

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE PERCEPTIONS OF DANCE STUDENTS ON  
LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN ONE INDEPENDENT VOCATIONAL  
PERFORMING ARTS SCHOOL.

By

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**Abstract:**

The aim of this research was to investigate year nine dance students' perceptions of learning in studio and classroom-based environments in a vocational performing arts school. The following areas were explored: past histories, ambitions, students' perceptions and approaches to lessons, influences on the learning process, strategies of engagement, and students' responses to different teaching approaches. Social constructivist theory provided the main foundation to support the areas of inquiry. The focus on specialist dance students' perceptions towards different subjects gave clear insight into their educational experiences and preferred learning styles. An interpretivist case study approach provided a lens through which to view dance students' learning and engagement. Empirical data was gathered from a range of methods, which included questionnaires, focus groups, observations, and interviews. Content analysis and cross referencing of data led to the emergence of six themes, including the significance of influences such as the physical environment, application to teaching, and students' perceptions of learning. The impact of their ambitions permeated many aspects, as they related to the symbols and cultures of dance education, bringing a focus to their training that was different to their learning in other classroom lessons. The study concluded that knowledge and understanding comes from a range of factors, specifically, students' past experiences, perceptions of meaningful learning, socio-cultural practices, a dancer's identity, the effects of a deeply embedded dance culture, and an intense desire to become a professional performer. In identifying key areas of effective teaching and learning practices for vocational dance students, the research provides a platform for further pedagogical study, particularly based around collaborative and constructivist philosophies.

**Dedication:**

I dedicate this thesis to my wonderful wife Sue, for her never-failing support, love and unwavering belief in me.

**Acknowledgements:**

I have been extremely fortunate in the latter stages of this research, to have such wonderful guidance from my two supervisors, Dr. Tonie Stolberg and Dr. Tansin Benn. Their dedication, expertise, and profound knowledge has been truly inspiring. I sincerely thank them for their time, patience, and opportunity to complete this work.

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## **Chapter 1: SETTING THE CONTEXT**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This study investigated vocational dance students' perceptions of learning, taking a holistic view across all areas of their education and training. It identified how students were managed within two contrasting learning spaces: the dance studio and the academic classroom. An important element was to explore how these students' perceptions were manifested, in particular, their approach to different subjects, their work ethic, and their engagement in subject content. Aspects of the social and student identity were seen as key supporting elements in analysing the empirical data from these learning spaces.

The school at the centre of this study has many different specialist teaching spaces, although what sets it apart from most schools, are the 12 large dance and drama studios that essentially surround the academic classrooms. In exploring how specialist dance students approached and worked in these different learning environments, an overlying aim was to develop a greater understanding of how they viewed all aspects of their education.

### **1.2 The researcher**

I have been teaching music and performing arts for over forty years and being privileged to work with extremely talented students, many of them going on to

achieve great success as professional performers. For the past twenty years I have taught in a vocational performing arts school, working alongside dance teachers, choreographers, and musical theatre directors. Observing a broad variety of teaching methods in different learning environments during this time inspired me to approach a line of inquiry from a student's perspective rather than established pedagogical practices and theories. This led me to question what it is that motivates these students, aged 11-21 years. It is clear that they work hard and reach high levels of success in studio-based environments, particularly in dance. On the other hand (in some cases) they appear reticent and disengaged in classroom-based lessons. This study focussed around learning within these two specific contexts, exploring what relevance and importance students attach to the various facets of their curriculum. Personal interest lay in how students perceived their different learning spaces and whether their attitude and approach to learning differed between the dance studio and the more formal classroom. I also drew on my considerable experience as a music teacher, particularly observing how students worked independently and collaboratively. The focus here has been on how knowledge is constructed in order to make sense of subject material. It is essentially the essence of those two differentiated learning spaces, students' perceptions of those two spaces, and how knowledge and learning is managed within those environments, that have principally been explored. Placing myself centrally in these research areas allowed me to observe detailed phenomena, using my own knowledge and experience in teaching and learning as a measure and a guide. Potential researcher bias is acknowledged through having such an integral role within the school. It was important to ensure

that I analysed students' perceptions and not my own (Saldana, 2016) without allowing subjectivity into my interpretations of their narratives. Gray (2014) highlights the importance of consistency of questions and delivery during interviews. It was therefore essential to maintain a level of scepticism (Thomas, 2017; Gray, 2014; Wells, 2005) in relation to the supporting literature and the empirical data from interviews and observations.

As an experienced music teacher, it has been interesting to reflect how my approach to teaching over the past forty years has changed. This has been influenced by school and department policy, which has followed national curriculum guidelines dictating curriculum content and assessment procedures. However, of greater significance, has been my personal reflections on how I have managed differentiation within these learning climates. Both experience and educational theory led me to develop new classroom strategies that have encouraged a greater onus on student-centred learning, rather than teacher-centred delivery. These inclusive approaches, of what is essentially sociocultural perspectives to learning, were developed through investigating social constructivist theories as detailed in chapter two. Over the past six years, this has allowed me to explore new approaches and philosophies, establishing a more efficient and engaging learning climate. Of significance to this study was that most of this change or development was driven from a pedagogical and educational perspective and not from a student's perspective. However, as a researcher and teacher, it was also important to recognise personal experience 'as being so valuable in providing insight' (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p. 98).

Peim (2018), stresses the importance and relevance of the researcher's past knowledge in any investigation, particularly in the education world. In his arguments he expressed the links between the subject and the object arguing how important it was: 'to objectify the personal experience of the subject' (Peim, 2018, p. 104). Here, there is a clear argument that to fully understand a situation (or object) you must bring your own perceptions and histories to that investigation.

