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# Embodied Reflection – Exploring creative routes to teaching reflective practice within dance training

## Abstract

This paper draws from a collaboration between Rambert School of Dance, University of Kent, and University College London Institute of Education and an anthropological filmmaker. Together we took a creative and embodied approach to teaching reflective practice within a conservatoire to second year dance students. In this paper we explore where this somatically inspired pedagogy sits within dance training. We discuss the nature of reflection for dance training, and in particular consider embodied reflective practice. Finally we offer effective methodologies for drawing out and capturing embodied practice.

Keywords: somatic; pedagogy; creative; film; reflection; reflective practice; dance

In this paper we show how a pedagogical initiative to redesign how reflective practice was taught to undergraduate dance students communicated and captured a somatic embodied experience. We were specifically concerned with the the idea of reflection, rather than a more general approach to somatics (Coogan, 2016). Through a creative and embodied approach to training in reflection, we were able to allow student dancers to be more

empowered through their own self-knowledge. We argue that this training needs to be given equal weight to technical training in order to innovate dance pedagogy. We use the example of a collaborative project between Rambert School of Dance, University of Kent, University College London Institute of Education and an ethnographic filmmaker. The methodology, background and approach for this multi-faceted project is published in an article in *Research in Dance Education*. In this paper we explore the notion of embodied reflective practice within the creative process as a means of knowledge building and learning development. This includes the notion of questioning within reflective practice, in line with the philosophy behind somatics, offering a platform where we can begin to explore and refine its impact on the process of reflection. We then identify the most effective methodologies that allowed us to 'draw-out' and capture embodied practice through reflective means. We will follow these papers with two more – one exploring the data generated by and with the students who took part, and another taking a reflexive approach to consider and discuss the positionality of the four academics who collaborated on the project.

### Artistic and creative reflection as part of dance pedagogy

Reflective practice can emerge directly from artistic practice, and in the case of dancers in training, the 'artistic' can take many forms. Firstly, it can refer to the creative part of training, which links to making/choreography. Secondly, it can be the intangible notion of 'artistry' which directly links to expressivity and performance. Finally, it can relate directly to a dancer's (artistic) identity – the essence that makes them who they are as dancers. These

are inextricably linked within the psyche of a performer/dancer and they form the substance of their practice. However, this sense of artistic substance is often sacrificed in the name of technique and virtuosity, particularly when the focus within conservatoire dance training targets the development of skill, rather than the individual artist. This is not necessarily a conscious approach by institutions, but a traditionally entrenched pedagogy inherited from classical ballet. Classical ballet has many forms and stylistic representations which have varied on the basis of geographic, historical or cultural factors. These have determined to a great extent the nature of pedagogy within dance – the use of extrinsic means of motivation and reflection, namely the master teacher and the mirror, have dominated Western theatrical dance training for the best part of its existence. Furthermore, the Cartesian divide of mind and body which has dominated Western philosophy and thought, has directly influenced both artistic and pedagogic notions of dance. The philosophical positioning predicating the body as inferior to the mind, has infiltrated dance training, in the sense of separating the ‘doing’ from the ‘thinking’.

Situating dance pedagogy within a wider framework of philosophical thought allows us to look at it ontologically and start to reflect on its nature as a practice. Within the 21<sup>st</sup> Century there are a range of approaches and practices within dance education and conservatoires in particular, which take a leading role preparing the dancers of the future. Although there are various facets to dance education, this article focuses on dance in Higher Education and more specifically in a conservatoire environment. Dance education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century UK within conservatoire environments generally lives under the umbrella of Higher Education Dance, however its roots lie in more vocational or professional training-based approaches. Skill acquisition, discipline, professionalism and creativity are at the core of vocational

training. The pedagogic methodologies are often linked to a replication of the professional world, i.e. industry-led teaching. However, there is a level of diversity in approaches between dance conservatoires. Learning often includes 'embodied knowledge', and at higher levels of study Practice as Research (Barrett & Bolt, 2010). Practice and theory are taught in varying proportions and for varying purposes as defined within the QAA Benchmark Statement for Dance, Drama and the Performing arts (QAA, 2015).

Reflecting upon elite dance training within the context of pedagogy gives us the opportunity to take a different perspective and analyse its purpose and effectiveness more holistically. From the Greek root of the word pedagogy<sup>1</sup>, we can draw the notion of 'leading' a student to knowledge, to answers, to improved practice. This notion predicates supporting a journey towards learning, rather than imposing knowledge. Maybe there is an inherent tension between training and education. Training is often considered as necessary in order to do a job, whilst education can be more about development of the individual. However, both are considered to have a pedagogical nature. Therefore, by reflecting on this ontological distinction we can begin to reveal some of the underlying processes of teaching and learning within professional dance training and determine what innovations are pertinent in the field. In an inherently creative discipline such as dance, and more specifically within the parameters of training for elite performance, the notion of 'creativity' is often assumed as a characteristic attribute of the practice. However, this does not necessarily mean that the teaching of dance is characteristically creative in the pedagogic sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Pedagogy is a derivative from the Greek Paidagogia, which comes from paidagogos. Paidagogos is a synthesis of child (paidos) and lead (ago), and so means 'to lead a child'. It is commonly understood now to mean the approach to teaching and encompasses both the theory and practice of education.

