stakes testing may lead to a default philosophy of education that holds in high regard a narrow bundle of knowledge and skills" (Guzenhauser, 2003, p. 51).

Within the United States, the "primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world" (NCSS, 1994, p. vii). The purpose of the present paper is to take this philosophical thinking about creating more inclusive education and see if it is possible, and to clearly articulate how dance education, as a comprehensive education that enables young people to work in and encounter the world around them, can also be social studies (Koff, 2021). The article will first examine the literature to determine if the process of dance focused as social studies is discussed and considered. This is followed by a survey of how dance is currently taught within the United States in order to answer the question: Is there commonality between social studies education and dance education within elementary and secondary education, and if so, how much do these disciplines have in common? In discussing how dance education can contribute to the holistic development of young people in schools if it is implemented in this manner, we determine that dance can be recognised as an essential aspect of the curriculum,

encouraging the holistic development of young people and enabling them to meet the challenges of the world around them. These outcomes suggest changes to dance education and policy within the formal education sector.

Definition of Terms

Social Studies

Social studies is defined as "the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence" (NCSS, 1994, p. vii). This encompasses a variety of specific subjects including geography, history, sociology and anthropology. The focus is integration across the curriculum to address concepts (as defined by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)) of culture; time continuity and change; people, places and environments; individual development and identity; individuals, groups and institutions; power, authority and governance; production, distribution and consumption; science, technology and society; global connections; and civic ideals and practices (NCSS, 1994, pp. 12–14). Although elements of these areas can occur within individual courses, a list of this kind leads to entire school focus in order to emphasise a comprehensive education.

Dance Education

As defined through the National Core Arts Standards (US), dance education (like other arts education fields) is focused on the processes of creating, performing, presenting, producing, responding and connecting through eleven core competencies, of which only one reaches beyond the actual arts discipline, that is, relating "artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding" (*National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts Learning*, 2016, p. 13). There are, however, multiple understandings and definitions of dance education. Moreover, dance education can be defined in much broader and complete terms as comprehensive education that enables young people to work in and encounter the world around them through developed expression (Koff, 2021).

Educational Measurement

Measurement of success in education is used throughout the world to gauge the progress of students through formal elementary and secondary education. Within the United States, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is administered in formal schooling and "includes a range of subjects at grades 4, 8, and 12 to provide a comprehensive look at the wide array of

academic areas that are a part of a student's education. Subjects include civics, economics, geography, mathematics, music and visual arts, reading, science, technology and engineering, literacy, U.S. history, and writing" (NAEP, 2021, p. 3). Although the list of subjects is broad, it is important to note that they are tested individually. The only arts covered in NAEP are music and visual arts.

Internationally, PISA, which is created by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "tests the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students in mathematics, reading and science," while also including "additional results on students' financial literacy, creative thinking and readiness for life-long learning" (OECD, n.d., para. 1). PISA was developed as a comparative study across countries. Although the US participates in PISA and is included in PISA data, the participant numbers are relatively small. The focus on comparative testing within the US is NAEP, "The Nation's Report Card."

Both forms of educational testing, PISA and NAEP (within the US), are used to make policy and funding decisions across the world, enabling countries to ensure that their compulsory education is achieving its desired goals. These goals may depend on the specifics of education ministries within the respective countries, which are subject to political shifts. Although education is considered broader than the desires of any individual country, the complex systems of education in any given country are constantly shifting. Due to the complexity of international testing systems, and despite stating that the ultimate goal is to reveal a comprehensive view of progress, the very manner of testing by subjects channels the whole process into views of silos of subjects. Logistically, no comprehensive, integrated education can be tested; governments can only make inferences based on the data collected. Conversely, isolated disciplines are emphasised in order to facilitate testing, resulting in a shift away from any interdisciplinary education.

Within this complex, concrete system of testing, the present article focuses on discerning whether such integration is possible, considered through an examination of the integration of dance and social studies in US schools. The literature was searched and a survey was analysed. The survey questions were derived from and focused on the primary social studies categories (defined by the NCSS, 1994, pp. 14–16) and were adapted and directed to dance educators.

Literature

A review was undertaken of the literature discussing dance/arts expression within the many concepts of social studies, as well as some tangential arts education literature. It was clear that certain standards from the NCSS were not

mentioned in the literature on dance/arts education and rarely appeared in the surveyed literature on arts within educational directions. The literature search for connections to social studies concepts led to narrowing some questions within the survey. The literature was also searched for background to the testing movement, the educational perspective on this movement and, indirectly, its effect on curriculum choices.

The Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal was searched to discern whether this topic had been covered in the previous five years. Two articles concerning music education had been published in the journal during that period (Žnidaršič, 2022; Juhart & Kafol, 2022), while one entire issue had focused on art education and was summarised in the introduction (Selan & Potočnik, 2020). In the five-year period examined, however, the Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal had not discussed dance education or dance education integration with social studies.

The Educational Perspective on Student Learning

PISA testing began in 2000. Prior to that, there was more interest in the integration of arts into the general curriculum (Fiske, 1999) and the arts were considered an important aspect of general educational reform. In the late 1990s, the Clinton administration in the US created the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, bringing together nationally known researchers to analyse the impact of the arts on schools and student learning. Many significant findings emerged from this report (Fiske, 1999). However, the presidential administration changed to a different political party in 2000, the same year that PISA was created, and US perspectives clearly shifted with these changes. PISA set an international standard; however, as mentioned earlier, the arts were not measured. Any arts thrust for integration was tempered by this narrow focus.

From the literature, it is clear that students' ability can only grow when teachers no longer feel obligated to cater to a narrow educational curriculum (Gunzenhauser, 2003), and that students prosper when teachers no longer feel limited by curricular constraints. A unique example is the neglect of special needs students, who suffer from lacking a student voice and require a collaborative effort from their peers and instructors (Conklin & Olah, 2013). This narrow view of education can be the result of an inability to focus on subjects that do not require standardised testing, such as the arts. Subjects that can be applied alongside art would enlarge the educational focus and minimise the marginalisation of group communities (Glass et al., 2013). When education is integrated with history, art and physical education, learning can be more engaging. Quality art(s) lessons can contribute to character motivation, increased

conflict-resolution skills and many other areas (Allen, 2023; Burstein, 2014). Students have been shown to benefit from improvisation and creative exercises, such as those used in dance (Biasutti & Habe, 2021). Improving curriculum development and overall education is an important duty of teachers, and the acceptance of art education (including dance) can aid in this process.

Dance and Culture

Dance students can make connections to the heritage of dance, leading to greater cultural literacy (Georgios, 2017). Dance can cover multiple standards in the NCSS, including areas beyond culture, ranging from "people, places, and environments, to individuals, groups, and institutions" (NCSS, 1994, pp. 12–13). The dance teaching style can include as much social studies content as actual dance content, so it is important for dance educators to consider their teaching style as an aspect of their teaching (Dyer, 2009). Dance education content cannot be devoid of the context of its origin, so teachers must be aware of cases when the past context included problematic practices such as colonialism and environmental exploitation (Kloetzel, 2024). Rather than being ignored in the classroom, these practices can become the background for additional depth in teaching, in order to comprehend the complexity and issues involved in such practices.

One issue that arises when discussing culture is colonialism. The relationship between colonialism and dance education involves readdressing certain dance training/teaching styles. Some of these styles, such as authoritarianism, can be addressed through the dance education classroom. Alternative techniques, such as improvisation, can enhance both communication and children's holistic development (Biasutti, 2021). The ability to use movement is a product of creative expression that aligns with the core values of social studies, as a more sustainable transformation from a worldview to individual communities (Shilcutt et al., 2020). This is often missing in the education curriculum.

Culture can be interpreted in many ways, depending on the discipline. The NCSS says that "culture examines the socially transmitted beliefs, values, institutions, behaviours, traditions and way of life of a group of people" (NCSS, n.d., para. 1) and that arts and other attributes reflect that culture. Dance uses the word culture in a looser manner, as an "expressive medium" that incorporates elements of daily life (Burstein, 2014, p. 133). Cultures reflect a person's relationship to time, which can move from the past to the future and eventually reach the present. Therefore, preserving generational knowledge in its original form is important (Georgios, 2017). Cultural interpretations are often influenced by societal nationalist perspectives, leaving certain questions unresolved when historical events are not acknowledged from a culturally accurate

viewpoint. When a culture's context is not preserved, history becomes a series of events that lack authentic evidence, filled instead by a false digital footprint.

Within dance, expressive culture connects cultural practices with social studies by demonstrating how artistic communities can be shaped by memories and emotional stories, and do not need all of their aspects to be focused on serving an aesthetic performance (Burstein, 2014). By highlighting values and practices that develop artistic codes and frameworks, subjects like dance offer new opportunities to "participate in cultural production, in which prevailing cultural norms are challenged" (Dewinter et al., 2021, p. 940). This intersection of culture and the arts can enhance personal connections with heritage and community. Cultural significance grows by utilising a collection of experiences, thus the more shared experiences there are between individuals in historical culture, the bigger the collective of students that benefit from their social studies education (Dyer, 2009).