### **1.3 Dance students and their learning environments**

My research domain was set in an independent performing arts school, specialising in dance, with many of its students being awarded Music and Dance Scheme scholarships. The school days are long, beginning at 8.55am and ending at 6.30pm Monday to Friday and on Saturday mornings from 9.00am to 12.00pm. These are dedicated dance students who show an aptitude for their specialism, with the majority wanting to enter the professional world of performance. This encompasses many genres and styles of dance, musical theatre and film acting. All 12 research participants were boarders and eight of these were receiving Music and Dance Scheme (MDS) scholarships. Although their academic skills were tested on entry to the school, the dance audition was of greater significance to the final decision from the awarding panel. The majority of dance students in the school are boarders and therefore live within a tightly focussed community. It could be argued that this social world of dance bias is not typical of the world that most children of that age experience. Using Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, Pickard (2015) argued, 'young

dancers are acquiring a ballet dancer's *habitus* and are therefore still becoming familiar with the codes and normal behaviour of the social worlds in which they inhabit'. This concept of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1990a) lies below the level of consciousness, developing from experiences of a practical nature (Pickard, 2015, p. 27). The key part of the above statement is 'social worlds'. Vocational dance students operate in contrasting environments, often with different rules and etiquette, different approaches to work, and contrasting physical spaces. A key element of Bourdieu's (1990a) *habitus* is the relationship between the "outer" social and the "inner" self (Maton, 2014, p. 49 in Grenfell, 2014). Maton (2014, p. 50) argued that *habitus* 'is structured by one's past and present circumstances'. This reinforces the notion that a student's *habitus* is strongly influenced by the world of dance, and that the majority will have experienced this from an early age. Of equal significance, as presented by Bourdieu (1986), is what he calls "the field". This could also be referred to as the social arena and links closely to the world of dance or dance culture. Dance students, therefore, operate in a world of: practices (ways of thinking and doing), personal investment into an activity (personal expectations), and the social environment (cultures and collaborative practices). This social field is defined by Maton (2014, p. 52) as 'a competitive game or "field of struggles" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 187) in which actors strategically improvise in their quest to maximise their positions'. Using Bourdieu's (1990) equation, a dancer's *habitus* could, therefore, be expressed as a formula: personal dispositions plus appreciations and expectations, plus social environment equals practice. This presents a potential argument that a dancer's *habitus* may change between the

dance studio and academic classroom. Therefore, one's practices may present in different ways, depending on the field or environment.

Over the last ten years the school has grown considerably, including the student roll, numbers of specialist staff, new courses at post 16 level, new buildings and numerous teaching resources. However, by comparing photographs of these buildings, below, it could be argued that there are clear examples of direction and bias towards whole-school priorities. This is not a direct criticism, as any specialist school must have prioritised areas to fulfil in order to maintain its specialist status. However, to many students and visiting parents, certain buildings may be viewed as symbols of less-significant subject areas (see photos 1.1 and 1.2, below).



Photo 1.1 Maths Block



Photo 1.2 Science Block

These are in stark contrast to the performing arts centre and dance studio blocks; impressive and imposing structures that can be seen when entering the main driveway to the school (see photos 1.3 and 1.4, below).





Photo 1.3 Performing Arts Centre



Photo 1.4 Dance Studios

Dewey (1933, p. 22) argued that 'We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment. Whether we permit chance environments to do the work, or whether we design environments for the purpose makes a great difference'. In defining 'environment' this could refer to the actual physical space or indeed the overall essence and culture of that learning space. This includes how knowledge and understanding is delivered, and perceived, and how students and learning activities are managed.

This study observed that the majority of classrooms followed similar patterns of layout and décor, noting that the science labs could be associated with the 'real world'. All dance studios are symbolically linked to the professional world of dance through the open space (performance area), ballet barres (professional tools), and dancewear (theatrical costume). Therefore, there was a stark difference, as can be seen from the above photographs 1.1 to 1.4, between most academic teaching spaces and the vocational dance and drama studios. From past observations and

discussions with staff, it became clear that the arrangement of classroom furniture was often designed to facilitate classroom discipline and management of the students. Foucault (1977, p. 141), in describing how groups of people were confined to various places to control discipline, states: 'Discipline sometimes requires enclosure, the specification of a place heterogeneous to all others and closed in upon itself. It is the protected place of disciplinary monotony'. To some extent this reflects the heterogeneous learning spaces in the modern school, but this level of controlled environment may potentially inhibit certain students or at least impact on the quality of their work ethic and learning.

Although the 12 participating students specialised in dance studies as part of the national MDS initiative, they also undertook a full academic curriculum. This study did not attempt to assess levels of attainment achieved across the curriculum, although at times it considered levels of progress in relation to pupil-engagement and motivation in all subjects. The main areas of research focussed on aspects of activity within contrasting learning spaces, and how knowledge and understanding in students was developed through the relationship between theory and practice. Studio and classroom observations were key in identifying effective links between pedagogical theory and practice.

#### **1.4 Rationale and significance**

Although the research field was in an independent school, students within this environment came from all walks of life. They were awarded places on potential

talent and physical prowess, with a significant number being awarded government scholarships through the Music and Dance Scheme. By focussing on dance students' perceptions and experiences across all subject areas, this study was able to closely scrutinise and evaluate student approaches to work. It also identified methods of best practice between studio and classroom-based environments.

Students' perceptions of learning was central to this study, specifically how they approached their array of subjects in different learning environments. This included a study of their individual practices within each learning space. From exploring the work of Bourdieu (1986), Lave and Wenger (2017), and Kolb (2015), future aspirations of the participants were also identified as an area for investigation. It was intended that this greater awareness of the positive effects that well-managed teaching spaces can have on a child's learning, will help inform subject planning and whole-school strategies. This may be through a sharing of good practice and reorganisation and management of those learning spaces. Observing many lessons in all subject areas over a period of twenty years, had inspired me to question what impact the subject content, the learning environment, the style of teaching, and the students' individual expectations have had in creating students' behaviours. This study identified an inconsistency in how each student approached and worked in different subject areas. The main purpose was, therefore, to acquire a greater understanding of the conscious and subconscious behaviours of these dance students, with the intention of feeding into whole-school development planning with regard to all aspects of teaching

and learning. Seltzer (2019) defines conscious and subconscious states, as thoughts and behaviours that are dictated by awareness and unawareness of aspects in your world. Cherry (2020, 7<sup>th</sup> para.), gives a similar definition, stating: 'your awareness of yourself and the world around you are part of your consciousness'. Cherry (2020, 8<sup>th</sup> para.) defines the subconscious as 'memories [that] are not conscious, but we can retrieve them to conscious awareness at any time'. This then suggests that students' behaviours and perceptions can be influenced depending on their use of the conscious or subconscious mind. Freud offered three levels: conscious, subconscious, and unconscious (Journal Psyche, 2018). He argued that all three represent our reality: conscious is the selector of events, subconscious stores recent memory for quick recall, and unconscious stores all memories and past experiences.