Creative pedagogy facilitates the design of empowering learning experiences and promotes multi-faceted approaches to developing knowledge. It is therefore predetermined within this model that a variety of approaches will be engaged with in order to facilitate learning. In the case of embodied learning, this potential trap of assuming that dance teaching is inherently creative often overshadows the scrutiny of traditional dance teaching methodologies. The entrenched practices of mimesis in dance training have been long established and are perpetuated within institutions. The strength of creative pedagogy lies in the *how* of the learning, “how to consider possibilities and understand things in new ways” (Selkrig & Keamy, 2017, p.357). This article’s positioning on creative learning is that it should be adaptable and imbued with the essence of the practice in question. Therefore, without presuming that creativity is present in every dance activity, in this study we propose and experiment with the idea of creative methodology for reflective purposes.

For dancers in this environment, ‘doing’ is equal to high intensity physical practice, which does not always allow for stopping and reflecting. Even the notion of ‘stopping’ can fill dance students with dread. So, utilising movement-based reflection methodologies can balance out the tension between the ‘doing’ of dancing and the ‘stopping’ of reflection. This approach allows us to consider and experiment with reflective practice which becomes a process of maturation into enhanced self-awareness. Another important aspect of this process is the level of detachment that is needed in order to arrive at more objective conclusions generated from subjective embodied experience. This detachment could be compared to the inner witness developed in practices such as Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002).

It is also important for dancers in such a process to 'move away' from movement. They need to be able to widen their focus to include images, feelings and emotions as well as their kinaesthetic sensations and to also retain the creative and embodied nature of reflective activities. This is why in this project, other visual arts methods including drawing and the use of photography and film were employed and encouraged. Creative and artistic practice lends itself to be a conduit for expression and has the capacity to break down language barriers and potentially cultural barriers with regards to articulation of dance practice through reflection. Arriving at language-based articulation of dance practice is certainly a journey of translation and the explicit use of creative methods of reflection can enhance this process. Figure 1 shows an image created by one of the dance students bringing in art, collage and digital imagery to her reflective practice. Engaging in creative 'playful behaviours' (Statler, Heracleous & Jacobs, 2011, p.1) in order to arrive at reflective outcomes about the very essence of one's dance practice (and by extension, dance identity) can be extremely liberating. Starting with the less cognitive or language based approaches allows for embodied engagement – model-making and drawing, free from stylistic concerns, and presents students with paths to knowledge, true to the notion of pedagogy as 'leading to' learning/new ideas. Pointing to the specific outcomes of reflecting on the student's relationship with dance (training and performance), artistic activities can reveal subconscious thoughts and feelings that can then be used to support behavioural change.