Another important aspect of culture and arts concerning social studies is the consideration of civics within specific communities. The social studies curriculum has been critiqued for the need for more initiative in promoting civics, while dance has played a role in fostering marginalised groups by combining culture with dance history, allowing for more voices to be reached and understood (Hall, 2023). An example of dance communities that benefit from civics is the relationship between Black culture and Hip-Hop (Adjapong & Emdin, 2015). Hip-Hop is a culturally significant symbol within the dance scene that is sometimes split between categories such as breakdancing and house, as well as others. Hip-Hop educators using Hip-Hop as a pedagogy within social studies relay the clear message of dance as a civic identity, especially for students of colour who stand up for their history and culture, and see themselves through a social studies narrative (Hall, 2023). The popularity of Hip-Hop has grown through social media, but choreographers emphasise that true Hip-Hop is meant to be taught in a way that honours its origins, as the dance reflects an inclusive part of what being a community means.

Integration of Arts Education and Social Studies

As mentioned previously, education includes limited resources that at times can be unsatisfactory to students interested in expanding their understanding of social studies and art outside a Western perspective. Additional frameworks within history, such as critical race theory (CRT), have recently been added to approach questions that tackle diversity and how indigenous communities have been neglected within popular historical events. In this light, the principles that guide the NCSS are as follows: "NCSS looks forward

to continuing its efforts to provide authentic educational resources on teaching and learning about Indigenous Peoples and Nations, and to foster opportunities and partnerships to engage and inspire all educators to prepare students to be successful in our complex social, cultural, economic and political world" (Paska, n.d., para. 3). With this statement from the NCSS, there are no longer worries surrounding a student's non-adaptable ability and the marginalisation of general art education classrooms (Gunzenhauser, 2003; Conklin & Olah, 2013). Some suggest that if social studies included more art activities, this would lead to learning through active engagement and the creation of healthier social scripts that influence students to have a more empathetic understanding towards others (Brouillette, 2009). Therefore, strategies such as the Universal Design for Learning and the Arts (UDL) support learning as "a dynamic interaction between an individual and the physical and social affordances and constraints of the learning environment" (Glass et al., 2013, p. 100). The primary advantage of the UDL system is its accessibility, which enhances art education by moving away from high-stakes testing (the testing systems discussed above). This approach makes art learning more comprehensible for everyone (Glass et al., 2013). When education involves creative curricula through foundational arts elements such as improvisation, pathways and levelling, commonalities start to form between various subjects: music and dance (Burstein, 2014).

Three key themes have emerged through the literature:
- The international educational testing movement drives international education policy.
- Integration of arts/dance education within the curriculum will more often be driven by arts education initiatives than initiatives outside the arts.
- Dance education within the curriculum has very different interpretations and modes of implementation, leading to an unclear sense of the importance of both pedagogy and the curriculum within the dance education classroom.
- Considerations for curriculum development will take these concepts into account.

Method

Participants

The participants in the present study are 91 graduates of dance education programmes within the United States, teaching students of a variety of ages in a variety of settings. They were recruited through an email sent to them from

the dance programme or department where they had studied. Participation was voluntarily. The research was intended to be international in scope, but the IRB (Institutional Review Board) limited the scope to the United States. In order to completely anonymise the instrument, nine tertiary institutions within the United States that stated dance education was a degree focus were identified to receive the survey. These institutions were asked to distribute the survey to all of their graduates in dance education. There is no way to trace the responses to individual respondents. The subject pool is random but small, thus limiting the ability to generalise the results.

Instrument

The instrument is a survey (Table 1) consisting of 12 questions. It was created in Qualtrics, an electronic data collection instrument that cannot be traced to the respondents or their institutions. The actual questions were greatly reduced by the IRB and resulted in qualitative and quantitative data that provides a mere snapshot of the dance education focus within the United States. The longer questions would have revealed more qualitative text data, but the IRB created a limitation of the actual content of the survey.