In exploring dance students' perceptions of learning, three areas of investigation were deployed, resulting in the following research questions:

- 1. What influences a dance student's engagement in learning processes in studio and classroom-based environments?**
- 2. How do dance students engage in learning experiences in studio and classroom environments?**
- 3. How do dance students' future aspirations impact on commitment to learning in studio and classroom-based lessons?**

## 1.5 Theoretical frameworks

The intentions of this study were to “understand, describe, [and] explore” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p. 90) situations and practices within a school environment. Through observations and interviews, themes emerged from the data relating to social constructs and cultural phenomena. This linked well to social constructivist theories, particularly Vygotsky (1978), with aspects of the cognitive constructivists: Dewey (1933), Bruner (2003), and Piaget (1973). This theoretical position was described as ‘inductive’ by Gray (2014), Robson and McCartan (2016), and Thomas (2016): ‘from observations to theory’ (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 37). In exploring two contrasting learning spaces, the emphasis lent towards the context of the social and physical setting (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). This case study approach gave ‘a rich picture with many kinds of insights coming from different perspectives, [and] from different kinds of information’ (Thomas, 2016, p. 21).

After receiving a brief overview of this research project, twenty four participants (dance students) were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) that allowed them to reflect on their learning experiences across their range of subjects. This provided a rich source of data to drive further research methods. These student reflections were central to all further study for this project. In reflecting on the nature of this type of study, Tsompanaki and Benn (2011, p. 207), state ‘The future of dance as a discipline can be improved through listening to students’ needs’. This philosophy was applied throughout the study, with a

focus on how dance students made sense of, and perceived, their learning in studio and classroom-based environments. A case study approach was implemented, to identify: 'what is going on' (Robson and McCartan, 2016), to understand the dynamics of the situation (Eisenhardt, 1989), and to uncover a relationship between a phenomenon [students' perceptions] and the context in which it is occurring [studio and classroom-based environments] (Gray, 2014). In investigating students' perceptions of learning within an independent vocational performing arts school, the intention was to investigate 'multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness' (Thomas, 2016, p. 10) of the chosen learning environment.

Yin (2012) proposed six main sources of case study data: documentation; archival records; interviews; direct observations; participant observations; and physical artifacts. Of these, interviews, direct and participant observations, and physical artifacts were selected as the principal methods for gathering data.

At the centre of this study, was how students operated and made sense of what was being taught in each subject area. Although much has been written on the teaching of dance, there is little evidence of what significance dance students place on subjects other than their specialism. Pickard (2015, p.7), states: 'the moving body has warranted relatively little attention in academia'. In assessing students' perceptions, Kolb's cycle of experiential learning was initially used as a framework to guide key strategies for research. The north-south continuum

provided a platform to analyse how students feel and think about each subject area. (See Fig.1.1, below).

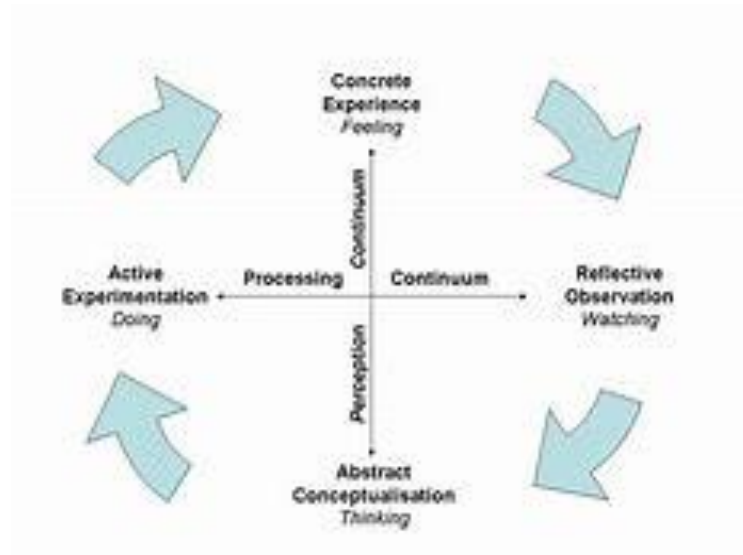


Fig. 1.1 Kolb's cycle of experiential learning

In linking cultural phenomena with students' perceptions in studio and classroom-based spaces, approaches to learning and levels of motivation could be identified. Guided by the experiential learning cycle, questions were raised as to how much students were engaged in learning activities. The researcher was interested to see if they were actively involved in observing, reflecting, and doing, effectively creating a more meaningful process to their learning? Their approaches to learning, described by Kolb as the processing continuum were explored through observations and semi-structured interviews.

It was also important to acknowledge the potential influence of the researcher's own experience and knowledge of education, although strategies were used in

this analysis to ensure there would be no researcher bias. I see knowledge and understanding as being created by interactions within our own world. Truth and meaning are gradually built up from our own perceptions and experiences, so 'subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon' (Gray, 2014, p. 18). This epistemological perspective of constructivism helped define and guide the research design, taking into consideration: the types of evidence being gathered, where they were from, and the methodology used to interpret this evidence. This linked well with experiential learning through shared experience, as Kolb & Kolb (2017, p. xxiv) state: 'the magic of experiential learning lies in the unique relationship that is created between teacher, learner, and the subject matter under study'. It was this notion that led to a more holistic approach to the research. From the first questionnaire there was clear evidence of the passion students had for their dance classes, with the majority of students seeing learning spaces and teaching styles as being significant to their personal development. This is analysed in greater detail in chapter five. This approach also took into account the learning styles of dance students and how these may have been influenced from an early age. This concept is supported by Kolb (2015, p. 164), who argues that 'learning style is not a fixed personality trait but more like a habit of learning'. This suggests that influences from a very early age play a dominant part in forging a person's learning style and aspirations. As discussed earlier, this also fits with Bourdieu's (1986) concept of 'habitus', supporting the notion of identities and practices, that are formed from a very young age.