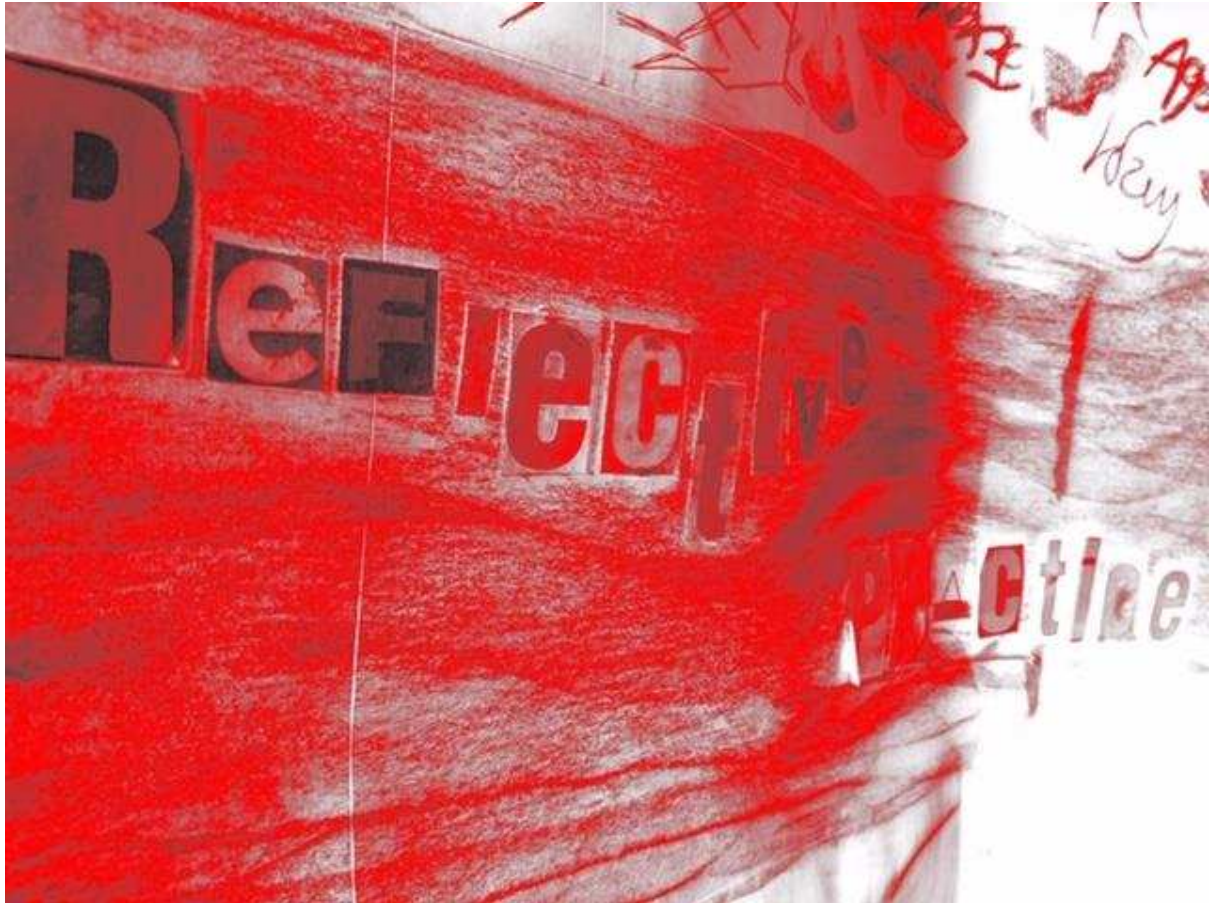


Figure 1 Reflective practice

### Reflection within creative arts practice

Reflective practice sits at the core of artistic practice, and the process of reflexivity is considered an inherent process within any creative endeavour. It is a necessary and essential part of a conservatoire training for students in order to develop them as artists and professionals within their fields. This view is backed up in the literature, for example a special issue of *Arts & Humanities in HE* was dedicated to the reflective conservatoire (Gaunt, 2016; Duffy, 2016; Guillaumier, 2016; Treagar, et al., 2016). Reflection can take many forms and infiltrate many creative processes, allowing for individual and collective consciousness to develop and shed light on **forms of** both individual and collective practices. As part of an artistic practice, it can play a role within the community and creative arts (Meyer & Wood, 2016), be a part of 'flow' (Hefferon & Ollis, 2006), have an impact on



performance (Woronchak & Comeau, 2016), and be part of identity formation (Wareing, 2017). Because of this, developing an effective and appropriate reflective practice should be an integral part of any pedagogy, particularly within the creative disciplines.

Reflecting is part of the learning process and contributes significantly to the accruing of knowledge. However, what reflective practice is, and how it is taught are not necessarily so clearly defined. In fact, reflection has been described as nothing but “a slogan” (Calderhead, 1989, p. 46) and a “catch-all title for an ill-defined process” (Bleakley, 1999, p. 317). Whilst traditionally reflection stems from the work of educational theorists such as Dewey (1933) and Schön (1987), who saw it as an integral part of the art of teaching and learning, integrating it within a defined curriculum and pedagogic approach means that we need to know what about it we want to teach to our students and why. Within the literature the vagueness of the term has been acknowledged by many (see for example Hatton & Smith, 1995; Ixer, 1999; Jay & Johnson, 2002; McArdle & Coutts, 2003; and Tremmel, 1993).

Definitions vary from thinking critically about one’s actions (Imel, 1992), a habit of the mind (O’Sullivan, Tannehill, & Hinchion, 2008) to more embodied perspectives (redacted & Bailey, 2013; Smears, 2009). With all this vagueness **is easy to understand** that teaching reflective practice is not simple (Russell, 2005). In addition, we should acknowledge that not all agree that teaching reflective practice is desirable. Reflection can be associated with a ‘dark side’ that can “result in people being seduced by their own stories and beliefs” (Hickson, 2011, p. 832). Whilst this may be in part due to self-indulgence, is likely to be due to the prominence of rumination, rather than reflection. Whilst reflection can increase our levels of empathy (Joireman, Parrott III, & Hammersla, 2002), rumination, or dwelling on the negative and critical aspects of an experience or sensation, is likely to cause the opposite. One way to

prevent this unhealthy rumination is to become more aware of our feelings and our moods (Lischetzke & Eid, 2003) and to ground ourselves in our embodied experience.

The kind of knowledge that is gained in studying for a dance degree is often embodied, and specific to self as well as contributing to the collective experience. It makes sense for this reason as well as the desire to prevent excessive rumination, that we foreground more embodied ways of understanding what reflective practice is when we are working with young dancers. These understandings draw on the body to ground knowledge (Smears, 2009), require an individual to be aware of and understand themselves and their own motivations (Van Manen, 1995) and ask them to be consciously self-aware of the information that their bodies can tell them so that they have sufficient information to reflect *on* (redacted & Bailey, 2013). Embodied perspectives can enrich traditional theories and approaches (Meier, Schnall, & Schwarz, 2012). However, taking or having an embodied approach to reflection does not guarantee that it will be easy (Leijen, Lam, Wilschut, & Simons, 2009). We will explore some of the philosophy that underpins embodied approaches later on in this article.