Research design

The research was approved by the New York University Institutional Review Board (IRB) following the ethical standards for survey research. The survey was distributed between March and April 2024. The research was not conducted with a sampling technique that would enable generalisations to be made. Since the survey was not distributed through a quantitative sampling design, the quantitative results will be discussed in a general manner. Through qualitative data analysis, trends are discussed as they emerge from the data. The trends are a result of textual data analysis through a qualitative process of recognising emerging themes. The themes were then coded in order to recognise patterns and trends (Cresswell, 2009). The results of the qualitative survey provides a starting point to open the discussion about dance and social studies in various settings.

Table 1

Qualtrics Survey Questions and Response Mode

Question number	Question	Response Mode
1.	What grade and/or ages do you teach?	Short answer
2.	In what setting do you teach?	Short answer
3.	Does your curriculum focus on culture?	Yes/no
4.	Does your curriculum incorporate attention to time, continuity and change?	Yes/no
5.	Does your curriculum incorporate attention to people, places and environments?	Yes/no
6.	Does your curriculum focus on individual development and identity?	Yes/no
7.	Does your curriculum focus on differentiating individual, groups and institutions?	Yes/no
8.	Is there any place in your curriculum that attention is paid to power, authority and governance?	Yes/no
9.	Does your curriculum have any focus on science, technology and society?	Yes/no
10.	Does your curriculum incorporate focus on global connections?	Yes/no
11.	Does your curriculum incorporate civic ideals and practices?	Yes/no
12.	If you answered yes to any question above, please take the time to mention the content you marked yes; describe how it is incorporated in your curriculum.	Open-ended text answer

Results

There were 91 respondents to the survey. Questions 3–11 asked for a binary (yes/no) response listing the primary social studies concepts as defined by the NCSS (1994). Since the survey was not created from a randomised sampling method, the numbers will be reported as percentages and then summarised, as shown in Table 2. Although not every social studies concept was covered by every teacher, none of the concepts were omitted by all of the respondents. Clearly the strongest concept focus was on two categories: "attention to people, places and environments" (NCSS, 1994, p. 12) and "individual development and identity" (p. 12). This was followed by "culture; time, continuity and change" (p. 12), "individuals, groups, and institutions" (p. 13) and "global connections" (p. 14). Less attention was paid to "power, authority and governance; science, technology and society" (p. 13) and "civic ideals and practices" (p. 14).

Due to the type of survey and respondents, it is not possible to discern how many concepts are covered by one teacher, but this type of result is irrelevant, as the teachers covered a huge range of teaching settings and contexts.

The last question allowed for an open-ended answer. Some of the respondents also added more information in questions one and two, which contributed to the text that was analysed. The responses were broad and extended beyond compulsory education within the elementary and secondary range. The students taught by the respondents ranged from two-year-olds to senior citizens. The teaching settings were equally far-ranging and included almost any location in which movement is possible. Some of the respondents even voluntarily included some student characteristics, including low socioeconomic standing and students with special needs. As a snapshot, the resulting picture can be regarded as an overview of how dance is permeated through US society.

Table 2

Binary Question Results (yes/no)

Question Number	Question	Response Yes	Response No
3.	Does your curriculum focus on culture?	63%	38%
4.	Does your curriculum incorporate attention to time, continuity and change?	75%	25%
5.	Does your curriculum incorporate attention to people, places and environments?	94%	6%
6.	Does your curriculum focus on individual development and identity?	97%	3%
7.	Does your curriculum focus on differentiating individual, groups and institutions?	69%	31%
8.	Is there any place in your curriculum that attention is paid to power, authority and governance?	44%	56%
9.	Does your curriculum have any focus on science, technology and society?	59%	41%
10.	Does your curriculum incorporate focus on global connections?	66%	34%
11.	Does your curriculum incorporate civic ideals and practices?	44%	56%

The more revealing results were in response to the one open-ended question: "If you answered yes to any question above, please take the time to mention the content you marked yes; describe how it is incorporated in your curriculum." Some of the responses were holistic and demonstrated that the

respondents could see the connections even if they were not literal. Other responses were very literal and listed the units or aspects in the curriculum in which the concepts were taught. One of the most holistic responses that was clear about all of the implicit connections stated:

> *Dance allows both teacher and student to reflect in a safe and playful space our connections to society and to ourselves. How we perform within the dance class teaches us about the role we play as individuals within the class, the school, our families and beyond. Our actions in the dance class reveal the ways in which we have assimilated systems of power and also the practices we can put forth if we wish to change those systems. The task of learning a skill as a collective asks of all participants to adhere to rules of coexistence that mirror our civic duties to society. Respect, listening with our selves, keeping an open mind to new ideas, lean into the uncomfortable feeling of ambiguity, are some of the values explored in a creative learning environment. I use music and cultural dance styles that helps participants see their own connection to other peoples and lands and develop a sense of empathy. Understanding ourselves as physical beings allows us to create connections to the natural world and its processes.*