A research strategy framework was created (see Fig. 1.2, below) to ensure that key areas of the learning environment were included. Because the study was investigating students' perceptions of learning, the curriculum and learning environment were seen as key elements. Variables were also considered to reflect the broad range of facets of this study. Three main sources were identified as: student perceptions, teacher perceptions, and researcher reflections. Figure 2.1, below, demonstrates the inductive nature of the research, which gave a level of freedom to gathering data with ongoing links between each area of study. This could be referred to as 'grounded theory' (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p.161) where a theory is generated from data. However, 'the point of the research [was] not to develop general theories, but to understand particulars' (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 191). This then became a strength of the research process, with students' practices and behaviours seen as key elements. A vocational dance student's training focuses on technique, competition, elitism, hierarchy, artistry, and personal expression. This is opposed to non-vocational dance students (e.g. GCSE dance), who generally follow programmes of study with an emphasis on creatively making and analysing dance (Hanna, 2002, p. 50). Pickard (2015, p. 12) adds to this, stating that 'dancers live with constant criticism and review'.

This study is, therefore, an investigation into dance students' perceptions of learning processes, experiences and activities in both studio and classroom-based environments.

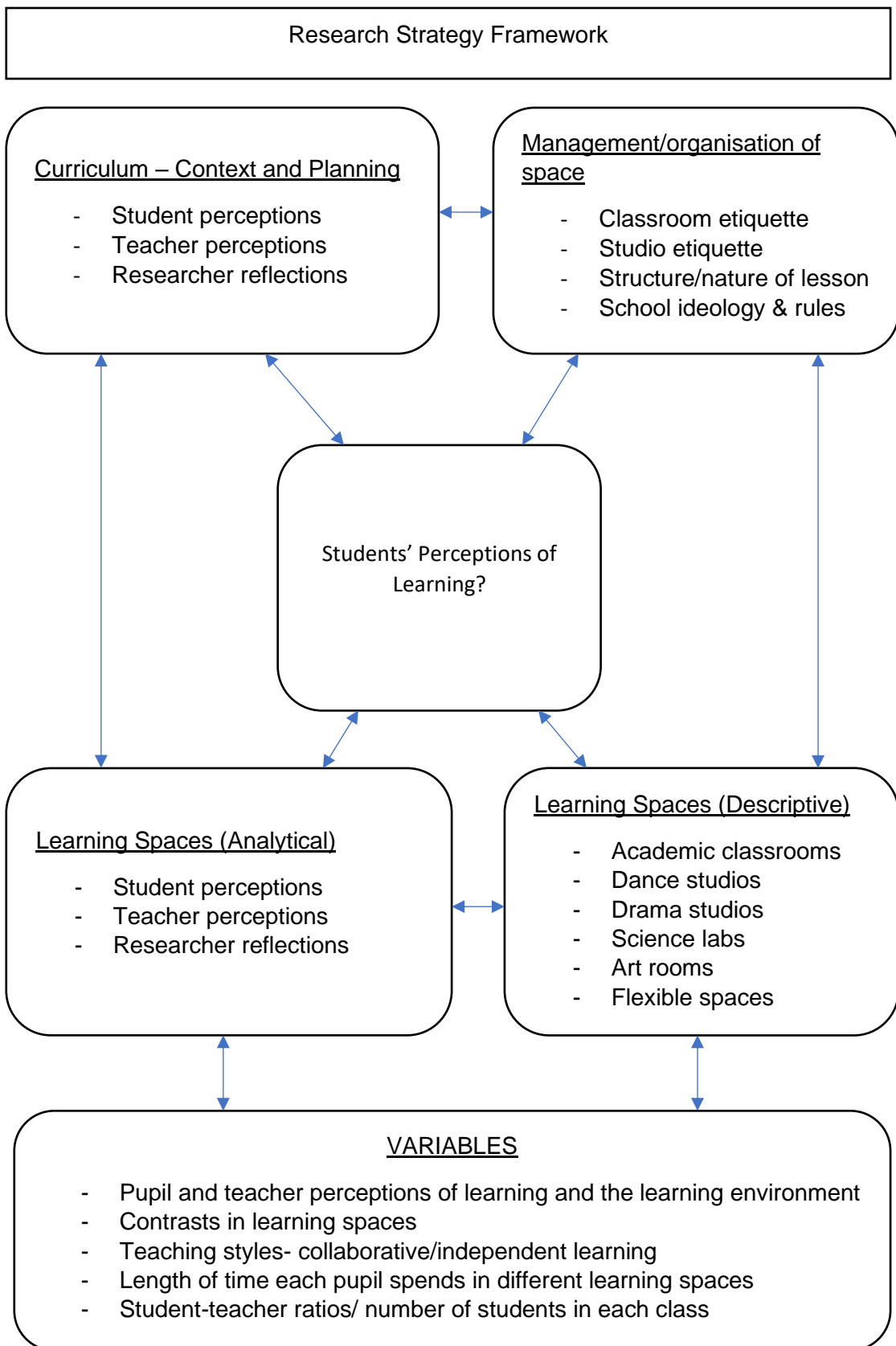


Fig. 1.2 Research strategy framework

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Introduction

The initial literature search on dance students' perceptions of learning in classroom and studio-based environments, identified that little has been written around this area of study. The intention was to seek a rich description and understanding of what was happening in the different learning spaces within one institution. This investigation into students' perceptions of learning, aimed to contribute to improved pedagogical planning and classroom/studio management linked to the development plan as part of a whole-school initiative. Specifically, my main intentions were to seek out commonalities and differences in student perceptions of learning and approaches to their work. To successfully complete this study, it was necessary to undertake a critical review of related current and seminal literature. This was ongoing throughout the data collection, as in line with case study methodology, 'both "before" and "after" approaches [have been] employed' (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 106). The main foci of the investigation were as follows: student identity; students' perceptions of learning; pedagogical practices; learning environments and emotional engagement of students, and so searches of the literature were conducted under those headings. Mayer (2002, p. 227) links meaningful learning to constructivist theory where information is mentally organised into a 'coherent representation'. This is then combined with existing knowledge, as opposed to just adding to the student's memory, thereby, providing a deeper understanding and an ability to apply 'one or more procedures

to an unfamiliar task' (Mayer, 2002, p. 229). Meaningful learning is therefore associated with cognitive processes that combine understanding with application.