Incorporating reflection into a pedagogic approach and making it part of the curriculum implies that it will also form part of the explicit learning outcomes for the students, and that we need to see that these are met. As such we need to consider how, and if, we should monitor and assess it (redacted, 2016). When we ask students to write down their reflections, which are seen by someone in charge of their marks, it necessarily changes the nature of what they will write (Clegg, Tan, & Saedidi, 2002). Rather than trying to be true to what they are feeling, and critical, they will, quite rightly, focus instead on conforming to

expectations and delivering what the assessor wants to see (Macfarlane & Gourlay, 2009). If a teacher models one way of reflecting for example, it is likely that her students will mirror this back to her (Clegg, 1999). Instead of facilitating effective reflection, this instead encourages superficial processes. If we go one step further and start assessing reflective writing, not only are we limiting our students to only reflecting in one way, through language, we are also putting ourselves as assessors into the role of a figure of authority judging whether someone's reflective practice is worthy enough (Trevitt & Perera, 2009). We need to ask questions about how robust an assessment framework for reflective practice can be (Clarkeburn & Kettula, 2012), as well as deeper questions about whether we can assess reflective practice at all (Iyer, 1999). We believe that reflection should not be limited to writing alone, and instead should draw on a range of creative and metaphorical methods.

### Creative and embodied approaches to reflection

Traditionally reflection and reflective practices rely heavily on a Western philosophy (Ryan, 2011), and a critical, Cartesian, disembodied framework that privileges the mind (and words) over the body (and sensations), and dissociates them from each other. An embodied approach might instead draw on the work of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, a dancer and philosopher who advises us to 'root' reflection in the experiences of the "kinetic/tactile-kinaesthetic body" (Sheets-Johnstone, 2010a, p. 112). Sheets-Johnson says that the primary way we communicate is through our moving body, and so language comes from the experiences of the corporeal (Sheets-Johnstone, 2009). This perspective advocates that through moving and using our body and paying attention to it and to the language that

arises from it we can achieve a 'truer' form of reflection, processing and learning from our experiences (Sheets-Johnstone, 2010b).

There are many ways to reflect "including through discussion...writing in a journal...[or]...through poetry, song, painting or dance" (Hickson, 2011, p. 830). Reflecting through movement or dance might be likened to Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002) and as such it may be a form of process work particularly appropriate for dancers. In this project Authentic Movement was used as a way in to encourage the students to develop their awareness of the different modes of reflection and ground them with their moving body. In Authentic Movement movers move with their eyes closed following internal impulses that arise from their unconscious (see figure 2). Because of its intense and therapeutic nature, Authentic Movement requires particular training, experience and skills that may be beyond the scope of most conservatoire dance teachers to introduce as a pedagogic tool for developing reflection. It is worth considering the other creative approaches to reflection, and the advances made recently in creative research methods that are attempting to deepen the reflective processes of their participants.



Figure 2 Eyes closed

Within recent discourses of research methodologies there have been calls to bring the body back into the centre of attention (Frank, 1990; William and Bendelow, 1998; Ellingson, 2006). This focus on the body as subject and object of research, specifically in social and medical sciences within the context of medical and sociological research, has led to the development of new research approaches. Whilst some are talking about sensory ethnography (Mason and Davies, 2009; Pink, 2015) or imaginative ethnographies (Elliott and Culhane, 2016), others refer to the use of creative methods (Kara, 2015). Despite the differences in terminologies and specific conceptualisations, there is one common goal: to find means to access knowledge that is generated through, with and in the body. As humans we *have* bodies, but we also *are* our bodies, in that our experiences and knowledge are embedded within them. This is best exemplified in Pink's (2015) exploration of how as

humans we know whether or not our clothes need washing; the answer being, yes, we do look at our clothes to see if there are dirty specks on them, but also we smell our clothes – and it is the smell that makes us decide on the ‘dirtiness’ of clothes. By relying on our sense of smell, we use that embodied knowledge to make the relevant decision. If we are therefore to employ a research method that relies on the word, through interviews or surveys for example, we will not do justice to bodily and embodied experiences, such as those described in Pink (2015).

Harnessing embodied knowledge requires an alternative approach to reflection, which is where the use of the creative methods (Kara, 2015) comes in. Activities, such as sketching, drawing or model-making allow for access to emotional, sensory and real experiences, in a way that traditional forms of inquiries would not (redacted, 2018). Broader dance research has identified the ways in which the practice of somatics has played an influential part in the evolution of contemporary dance as a genre, but also, most aptly for this article, dance pedagogy. Tomas Hanna’s well-known quote “I think, therefore I *move*” (IADMS, 2009) reveals the shift in attitudes with regards to the division between body and mind, promoting the physical and psychological growth that is revealed and understood through the body. The field of somatics has contributed practices that have also worked as a catalyst to a more effective reflection in self (as a dancer and or creator). By tapping into their ‘natural’ process of reflexivity within the studio and un-picking this process further, dancers in training can begin to identify, not only technical/virtuosic targets, but also uncover patterns of behaviour, modes of creativity, as well as explore the dynamic between dancer and personal identity. Somatic concepts which have infiltrated dance pedagogy in a great deal of contexts, facilitate this notion of self-awareness, whereby the education of the body is

aiming at the pursuit of “personal autonomy” (Batson, 2009, p.1) rather than the “dismembering mind-body dualism” (ibid.)