The many social studies concepts were presented directly through the questions, so they did not become categories through the content analysis. The data analysis through text revealed that the concepts were comprehended and discussed in a manner ranging from literal to implied. These were the strongest trends that emerged from the data. Literal included the teacher naming the concept somewhere in the teaching setting, whereas implied meant that the teacher never mentioned the concept or words related to the concept. The interpretation of the actual concept names then influenced how each teacher considered their inclusion in the classes they taught. Below is a discussion of the range of literal to implied within the concepts in which the theme occurred.

Attention to People, Places and Environments; and Focus on Individual Development and Environments (NCSS, 1994, pp. 12–13)

The two most frequently discussed categories – "attention to people, places and environments" and "focus on individual development and environments" (NCSS, 1994, pp. 12–13) – were often discussed or included in the curriculum in either literal ways (one teacher mentioned the geography of the origin of a dance) or implicitly in the way that the classes practised their comprehension of inclusion. Inclusion was sometimes listed as students with disabilities, students from diverse communities such as LGBTQ, or students from

differing socioeconomic backgrounds. These differences were also discussed in the concept of "differentiating individual, groups, and institutions".

Culture

Culture and its implications were discussed most frequently in the open-ended question. The concept was interpreted literally and was covered by teaching multiple dance forms from different parts of the world. Culture was often covered by introducing various dance styles and the background to those styles. This was then conflated with the categories of "society, groups", "time, continuity and change" and "global connections". All of these were regarded as literal responses.

Power, Authority and Governance

Those who wrote about power, authority and governance did so in a non-literal sense. One respondent stated that while "there may not be mention of civic ideas and practices", these can be included by the manner of teaching. Others mentioned that the way the class operates can "mirror" society. Some even mentioned that the class created rules of decorum. While dance students do not explicitly have lessons in government and civic society through these practices, the teachers expressed the hope that the students are able to transfer this learning to functioning within broader society. One respondent who teaches from a classical ballet curriculum stated that the inherent teaching style in classical ballet is authoritarian, and the dancer etiquette built into the curriculum gives the teacher an authoritative role. The teacher was implying that either they cannot change this authoritarian nature, or perhaps that the students learn only one example of government. However, there is no way of connecting what students learn in a dance classroom to what they perceive in government and society.

Additional Categories

Some of the respondents discussed what was included or not included in the written curriculum and how that limited what they were teaching. This extended the concept of literal interpretation of the concepts to literal interpretation of what should be taught. Included in this idea is the comment "we don't have a curriculum", implying that it would have to be explicit to be taught. Focusing again on the explicit curriculum, some teachers mentioned being pulled away from any of these concepts by demands to create student performances. Finally, science was interpreted literally only when discussing dancer health, during teaching that focused on the benefits of exercise or in units that focused on a climate change issue.

Discussion

The research was initiated to answer the question: Is there commonality between social studies education and dance education within elementary and secondary education, and if so, how much do these disciplines have in common? The literature review demonstrated that:

- The international educational testing movement drives international education policy.
- Integration of arts/dance education within the curriculum will more often be driven by arts education initiatives than initiatives outside the arts.
- Dance education within the curriculum has very different interpretations and modes of implementation, leading to an unclear sense of the importance of both pedagogy and the curriculum within the dance education classroom.

The first finding did not emerge and was not discussed in the survey. This can suggest areas for further research.

The second finding from the literature was difficult to discern, as the survey focused solely on the dance education perspective. The teacher perspectives in the discussion are from dance education only and do not include the perspectives of social studies teachers, so no conclusions can be derived from the social studies perspective. The literature is also predominantly from the dance/arts education perspective. The study and literature review reveal wide-ranging interpretations of the dance curriculum from the teacher perspective. Although not the initial focus of the present study, dance educators also have diverse views on the collaboration of the curriculum and pedagogy, and the importance of devoting attention to both within the classroom, which causes distinct variations in the implementation of dance education in multiple settings. The finding that can be inferred from the analysis is that dance educators often operate alone when integrating the curriculum and when broadening the curriculum that they are teaching. They have little guidance in this endeavour. When dance educators create a holistic perspective to the curriculum and consider all of the possible explicit and implicit content that is present, they can integrate social studies concepts within the dance education classroom. However, when educators define dance education from an explicit and pre-determined curriculum, they do not see and therefore do not emphasise the social studies (and other) concepts that may be present. One suggestion that can be made based on these limited findings is to completely overhaul the dance curriculum

so that it is not prescriptive (as in the National Core Arts Standards in the US) and to increase professional development for dance educators so that they recognise the importance of pedagogy in the classroom and how it interrelates with the curriculum.