This supports Ausubel's (2000) theory that effective learning is influenced by what the learner already knows. This is further supported by Agra (2019), and Vallori (2014), stating that meaningful learning 'occurs when human beings relate new concepts to pre-existing concepts' (Vallori, 2014, p. 199). Although Vallori's (2014) paper links a number of useful concepts and strategies about teaching, the main focus lies with its impact on the teacher rather than the learner. Agra (2019) acknowledges the significance of the 'social' and 'interaction' in establishing meaningful learning. This links to the main social-constructivist theories of learning (Dewey, 1933; Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 2003; Ernest, 1999). Agra (2019) suggests a preoccupation with 'learning to think and learning to learn' (4th Para). This highlights the potential significance and importance of how students engage in their own learning processes.

The concept of the 'social' is identified as an important element of the learning process, and highlights the significance of the facilitator in that process.

Gadamer (1989) talks of us having our own horizons of knowledge, which is a distinct way of describing each individual's world. It also helps to describe the concept of what we know and how that knowledge can be expanded through interactions that overlap with other people's horizons. Therefore, both the teacher's and the student's knowledge can be seen as essential components of

the learning process. In other words, knowledge is existential, governed by the world(s) we occupy. These worlds could be our own conscious decisions, or guided by those around us such as parents, teachers, or friends. This may also include the student's own ideals of what they would like to be and how they perceive themselves within their own world (Peim, 2018, p. 110). Kolb and Kolb (1917, p. 98) argued the importance of the student themselves investing in their own development although, citing Dweck (2000), they discuss the fixed view students can have of themselves, 'believing that they are incapable of learning'. This view of students' perceptions of learning is extreme and I would argue that other factors have influence, such as thoughts of inadequacy. In dance classes, this could potentially appear as a lack of confidence or self-esteem with the student believing 'that the reason that some students [achieve] good grades was because they were smart'. (Kolb and Kolb, 2017, p. 98). This theory suggests that students accept failure in certain subjects as a *fait accompli*, depending on their perceptions of their own levels of skill or intelligence. This simplistic view shows knowledge that is given rather than knowledge that is developed within the person with "a lack of understanding" being the main barrier to further development. This self-motivated separation from the learning environment suggests there is a strong argument for collaborative learning practices that encourages all students to be fully engaged in the learning process. Perry (2013) gave an interesting account of how students can have a blinkered view of knowledge, arguing that it is seen as something that is handed down from a greater authority. This concept of knowledge development does not take into account the essential elements of understanding and application. Therefore, it is

important to identify the key processes of how knowledge is transformed into deeper understanding and meaningful applications. Schommer and Walker (1995) provide strong evidence which shows that a student's perception of knowledge varies between subjects, and is often impacted by the social interaction and dynamics of each learning space.

Exploring the world of a dance student, through a social-constructivist lens (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 2003; Ernest, 1999), led this inquiry to focus on the students' interaction with the physical world, collaborative practices, and the cultural and linguistic environment (Baker, McGaw and Peterson, 2007). Baker et al. (2007) argue the significance of culture and language within a learning environment, presenting this as a framework for combining existing knowledge with new, within a social context. This also links to the significance of student identity and purposeful knowledge and training.

## **2.2 Student identities**

In identifying students' perceptions to learning, this study sought reasons for different levels of work ethic in contrasting learning spaces, identifying key practices and phenomena in those spaces. This allowed comparisons of the quality of student work and focus between studio and classroom-based environments. If we assume that individual academic subjects (in senior schools) cannot create specialists in that specific area, then we can also presume that their main aim is to equip students with a foundation of knowledge and skills that

can later be used to construct specialisms. In using physics as an example of school teaching linked to 'communities of practice', Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 99) state, 'The actual reproducing community of practice, within which schoolchildren learn about physics, is not the community of physicists but the community of schooled adults'. H'Doubler (1998, p. xxvi) supports this concept, writing; 'we do not go to science to become scientists, but to gain that kind of knowledge which gives informed appreciation of the living processes that animate our activities'. This argument reinforces the notion that schooling pre-sixteen is biased towards a more general education, and is therefore a stepping stone towards a specific specialism. However, this may not be entirely true of dance classes as these students are being taught the techniques and aesthetical understanding required for professional performance. This point also emerged from the empirical data as it became clear that students were fully aware of the expectations of being a dance student in a vocational school.

This then suggests that dance students establish strong identities (i.e. 'the dancer') much earlier in their schooling experience than other non-specialist students. This may present a dichotomy to academic teachers who teach classes containing both dance and non-dance students. It is important to note that the term non-dance student is not something that is referred to within the teaching body but is used here purely to differentiate between the two groups of students. Although these two groups may have different aims and expectations in life, it does not necessarily mean that educational practices should differ. However, it is interesting to note that Wenger-Trayner et. al. (2015), discussing the importance