## Our rationale

Building on the ideas of the importance of reflection as part of an artistic practice, the embodied nature of dance training, and a creative approach to reflection, we wanted to see whether utilising multi-modal methods of reflection, including embodied practices, would enhance the process of self-awareness for dancers in a conservatoire environment. We wanted to take a new approach towards explicitly teaching reflective practice in a way that would be embodied, relevant and useful to dancers in training.

The Conservatoire for Dance and Drama funded a collaborative pilot project, based at the Rambert School, with academics from the University of Kent (redacted) and UCL’s Institute of Education (redacted). Redacted brought her expertise as a somatic movement therapist and research around embodied reflective practice and Redacted brought her pedagogical expertise. They both brought extensive use of creative techniques in both research and teaching. As a group we wanted to bring together our expertise and knowledge around reflective practice, creative research methods, somatic movement therapy and education and dance pedagogy to work with a cohort of dancers who had not been exposed to these kinds of ideas. We drew on redacted’s work on participatory and creative work with students (redacted, 2018), and redacted’s work on embodied reflective practice that stemmed from her training as a somatic movement therapist and educator (redacted, 2016; redacted & Bailey, 2013). Redacted and redacted both use a range of creative research methods in their work in order to explore the richness and depth of experiences around

identity (redacted & redacted, 2018; redacted, 2018). Redacted has over 20 years of experience as a teacher of dance in further and higher education, and was relatively new to the post of Director of Studies at Rambert. She was keen to enhance the experience of the students, and to expose them to new ways of working and thinking about their practice. Redacted is an independent film maker who brought her prize-winning filming and editing skills (Redacted, 2017) and her anthropological background to the project to enable us to both capture the process of the students learning about embodied reflection, and to use film as part of that learning process.

The use of film in this context provided not only the visual evidence of the embodied, lived being and learning processes of the participants but allowed them to show a deeper level of vulnerability (Bruni, 2002; Farnell, 2011; Pink, 2009; Redacted & Bailey, 2013; Vertov, Michelson and O'Brian, 1984). Using film as an ethnographic research tool pushed the project with a further interdisciplinary perspective, and meant that the documentation in itself formed part of a reflexive process. The filming was an important part of the process, as it allowed us to notice and record the moments of self-reflection and capture the moments of reflexivity of the students. However, it was used as a creative process in and of itself, expressing the subtle emotion of the moments captured, rather than simply recording data. It was intended to capture the embodied nature of the project in the most literal, visceral way. The bodies, faces, voices, expressions and reactions of the students as well as the researchers were needed in order to capture the full embodied expression of all those involved. The filming style was similar to cinema vérité and the participants were not just observed by the camera. The camera was given to them to use, and after a brief instruction they engaged with it in reflections that were authentic and integrated (Alvesson &



Sköldberg, 2017; Eglinton, 2013). They were part of the documentation, whether this was through them taking control of the camera, sharing their dance practices or their use of 'padlet' (a website that emulates a wall of post-it notes that users can add to) and reflective journals. This was a deliberate and informed way in which we created a participatory and auto-anthropological field of vision.



Figure 3 Movers in the chapel studio

The dancers in this experimental project were in their second year of undergraduate study, and though they had had a large reflective component throughout their first year and had a

reflective assignment at the end of their second year, they did not have reflective practice taught explicitly as part of their curriculum. This project was designed to challenge and push the students into experiencing, reflecting on, recording, and processing their movement experiences in different ways. We used a variety of methods<sup>2</sup>, drawing on Authentic Movement practices, journaling, metaphor, Lego<sup>®</sup> construction, and work with audio-visual technology to introduce the dancers to several modes of reflection and theories of reflective practice. Figure 4 shows some artwork by one of the dancers following a session. By innovating the methods through which performers can communicate embodied experience within training we sought to in turn influence dance as a genre and dance pedagogy alike.

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<sup>2</sup> These are outlined in Redacted authors (2018) Creative and embodied methods to teach reflections and support students' learning Accepted subject to revisions by Research in Dance Education

