

Exploration and Research on "Creative Thinking" in Dance Education at Training Institutions

Puyi Liang^{1,a,*}

¹Dance Academy, Xi'an Conservatory of Music, No. 108, Middle Changan Road, Yanta District, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, 710061, China

a. puyiliang666@gmail.com

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Dance is an art form that uses the human body's artistic movements as a medium to convey life experiences and express inner emotions. Dance has existed since prehistoric times, even before the development of language, and has continued to the present day. In recent years, with the guidance of national policies and the influence of the new media industry, dance has garnered increasing attention and popularity. As a result, public-oriented dance training institutions have rapidly developed. Xi'an, China, has emerged as an attractive "internet-famous" city in recent years, providing a large capacity and substantial opportunities for the dance training market. A variety of training institutions have flourished, displaying diverse educational approaches. Given this context, we conducted research on three typical institutions through interviews and hands-on experiences to explore their approach to "creative thinking" in dance education. Before conducting formal research, we provided a subjective definition of "creative thinking" from the perspective of our field of study, specifically in the area of "dance education" with which we are personally familiar. This definition entails breaking away from traditional "demonstrative teaching" methods, transforming the "teacher-authority" dynamic, and establishing an "open" learning atmosphere. Under this framework, we conducted our investigation.

Keywords: Creative Thinking, Dance Training, Dance Education, Resource Utilization.

1. Introduction

Currently, dance education faces issues of monotony and rigidity in teaching methods. Most teaching plans are highly standardized and lack innovation and flexibility. This traditional educational model often falls short in helping students adapt to the rapidly changing demands of society as they transition into the workforce. Therefore, dance education must innovate; simple technical training alone is insufficient to nurture well-rounded, outstanding dancers. Instead, education should focus on enhancing students' comprehensive qualities. With the ongoing reforms in dance education within higher institutions, the educational models of commercial dance institutions also face traditional constraints. In this context, numerous studies within China have delved into "creative thinking" in dance education. For example, some researchers have explored the role of aesthetic education in dance and quality-oriented education. One study notes that dance aesthetic education, as an ideal form and content of quality education, fulfills various functions, including moral, intellectual, physical, aesthetic, and quality education, while also embodying the functions of creative education. At its core,

quality education emphasizes innovation, aligning well with dance aesthetic education. The study suggests that adhesive, exaggerated, typified, divergent, and convergent thinking are effective methods in art creation and emphasizes that the essence of art is creativity, with dance education serving as a practical activity in artistic creation and creation-based learning [1]. Additionally, other researchers have discussed fostering creativity in dance performance, thoroughly analyzing the characteristics of "creative" stage performance. They propose strategies to nurture creativity in dance performance, such as freeing the body, stimulating creativity, sharpening sensitivity to life, unlocking internal reservoirs, and cultivating factors that spark creativity. The shift from conceptual to embodied creative thinking is achieved through personal expression, tailoring education to individual needs, and exploring the dancer's deeper spirit and artistic intuition. Ultimately, creativity is highlighted as a significant direction in contemporary dance performance education and research [2].

Building on previous research on "creative thinking" in dance education, the author observed a gap in studies focusing on creativity within commercial dance education, as most existing research targets higher education and dance performance. Consequently, the author aims to analyze the phenomena and innovations in commercial dance education through the lens of resource utilization and "creative thinking" within dance training institutions. This research, grounded in existing theories, intends to examine typical cases, analyze innovative models that best suit dance practitioners, and develop a modern, reform-aligned, student-favored education model. The study focuses on course resources, teacher resources, and scene resources during visits, analyzing them from the perspectives of resource utilization and the application of creative thinking.

2. Data Collection

In this study, I visited three institutions, focusing on their characteristics, teaching staff qualifications, and student profiles to understand the basic educational conditions and target demographics of current social dance institutions, as well as the resources they utilize in their educational processes. Detailed information is presented below.

Table 1: Comparison of Basic Information for Three Institutions

Basic Information		School Characteristics			Situation of Teaching Staff			Trainee Characteristics		
		Founding Year	Offered Programs	Fee Standard (Annual)	Number of Teachers	Teacher Age Range	Teacher Education	Number of Students	Student Age Range	Gender Ratio (M
Institution Name										
Institution A	Olivia Aesthetics Center	2018	Ballet, Street Dance, Chinese Dance	¥10,000/year	12	20-30	Bachelor's /Master's	190+	5-16	1:10
	Address: 3rd Floor, Qujiang Zhengrong Rainbow Valley									

Table 1: (continued)

Institution B	Chang'an Blossom Art School	2020	Tea Art, Chinese Dance	¥7,000/year	3	19-22	Undergraduates from Xi'an Sports University	11	6-12	2:9
	Address: Near Xi'an University of Technology Affiliated Primary School									
Institution C	Yan Peng Children's Art Training School	2012	Chinese Dance, Street Dance, Piano, Guzheng, Vocal Music, Painting, Calligraphy	¥3,800/year	15	20-45	12 Bachelor's, 3 Master's	350	3-16	0:187
	Address: Majiavan, Gaoling County									

3. Results and Discussion

With ample time allocated for this study, I conducted 2-3 on-site visits to each of the three institutions. After gaining an in-depth understanding, I analyzed and compared the institutions based on several key aspects, highlighting both their strengths and weaknesses.