of identity in relation to education and work, argued that many students' identities are affected by educational practices. These engender 'perceptions of failure and incompetence in transitions across boundaries [and] the provisional and temporary nature, for many learners, of their engagement and alignment with academic practices' (p.152). Although this might suggest that there is little in common between the school and workplace landscape, it also insinuates that students may well be put off certain professions by the very nature, presentation, and experiences of related subjects at their school. Although Wenger-Travner et al'. (2015) perspective is not entirely relevant, particularly in the case of specialist dance students, it does present a strong argument for educationalists, academics, DfE and other related bodies to devise a more meaningful and inspirational curriculum in certain areas. Another strong consideration here is that typically, dance students begin their dance studies at a very young age without an appreciation or awareness of where it might lead them (Pickard, 2015, p. 55). Pickard's (2015) opening statement, 'I have become a dancer through a process of construction that began in early childhood' (p. 1) suggests a dancer's fate (if physicality, talent, and artistry are of an appropriate level) is determined by other factors. This is often referred to as the all-consuming world of dance (Sandham, 2012). Aalten, (2005, p. 5) describes an aspect of this world through an Alicia Markova quote (1982), reflecting a time during her professional career' "I am starved for people, life, thoughts, conversation, alternatives to my NYCB world". This statement depicts a very insular, and distant world of dance. It could be argued that this childhood membership of the dance community sits neatly with Bourdieu's argument that schools 'are sites of institutional symbolic violence [and]



that their violence is symbolic because it is invisible and unrecognised' (Pickard, 2015, p. 28). This, then, suggests that the identity of a dancer is constructed from an early age, adding a deeper meaning to seemingly simplistic statements made by students such as "I am a dancer" or "Dance is what I do" (Student focus group, 4.3, p.??). When considering Molden and Dweck's (2006) theories on *learner* and *fixed* identities, it could be argued that a student's assumptions about their knowledge and understanding for each subject could well hinder any future significant progress if they place themselves in the category of 'fixed identity' for a specific subject. Kolb and Kolb (2017, p. 101) reinforce this notion, stating: 'The fixed-identity person avoids challenge, gives up easily, avoids criticism, and feels threatened by the success of others'. This worrying notion suggests that lack of progress, or indeed failure to achieve, in a specific subject could be attributed to the student's past histories, educational experience, and lack of inspired guidance. The other side of this argument is that students with a strong learner identity, potentially a dancer who has developed this identity from a very young age, will be more motivated, confident, 'embrace challenge, persist in the face of obstacles, learn from criticism, and [be] inspired by and learn from the success of others' (Kolb and Kolb, 2017, p. 101).

In viewing identity as an important phenomenon within a learning community, there are strong arguments representing how it can manifest itself to others within a group, including how it may vary according to the social situation (Erikson, 1968; Illeris, 2017). Illeris (2017), quoting Gergen (1991), gave similar arguments stating that students are 'constantly exposed to influences that are so many and

varied that the self or identity cannot contain them' (p.133). The assumption here is that identities, which often determine behaviours, are influenced both by external environmental factors and individual perceptions in different situations.

In referring to identity, Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 32) suggest it is often 'an ambiguous, confused, and abstract term'. They refer to it as being either a cognitive phenomenon or a cultural process, as a personal or social thing (Leary & Tangney, 2005). Identity is often used for categorising groups of people or cultures. It can also relate to personality and appears in social contexts.

Therefore, dance students can be categorised as a social group belonging to a distinct culture that is deeply embedded in a real-world of dance and performance. This also suggests how these cultures or worlds might impact on a student's developing identity.

### **2.2.1 Identity construction**

Peim (2018, p. 107), describing Gadamer's (1989) philosophy, suggests we are guided by what and who surrounds us; things that are 'specific to our world' particularly including how we are guided through our early years and education. He goes on to describe how we construct our identities through these various processes involving 'language, culture, education, [and] knowledge. This suggests a process that involves other agencies, which may include parents, teachers, friends, technology, political and cultural influences, historical experiences, and physical surroundings. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 33)

discuss Vygotsky's (1998) concept of "emotional experience" or "lived experience", quoting from a Vygotsky (1998, p. 294) lecture stating: 'experience is the unity of the personality and the environment as it is represented in development'. This then becomes more explicit: 'the environment determines the development of the child through experience of the environment'. Therefore, it is argued that identity is formed from influences that surround each individual and can be affected by that individual's understanding and perceptions. The essential part of this statement is that all children will experience and perceive things differently, potentially influenced by past experience and understanding. This is supported by Van der Veer and Valsiner (1994, p. 354) who argue that Vygotsky's (1998) "emotional experience" can be 'interpreted, experienced or lived through by different children in different ways'. It could be argued that these perceptions and levels of understanding are led by biased opinions of the teacher, who can be seen by students as a nucleus of a particular culture. Interestingly, many staff use the term 'culture' as an umbrella term when referring to both their teaching and learning spaces.

In discussing Althusser's philosophy, Peim (2018, p. 111) discusses how our identities are constructed. As soon as we are born 'Interpellation begins to form our subjectivity from a very early age... when we are 'called' to be what we are' in what the philosopher Althusser terms as 'hailing'. Here, aspects of the social play a significant role as 'the hailer', whereby individuals respond and embrace those social forces rather than developing independently. This suggests that these social forces (parents, teachers) impact heavily on how the students (subjects)

make sense of their world. This could then have a strong bearing on their personal expectations and how they perceive and embrace their education and training. In other words, it surmises how meaningful certain aspects of their education is to them, in relation to their future lives. This suggests that if a student's understanding sits on the periphery of that subject, then it becomes extremely difficult to have any appreciation of what is being taught. Therefore, without basic levels of understanding for any subject, any significant progress may be prohibited. How this is monitored and managed is potentially one of the most important skills for a teacher to have, and often comes from how they inspire students, which relates to the importance of meaningful lessons. In many cases, a dance student will have been dancing from a very young age and dance will therefore be an integral part of their life. Potentially, each child will have developed with dance at the core of their thinking processes. Certainly, those students in a specialist dance college will have clear aspirations about performing; feelings that are deeply embedded due to their upbringing and experience. Therefore, other forms of knowledge only become important if they can be related to their future lives as a dancer. This deep psychology can be established from an early age and it could be argued that it goes against what could be termed as a more holistic pattern and routine of education that all students experience as part of the national curriculum. In establishing a difference between dance training and other educational teaching, Sternberg et al. (1998) describe three educational processes as '*triarchic theory*' as an alternative approach to intellectual ability. These are labelled as analytical ability, creative ability, and practical ability. He suggests that all three areas must be

successfully accomplished in order to produce a good performance. Warburton (2002) developed this theory by adding that to produce an outstanding level of performance in dance, you must have a high level of intellectual ability in order to make sense of the performance. Warburton (2002) also argues that Sternberg's triarchic theory can only work if all four concepts are used in a coordinated and domain specific view.