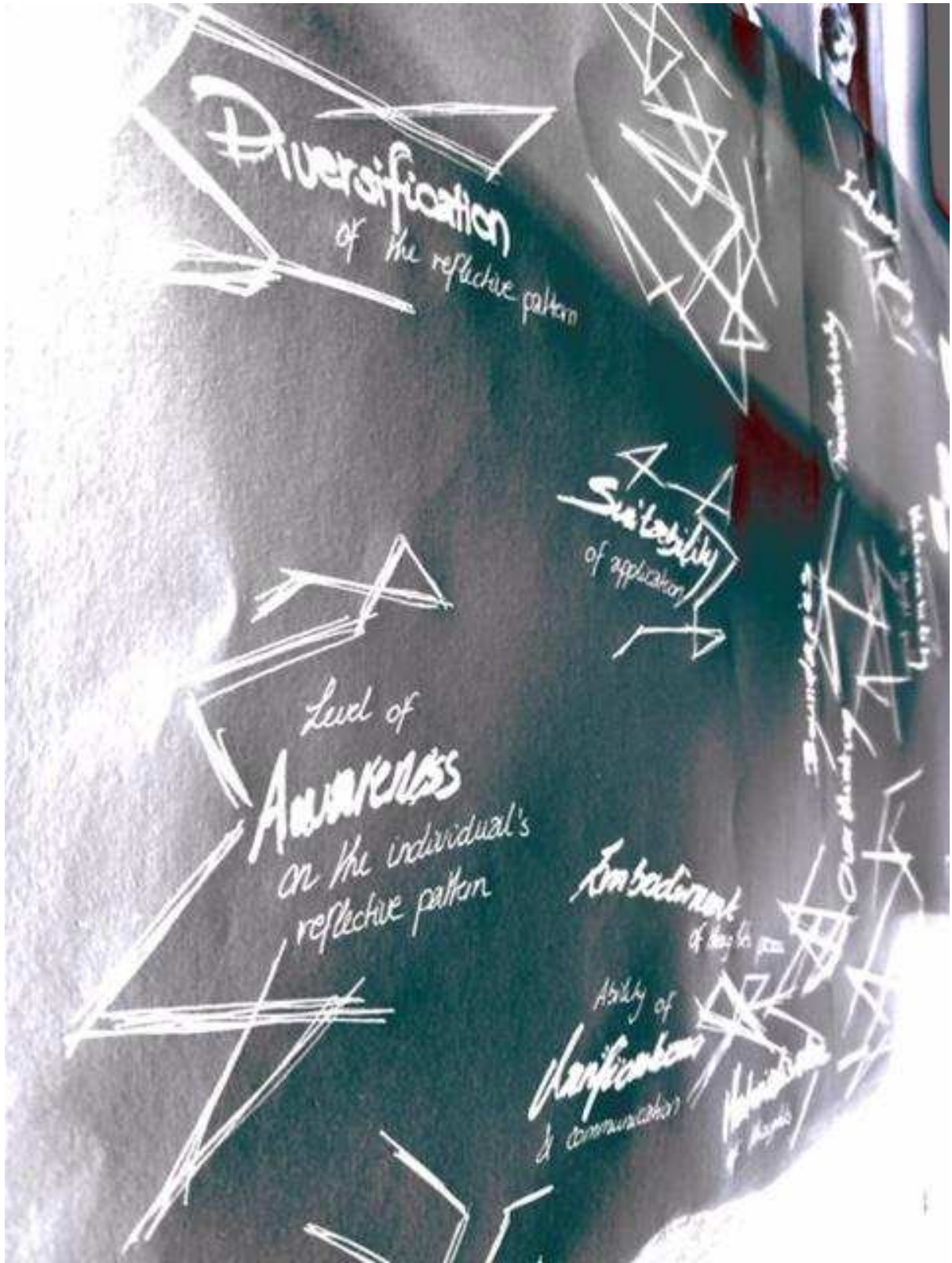


Figure 4 diversification of reflective practice.



Dance is experiential and episodic, so trying to capture it and reflect on the practice of performing or creating can be challenging, particularly during training. In a highly selective dance conservatoire, the base level of practice is already high, so this predetermines a level of maturity of the young dancer in terms of expressivity and creativity. However, these attributes can be ascribed to natural talents, which are not necessarily always consciously applied and developed. Part of the training process is to be able to understand where these expressive skills spring from and find a way to refine them and replicate them. In order to develop this awareness, we can begin by situating the practice into a reflective context whereby a deeper understanding of the sources of creativity and expressivity is encouraged for dancers in training. Interrogating the body in relation to its own performance, invites a notion of the somatic as the holistic amalgam of both body and mind. There is an interesting parallel between the processes of reflective practice and the notion of “body-as-content” (Batson, 2009, p.1) which is advocated in somatic practices. In our approach we investigate the ‘content’ generated by the bodies of the students in terms of their own reflections and perceptions, thus creating embodied knowledge, and relate this to elite dance training. Within the training environment of the conservatoire, the ‘knowledge’ or ‘content’ generated on a daily basis is immense. With approximately eight hours a day of training, the physical output of the dance students is extraordinary and in order to be able to capture how this level of practice promotes further knowledge and professional expertise in them, a process of effective reflection needs to take place. In our project we used time given over to ‘critical studies’ within the curriculum.

The motivation for this project was to identify the ways in which we could develop the skills of ‘the conscious dancer’, ‘the self-aware dancer’, ‘the thinking dancer/practitioner’ who

weaves together practice and the understanding of that practice. When we are on the journey of defining our practice, we are not merely defining a situation and/or condition. We are trying to unveil the reality behind the creative manifestations of that practice. Having the means to capture this unveiling process is vital to any practitioner. Our premise for this process is that the more varied the ways there are to look behind the façade of the daily practicing body the more effective the capturing of that practice can be.