3.1. Hardware Facilities

A quality teaching environment can significantly enhance educational outcomes. The three institutions I visited differ greatly in hardware facilities, creating distinct teaching environments. Below is a comparison of their facilities: Institution A: The interior design is refined, with dance-related artworks on the walls, creating a strong artistic atmosphere. There are two classrooms, each equipped with three sound systems and well-illuminated with spotlights and light strips. Each classroom is approximately 200 square meters, allowing for large-group movement exercises. For different dance genres, the school provides various props like resistance bands, yoga balls, and parasols. Functional rooms include restrooms, a lounge, and changing rooms. Additionally, students enrolled in the Royal Academy of Dance ballet program and their parents are offered complimentary afternoon tea during study sessions.



Figure 1: Overview of Institution A's Dance Room



Figure 2: Institution A's Lounge Area

Institution B: This institution has three dance classrooms with a more traditional interior style. Classrooms are equipped with multimedia computers and projectors to support teaching. Facilities such as floor mats and barre are provided according to dance genre needs. Functional rooms include restrooms, a lounge, and changing rooms. However, the overall space is limited, which restricts students' options for post-class relaxation or movement review.



Figure 3: Overview of Institution B's Dance Room



Figure 4: Another View of Institution B's Dance Room

Institution C: The design style is fresh, with pink murals that create a warm and welcoming learning environment. There are three dance rooms (two large, one small), each equipped with air conditioning, flooring, and barre. However, there are fewer auxiliary training devices. The institution also includes essential facilities like restrooms, a lounge, and changing rooms.



Figure 5: Overview of Institution C's Dance Room



Figure 6: Another View of Institution C's Dance Room

3.2. Institutional Characteristics

Unique operational features can play a significant role in attracting students. Based on visits to the three institutions, I have summarized their distinct characteristics: Institution A: Holds regular meetings every Monday or Friday where each teacher shares feedback and suggestions regarding the school and teaching practices. Teachers also engage in weekly lesson review sessions, where they role-play as students to experience the classroom from a learner's perspective. This helps identify and improve each teacher's strengths and weaknesses in the classroom. Institution B: Employs a multimedia teaching model. Each teacher is required to prepare a PowerPoint presentation for each class, which includes the original text of a classic poem and a brief analysis. This approach aims to deepen students' understanding of poetry as they integrate singing and dancing. Institution C: Classes are organized based on students' abilities and parents' preferences (e.g., solo class, parallel class). This institution emphasizes expressive dance teaching, focusing on safety and aligning with the

students’ physical growth patterns. Basic skills and techniques are taught with these considerations in mind.

3.3. Teaching Materials

Institution A: Utilizes the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) ballet syllabus, the Chinese Dance Teaching Association curriculum, and the Ballet Grading Syllabus of Beijing Dance Academy. The emphasis is on developing students' foundational skills, with a focus on the refinement of dance movements. Institution B: Uses an original poetry-dance curriculum along with the Chinese Dance Teaching Association syllabus and the Ballet Grading Syllabus of Beijing Dance Academy. The primary focus is to inspire students' natural affinity for dance, emphasizing the importance of dance enlightenment and creative abilities. Institution C: Employs the Chinese Folk Dance Grading Examination syllabus. Given the younger age of its students, this institution focuses on cultivating interest in dance, with an emphasis on the generation and consolidation of basic dance movements.

3.4. Class Process

The class process is displayed in tabular form to highlight the similarities and differences in teaching content across the institutions, providing an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in each institution's curriculum.

Table 2: Overview of Class Content for the Three Institutions

Course Content Class Duration	Class Process						
	Warm- Up	Review (Homework Check)	Basic Skills Training	Break	Dance Instruction	Physical Training	Post-Class Relaxation (Parent Communication)
Institution A 90min	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Institution B 90min	√	×	√	√	√	√	×
Institution C 120min	√	×	√	√	√	×	√