### **2.3 Knowledge construction and student engagement**

In exploring how students construct their knowledge and make sense of their world, it was important to focus on the social context and the impact of interaction and activity (Dewey, 1933; Koohang, Riley, Smith; Schrears, 2009). These social-constructivists reinforce the importance of an active and constructive process within a social context. Gayton (2013, p.1) supports this stating: 'The theory of social constructivism defines knowledge as something that is constructed within a social context'. Knowledge being actively constructed by the learner within a social context, combining new knowledge with existing ideas (Baker, McGaw and Peterson, 2010), reinforces the significance of external and internal processes. Gaytan (2013, p. 1) stress the importance of 'collective activity' and that this external knowledge construction only becomes meaningful when connected to the learner's existing knowledge. H'Doubler (1998), as a pioneer in dance teaching during the first part of the twentieth century, asked dance teachers to consider what they were actually teaching. This was directed not towards the routines or technical exercises, but from a pedagogical perspective; it required a

deeper understanding of what a dance student was actually learning. This question, of course, could be posed to any subject teacher, and potentially becomes a useful guide in analysing what impact teaching can have on a learner. Again, it is linked to student engagement, but more importantly how we instigate effective knowledge and understanding that becomes more meaningful to the student. H'Doubler in a chapter from Mertz (2002) discusses two important forms of student engagement:

There are two aspects to education: one, the capacity to take in, to become impressed; the other, the capacity to give out, to express. To receive impressions informs the mind, but to express its reactions to these impressions requires coordination and cooperation of all the mental powers (H'Doubler, 2002, p. 11)

This suggests an ideology where effective learning emerges from an enthusiasm (be impressed) for a particular subject and an understanding and confidence (to express) to apply that particular knowledge. H'Doubler continues with interesting observations of dance pedagogy and particularly the overall positive impact it can have on a child's development.

This critical review explores the importance of the management of the physical and intrapersonal space as an effective part of learning. To achieve this, the following areas of literature were reviewed: Kolb's (2017) experiential learning theories; Vygotsky (1962; 1987; 1978)'s sociocultural theories; and Lave and Wengers' (2017) 'communities of practice' and apprenticeship model. One important line of inquiry, was how knowledge and understanding were being developed in different subject areas and what specific teaching strategies were in

place to develop a student's sense-making. This provided a theoretical framework to support the gathered data, focussing on behaviours and interactions within the varied learning environments of the research domain. The overriding objective here was to explore and analyse how students made sense of knowledge within these spaces in relation to their ontological and epistemological perspectives.

Due to the very practical nature of dance it could be argued that dance readily allows and encourages participation and expression, thus allowing students to become fully engaged with the subject content, an area that academic staff should potentially give more value to when encouraging students to make a greater connection with their specific subject. This may allow students to make a more meaningful and engaged connection with those lessons providing motivation and inspiration to build on their knowledge and understanding. Engel (2015, p. 91) asks 'Why not learn things that might actually help you lead a meaningful life? What would it be like if happiness and engagement, rather than money [and exam tables], guided our educational process? This suggests a new approach to learning with a perspective on making the curriculum more relevant to everyone's lives. Mayer (2002, p. 227) states 'meaningful learning occurs when students build the knowledge and cognitive processes needed for successful problem solving'. This could be taken one step further, where potentially successful problem solving only becomes meaningful if the learner can relate it to their own personal development and real-world experiences. Mayer (2002) describes meaningful learning as knowledge construction, where pupils 'mentally [organise] incoming information into coherent representation, and

mentally [integrate] incoming information with existing knowledge. In discussing cognitive processes, Mayer (2002) gives some useful descriptions of the following; interpreting, exemplifying, classifying, summarizing, inferring, comparing, and explaining. This eclectic taxonomy proved useful in identifying how students engage in meaningful activity, therefore increasing focus and embracing the given task. However, it could be argued that a student may demonstrate all of these processes to some extent, still without fully understanding the context and potential links to previously gained knowledge. Making sense of something is an important part of education, although it bears little value if it cannot be linked or used to support previous or future gained knowledge. Three models of learning were identified by Mayer (2001, p. 15): 'learning that is taught, learning from individual sense-making, and learning from building knowledge with others'. This social constructivist view highlights the important process of knowledge as an external phenomenon, that becomes internal through social activity. It could be argued that this social activity is defined by the surrounding culture (Illeris, 2017, p. 58).

In discussing elements of learning, Strange and Banning (2015, p. 6) argue that 'the quality of any student's experience is a function of his or her congruence, or degree of fit, with the dominant group'. This reinforces the importance of identifying commonalities between students when observing patterns in behaviour. Therefore, there is a need to look at what sources or structures construct or inhibit this notion of compatibility. This relays back to the notion of cultures within different departments and particularly the 'club culture' or 'badge



of honour' that often comes with being a dance student within a vocational school that specialises in dance training.

This notion of 'learning comes from being inspired' is supported by Humphrey (1987, p. 38) who suggests that personal goals should be closely associated to learning activities stating: 'Of utmost importance is the fact that the goal must seem worthwhile to the child. This will perhaps involve such factors as interest, attention, and motivation'. This raises the question of what levels of inspiration students experience towards their different subjects, particularly the potential juxtaposition of academic and vocational training. This presents a strong argument for more cross-curricular links. However, Humphrey's (1987) argument here is perhaps too simplistic as the interest should be knowledge-driven rather than subject-driven. It could be argued that knowledge of any sort essentially becomes interesting only if the student is able to make sense of it and able to apply it to other previously gained knowledge. However, Kolb and Kolb (2017) argued that a student will only aspire to make sense of something if they already have a knowledge and understanding that is significant to them. Being able to relate subject matter to their 'own world' is crucial, as Kolb & Kolb (2017, p. 26) state: 'Learning will be enhanced if the educational process begins by bringing out the learner's beliefs and theories, examining and testing them, and then integrating the new, more refined ideas into the person's belief systems'. Although there are strong elements of constructivism here, it places the learner's 'identity' in the centre of the process, suggesting that the learner must have a

desire to invest in any new knowledge which comes from their own experiences and expectations.