## Discussion

Taking an artistic practice such as dance and attempting to unveil its impact on self and ensemble alike, we considered the types of creative activity that could be modified to facilitate the reflective journey of the trainee dancers. By always starting with the body and always returning to the body, the journey through other creative activities had a clear embodied framework. Authentic Movement was used in this experimental project to tap into bodily impulses and sensations felt by the dancers in order to start the journey of “enabling the mover to develop an inner witness, thus increasing conscious awareness” (ADTA, 2016). By stripping movement back to its authenticity in the moment, the young dancers were allowed the unusual freedom of moving outside predetermined technical patterns and aesthetic demands. This in turn enables what could be considered “a transformation of inner capacities that support new ways of being and knowing” (Sager, 2013 p 1) and as a result promote the connection between body and mind outside the framework of the aesthetic and the virtuosic. This type of ‘allowance’ within the context of intensive elite dance training is invaluable for the purpose of identifying not only technical

achievement but also on the mental state, attitude and behaviour patterns of the young dancer.

In her article on embodying multiplicity, Jennifer Roche (2011) supports the notion of the dancer as a site where cultural ideology and inherited historical meaning is “sewn into the neuro-musculature of the body” (Albright, 1997:54 in Roche, 2011, p 3). She continues to argue that “dancers are formed as individuals through the training systems with which they engage” (ibid). The techniques taught in conservatoire schools are inherited and re-positioned on current 21<sup>st</sup> Century bodies, keeping alive a heritage that has proven indispensable to dance pedagogy, but also evolving according to ever-changing factors. The further ‘inheritance’ or even some may argue ‘appropriation’ of Eastern methodologies of movement that connect the mind and body has resulted in further development of dance pedagogy, particularly through its manifestation into contemporary dance techniques and some forms of somatics. The latter in particular has been responsible for the problematising of the dominant (inherited) critical and authoritative pedagogy of dance and the departure from “falsely imposed values and systems of knowledge” (Green, 1999, p. 02). The move towards empowerment for the dancer in training has fuelled debate and promoted change within the Conservatoire. This is acutely relevant to our central premise in this article, whereby we investigate the notion of empowerment through deep reflection that is achieved via embodied (and therefore somatic) means, alongside supportive theoretical frameworks. Freeing the mind through the use of embodied practices and multi-modal reflective methods, allows for the journey of reflection to happen through the body, connecting to more cognitive processes via the somatic. Furthermore, as expressivity is at the core of dance as an artform, the participatory and expressive nature of

creative/embodied reflection and potentially allow for pre-conditioned and “presumed ideas of what the body should be and do” (Green, 1999, p. 4) to be un-picked for the purpose of empowerment of the student dancer.

By interrogating the reflective processes that dancers in training engage in and investigating the ways in which we can innovate this practice, we argue that the combination of movement with creative methods facilitates the reflective journey. Using film with both the students and researchers was one way in which we achieved this. The camera gave the participants the opportunity to take control and to explain and perform their own individual experience of reflexivity through the embodied exercises (Guillemin & Drew, 2010). Film was used as a tool for teaching reflective practice, and the making of a film is literal way of displaying the embodied person beyond the text or research observations. Film allows the data to affect or ‘haunt’ (Wilson, 2018) the audience by giving them access to the participants’ embodied and emotional experiences. With the anthropological themes of intersubjectivity and reflexivity guiding the filming and editing, learning through embodied practice was not only observed, but felt, through the filming (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2017; Jackson, 1998). The ethnographic film creates a somewhat unbiased space of interpretation and witnessing that the text, post-research, may not (Pink, 2009).

Deeper reflection can be achieved through embodied (reflective) practice, on an individual and collective level, for the dancer(s) in training, un-veiling the body’s stories, and valuing the subjectivity of the process. This in turn can de-objectify the student’s body from the constraints of (only) the “outward appearance” (Green, 1999, p. 53) and shift importance to notions of (re)presentation to a sense of “inner authority” (ibid.). This project from its



inception, through its practical experimentation with second year undergraduate students at Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance, has stood firmly on the position that somatic inspired pedagogy enables dancers to embed theory, concepts and ideas in an embodied way, and therefore arrive at more refined conclusions about their technical and behavioural practice. This, alongside the professionally driven need for self-efficacy and resilience, contributes to the further need for a dance pedagogy that promotes deeper reflection (not merely rumination) and the ability to use the knowledge derived from that for self-regulation.