The third finding from the literature emerged clearly from the survey and is present in many of the survey findings. The survey demonstrated that many of the elements defined by the NCSS (1994) are being taught or included within varying dance education settings within the United States. One element of the survey is a revelation that also came from some of the literature, that is, culture (one of the elements) is considered both from the perspective of the classroom and pedagogy, as well as from the content that is being taught. In the survey analysis, these are described as literal and non-literal interpretations. The literal and implied (non-literal) categories that emerged through the survey are the strongest outcome of the research. The meaning of culture is not clear to the dance educators surveyed, nor is it consistent with the meaning of culture within any other educational context. The definition of culture varied according to the sources of the definitions. The definition or understanding of the concept of culture then indicated how culture was implemented or defined within the classroom.

The initial data analysis revealed this lack of clarity as aspects of the implicit and explicit curriculum. However, further analysis of the results revealed that this lack of clarity could also be a misunderstanding of pedagogy, the curriculum and the manner in which pedagogy and the curriculum interrelate. This limited survey does not reveal a cause or source, but only the possibility that this misunderstanding exists.

The present article has summarised and focused on two specific subjects in formal education that may or may not be present, dance and social studies, and some of the factors that lead to how these disciplines are located within formal schooling. Clearly, formal school assessments are the largest driving factor affecting the location and valuation of these disciplines within the formal school setting. Non-formal and informal educational settings were not the focus here, although some respondents did also teach in these settings. The literature surveyed suggested that individual educators have initiated projects that do support the integration of dance and social studies. When these subjects are not integrated, it is more frequently structures of formal schooling that cause this limitation.

Conclusions

The study was greatly limited by the IRB, which kept the subject pool within the United States and reduced the questions to mostly yes/no questions, removing many longer response questions. This greatly limited the data available. In response to these restrictions on the subject pool, there was no follow-up survey to go into greater depth, as this would have necessitated subjects identifying themselves to receive the follow-up survey.

Further research could extend the study into the areas that were limited and discern the connection between international education policy and the actual implementation of that policy. Continuing the direction of the present research, further research could begin by opening the subject pool to an international population. In addition, a follow-up survey could be created with more in-depth questions for a group of subjects willing to identify themselves. Further research could also focus on methods by which the findings could influence curricular changes. More research is also needed on the implementation of the curriculum, as it seems that there has been a complete disconnect in this area.

These limitations do not, however, inhibit the discussion regarding global initiatives for arts education and the possibilities of these findings within this global perspective. Global initiatives are not focused on a select student population, nor are they focused on the gifted and talented. As stated in the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, "We also recognize that culture and the arts are integral to the holistic and inclusive development, resilience, and overall well-being of individuals and societies" (UNESCO, 2024, p. 1). Although formal education is not the sole location where this can occur and be nurtured, it is one of the integral sites. Since formal education is also influenced by the testing movement, governments could conceptually consider choosing to limit policy decisions related to the Framework for Culture and Arts Education outside the formal education sector, despite having endorsed the Framework. There is no comparison measure (such as PISA) for informal and non-formal education.

What are the possibilities from this perspective? Most changes anticipated from the present research can be made within education policy. There is no move to test arts education internationally and, as previously mentioned, only music and visual art are tested through NAEP within the US. Additionally, testing does not encourage interdisciplinary ideas and teaching. The strongest support to move in this direction is the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, which was ratified by over 100 member states in February

2024. It calls on governments and policies enacted by governments to create environments that support culture and arts education throughout the lifespan. Importantly, the UNESCO Framework discusses and suggests these changes in an interdisciplinary manner. This is a broad gesture and can only be initiated at all local levels. However, the global focus is on sustainable development and peace, which brings the conversation again to the integration of the arts, culture and social studies. The content of the overall Framework is therefore timely and inclusive, and can provide the support and initiative to implement policy that can create the many ways in which education can occur, in many settings.

Ethical Statement

The research study was approved by the New York University Institutional Review Board (IRB), which ensures that ethical standards are followed in pedagogical research. The research was supported by an undergraduate researcher sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Research at New York University.

Disclosure Statement

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

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