3.5. Discussion on Resource Utilization

Based on the above field investigation, the characteristics of teaching and training in the three institutions are summarized as follows: Institution A (Olivia Aesthetics Center): This institution benefits from a quality teaching environment, emphasizing a "student-centered" approach and fostering strong communication between teachers and students. Teaching is adapted to individual needs by considering the student's perspective. Additionally, the institution values communication with parents, establishing a family co-management system through recorded homework and post-class discussions, which increases satisfaction on both sides. While it improves communication efficiency by incorporating student feedback, the teaching style remains primarily traditional, relying on a teacher-led model with limited focus on inspiring creativity. This may hinder students' innovative abilities. Despite the appealing environment that attracts students and parents, the institution only has two dance classrooms, limiting capacity and its ability to conduct multiple classes simultaneously. To address this, careful scheduling is required to manage class sizes. The high tuition fees and

relatively young teaching staff may also impact long-term cooperative relationships with students and parents. Institution B (Chang'an Blossom Art School): This institution offers a more flexible and engaging teaching model, effectively utilizing multimedia to enhance traditional lecture-based teaching. By employing self-developed teaching materials, it moves away from the conventional focus on rote movements and instead nurtures students' innate affinity for dance. The teaching approach aligns well with students' developmental stages, fostering creativity. However, the self-developed materials lack the structure and professionalism found in standardized curricula like the Chinese Dance Teaching Association syllabus and the Ballet Grading Syllabus from Beijing Dance Academy. To strengthen its materials, the institution should incorporate a tiered approach to content development, selecting targeted exercises and techniques suited for its training model and carefully organizing progressions and standards [3]. Additionally, the institution's teaching staff is limited in both diversity and expertise, which impacts the overall quality of instruction and the integration of self-developed materials, restricting the institution's potential to elevate its educational standards. Institution C (Yan Peng Children's Art Training School): This institution focuses on individual dance skills by implementing a class-based system, conducting assessments every two months, and awarding students to build confidence and motivation. The concept of "happy dance" is central, with activities like games between classes to foster improvisational dance skills. However, the quality of the student body is low, as most students are "urban left-behind children." Limited communication with families restricts the effectiveness of teaching to the classroom environment, with no reinforcement at home. The institution's hardware is lacking, its teacher management system is underdeveloped, and teaching quality is inconsistent.

3.6. Discussion on Creative Thinking

As we conducted a comprehensive investigation of the three institutions, we evaluated whether they incorporated elements of creative thinking, according to the definition of "creative thinking" presented earlier. Institution A: Lacks creative thinking. The teaching model remains traditional, with conventional curriculum choices, relying more on external marketing and promotion to attract attention rather than innovation in teaching methods. Institution B: Demonstrates creative thinking. This institution adapts its teaching based on students' needs, designing materials that align with the ancient poetry curriculum studied in nearby schools. Additionally, the use of multimedia in the classroom allows for a more open and diversified approach to dance instruction, engaging students more deeply. Institution C: Displays creative thinking. The class is structured around a student-centered approach, with the teacher guiding the learning process. Games are used to develop students' imagination and creativity, fostering creative thinking and an awareness of choreography. Furthermore, the concept of "every student as a teacher" stands out, promoting an open, collaborative learning environment.

3.7. Challenges

Education in dance and other fine arts should be holistic, encompassing goals such as cultural depth, scientific spirit, learning skills, healthy living, responsibility, and innovative practice [4]. However, dance training institutions face unique challenges, as most students are not pursuing dance professionally. Consequently, teachers and institutions tend to adopt a standardized management approach, applying uniform curricula that often leave students in a repetitive learning state after training, failing to provide true inspiration. From a learning perspective, several curriculum development issues persist: (1) the content often does not align with students' interests or developmental needs, (2) it lacks adaptability and specificity, and (3) it is overly general without accounting for individual differences [5]. Regarding teaching resources, the pool of instructors is

primarily composed of university students, limited by the institution's budget and development constraints. Although these teachers are enthusiastic, their limited expertise restricts the overall quality of instruction, potentially capping the educational outcomes and limiting the institution's potential for fostering creativity and innovation in students.

4. Conclusion

This research delves into the importance and application of "creative thinking" in dance training education. The study reveals that creative thinking enhances teaching effectiveness and supports students' holistic development, benefiting both mental and physical well-being. The current dance training market is nearing saturation, with varying degrees of teaching quality and instructor expertise. Additionally, the rapid growth of information technology has made the education sector increasingly transparent, intensifying competition. Traditional teaching models, management approaches, and school philosophies are facing considerable challenges. The key to addressing these issues lies in innovation—specifically, innovation in curriculum design, teaching methods, marketing strategies, and educational philosophy. In terms of applying creative thinking, based on findings from current domestic research and this study's observations, methods such as integrating cross-disciplinary content, implementing rigorous teacher assessments, and expanding platforms for student performance should be employed to strengthen the incorporation of creative thinking into dance education.

Research indicates that an institution's use of its resources directly affects its educational outcomes and the future development of its students. Institutions that implement innovative teaching methods, provide excellent teaching conditions, and have strong faculty achieve significantly better results. Therefore, fostering creative thinking in dance education is a crucial direction for the future. This study further shows that institutions with superior hardware, innovative teaching models, and a robust faculty see enhanced educational outcomes. As a result, the future of dance education should focus on integrating creative thinking to drive comprehensive, multi-level innovation, providing students with more platforms for showcasing their talents and furthering their development. This approach will have a profound impact on the cultural and artistic growth within dance education.

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