**Creativity**, and creative learning in the broader sense can be conduits for the arrival to such self-regulation, whereby the trainee dancer can carefully analyse embodied experience in order to arrive at new knowledge about self and practice. A somatic approach to reflection lends itself to developing self-regulation, which is particularly useful in relation to the “increasing vagueness of borders between art forms” (Sööt & Viskus 2014, p. 1200) and therefore the multiplicity of demands on the dancer. Dance as an art form has expanded to invite many creative practices into its own processes, that dancers are required to engage with. These can include varied activities, from extensive improvisation, to using text, engaging with technology, amongst many others, and it is our firm belief that dance pedagogy can embrace this further by utilising multi-modal and embodied reflection. This link is based on the premise that dance education can engage the trainee dancer with a multiplicity of avenues into reflective discovery and use somatic practice to arrive at states less ‘controlled’ by technical restraints. The resulting self-regulation and awareness and the varied experiences this will offer will allow for greater ability to deal with the multiplicity of expressive and artistic processes. This is supported by Sööt & Viskus (2014) in their review

of 21<sup>st</sup> Century dance pedagogy by the assertion that “individuality, creativity and [a] subjective approach towards the learner and the learning process have an essential role to play” (p1200). It is not enough to teach the skills required for a virtuosic body, without working towards revealing the individual reflective narratives that underpin the learning, training and creative experiences of the young dancers. Though it might be useful to share specific questions that enabled these narratives to become revealed, such an approach detracts from the individualised nature of the work, and increases the possibility that the reflective process becomes rote, a process of answering questions rather than increasing self-awareness. Through the utilisation of embodied and multi-modal reflective processes with dancers in a conservatoire environment we can begin to work towards the notion that an open dialogue with self and a more inclusive pedagogy of dance – one that aims to “support the individual’s general development on the background of acquiring dance technical and compositional knowledge and skills” (Sööt & Viskus, 2014, p1200).

We locate the philosophy of reflection within the somatic, in order to use it as a catalyst for enhanced self-awareness, as well as transformed behaviour towards the practice of dance. Classical and Contemporary techniques inscribe the body with behavioural patterns which are often rooted in extrinsic feedback from the master-teacher and the mirror. This feedback narrative can in turn detract from intrinsic awareness and potentially instil a passivity in the student. The underlying reason for unpicking the teaching and learning process within conservatoire dance training is to discover innovative methodologies to revolutionise the ways the students ‘see’ themselves as well as understand their training. We feel that reflecting on self (away from the image of the body’s aesthetic reflection) and on self within an ensemble is vital to understanding practice, strengths and limitations,

behaviours, relationships. We achieved this through using models such as an adaption of Brookfield's (1995) four lenses, where we asked the students to reflect from their own point of view, through the lens of their colleague within their ensemble, through the lens of an audience, and through a theoretical lens of the students' choosing. How do we then identify, acknowledge and evaluate our practice, and furthermore our behaviour within a creative or training process? How do we imbue this with the notion of professionalism that permeates the training we provide at conservatoire level?

True to reflective practice itself, the embracing of different creative avenues, and therefore perspectives, towards reflection enriches the toolbox of the dancer and points towards individual and collective enhancement of awareness. Awareness of practice through multi-modal creative means of reflection can in turn, positively influence and strengthen dance pedagogy as a whole. This also offers the educational experience of dance training a balance between skills-driven instruction with a more open-ended exploration in which the dancers in training may need to become more tolerant of unpredictable outcomes which are not just based on technical development. The dance pedagogic model can be diversified significantly by utilising creative and artistic methods for reflection. Moreover, the diverse cultural traditions within the dance conservatoire demographic predetermines varied understandings of, and tolerances to, the value of reflective practice. By utilising creative and artistic methods, the cultural and language barriers that may prevent the 'translation' from practice to language are eased.

The training of a reflective 'thinking dancer' can be significantly enhanced by regular engagement with reflective practice, guided and self-directed, that leads to the unveiling of

behaviours and attitudes towards training and towards dance practice as a whole. Through this experimental process we can conclude that unless reflective practice training is given an equal value to technical training, and if this is done through creative and embodied means, we can innovate dance pedagogy in a way that allows the young dancer to be more empowered by their engagement with self-knowledge. Equally, the sharing of the discoveries and knowledge generated from deeper reflection can reveal new connections within the ensemble and strengthen relationships, as well as allow for a more democratic dialogue between learner and teacher. How young dancers learn to 'tell the tales' of their embodied experiences and are able to combine reflection in, on and for action, is directly linked to the pedagogic model. By guiding young dancers to discover the meanings and knowledge generated through embodied practice, and more importantly to discover ways of capturing them, we can begin to further innovate dance pedagogy within the conservatoire, empowering teachers and learners to articulate somatic/bodily narratives and arrive at a clarity of purpose within training. This also means an enhanced awareness of personal narratives for young dancers, discovered through reflective practice, which can in turn contribute to the strengthening of the links between personal and dance identity.

Furthermore, discovering this interrelationship through the body, rather than beginning reflection from a cognitive standpoint, promotes a level of inclusivity. The body, rather than verbal language, is the starting point and the arrival point, **through the reflective process of bringing conscious self-awareness to the body**, and the journey back to the 'soma' can be captured in a multiplicity of ways that do not interfere with the essence of the dance experience which is predominantly somatic. Through this experiment we were keen to guide the Rambert School dancers to discover meaning through reflective practice.

Embodied knowing cannot always be articulated easily as its origins are ephemeral, and so by engaging with non-disruptive methodologies of creative reflection through a variety of artistic means we can begin to capture the transitory nature of dance experience.

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