#### **2.4 Dancers' pedagogical sense-making: embodied learning**

In exploring students' perceptions of learning it was important to consider how dance students made sense of what they were being taught. The majority of observed dance classes showed a clear structure to the lesson. Students were taught moves and techniques with the aim of performing dance to the highest possible standard. That is, there is a definite product, giving a clear reason for learning such skills and understanding such artistry. This led to similar investigations in academic classes, exploring explicit relationships between 'knowing' and 'doing'. Brown et al. (1989, p. 32) assert: 'Many methods of didactic education assume a separation between knowing and doing, treating knowledge as an integral, self-sufficient substance, theoretically independent of the situations in which it is learned and used'. Teaching practices have certainly moved on from this perspective, with attempts to make the national curriculum more situated in people's lives and cultures. If learning and cognition are now situated, then how does this manifest itself in different subject areas and, as a result, are students seeing a greater connection and relevance to what they are learning. Illeris (2017) discusses the important connection between theory and application and that information renders itself useless if the learner does not know what to do with it. A simple analogy would be, if you give a child a set of carpentry tools they had not seen before, they would naturally struggle to use those tools to

good effect. Therefore, practical applications can be useful processes in 'learning strategies'. Chang, Chen and Li (2008, p. 238) commenting on learning as a social activity argue that 'collaborative learning environments can realize sociality by engaging students in a process of knowledge construction which will provide a situation in which knowledge will be created'. This emphasis of learning being initially external in the social world, relies on forms of interaction between learners. This then becomes a powerful sense-making tool, where the sociality of the environment acts as the facilitator for learning. This framework was typical of the many dance classes observed. Knapp (2019, p. 87), highlights the significance of both the learner's unique individual knowledge and that of the social group in which they belong. She discusses the process of knowledge construction within a social context that can be affected by 'gender and power relationships, and mediated by the tools and knowledge of the multiple cultures to which each of us belongs'. Therefore, there are potentially many factors that impact on the development of knowledge and understanding.

By focusing on the situated nature of cognition and how this is presented, this study investigated the various pedagogical strategies that were deployed in studios and classrooms. Brown et al. (1989, p. 33) in relating conceptual knowledge to a set of tools, state: '[tools] can only be fully understood through use, and using them entails both changing the user's view of the world and adopting the belief system of the culture in which they are used'. This supports the idea that construction of knowledge is more effective when given practical applications, 'the understanding, both of the world and of the tool, continually

changes as a result of their interaction' (Brown et al. 1989, p. 33). This suggests an internalisation to the learning process that happens through applying the knowledge given. Brown et al. (1989, p.33) go on to add: 'Learning and acting are interestingly indistinct; learning being a continuous, life-long process resulting from acting in situations'. However, if as Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 36) state LLP involves 'relations of power', then does this provide a view as to why some students seem disengaged with certain subjects and make little progress within their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978)? Explicit tools used in dance classes include, dance terminology, dancewear, ballet barres, and the studio environment. These symbolic elements represent powerful messages specifically linked to dance and dance culture. These physical elements are inextricably linked to the teaching and learning of dance, giving students a strong sense of belonging to the teaching and learning process.

In raising the profile of dance studies, Hanna (1999, p.11) argued that 'If purpose, intent, cultural influence, aesthetics and symbolism are integral to dance, then dance is surely more than physicality and emotion. The mind, that is, cognition, is at the helm'. Some dance teachers have explicitly detached themselves from discussing this philosophy regarding their pedagogical practices, opting to see dance as a 'vocational rather than academic activity' (Hanna, 1999, p.16). Hanna (1999, p.18) argued against this notion suggesting that dancers have 'grammar (i.e. rules for putting the vocabulary together)...[and] 'they have semantics (meaning)'. This is supported by contemporary dance practitioner Martha Graham (1985, p. 72), who 'recognised that dance is more than a physical externalisation

of inner feeling, that it is also a cognitive activity'. Hanna (1999) goes on to discuss various benefits of a dance education, including transfer of knowledge with its practical applications. Both Hanna's and Graham's concepts of dance pedagogy bring together important elements of the cultural environment, symbolism, language, social and cognitive activity. Therefore, the social interaction of the dance class, is fundamental to effective learning and sense-making. This is reflected in Wertsch's (1997, p.39) argument that 'acquisition of social meaning of important symbol systems and learning how to utilize them are dependent to social interaction with other more knowledgeable people'. Linking this to a dance class, the more knowledgeable person may be the teacher or indeed another student in the studio. Encouraging student interaction will allow students to think critically, providing sense-making thought processes. Powell and Kalina (2009, p. 245) support this, stating: 'The key is communication and for communication to occur at its most effective point, all participants must be on the same common ground'. This again highlights a potential difference between the dance studio and academic classroom, reflecting on the powerful "club culture" of dance students. All vocational dance students aspire to becoming a professional dancer but not all will wish to become a mathematician, for example.

Certainly, vocational training takes on a greater significance when its main purpose is to prepare students for that industry, as Berner (2010) points out, there is a strong connection between vocational training and the performing arts industry. Pickard's (2015, p. 59) empirical research also highlighted the fact that vocational dance students are fully aware of the 'exclusive opportunity that many

other children their age would not experience'. These students are placed into a world that reflects professional standards and etiquette, with its own set rules and unique symbols and language. It could be surmised that dance students have their own ontological perspective, created from this 'club culture' and could, therefore, sub-consciously construct league tables of meaningful knowledge. This could potentially result in the building of preventive barriers in certain class-based lessons developed from not being able to attach any personal relevance to the subject content. This in itself creates a *community of practice* within the school, as dance students will have common expectations, interests, and histories. In dance classes, constant 'teacher-student interaction and teacher-peer observation is also a strong influential factor in that vocational teachers in specialist schools invariably come from professional performing backgrounds, raising the status of that teacher from a students' perspective (Thorqvist and Axelsson, 2012, pp. 22-27). At the same time, school-based vocational training is part of a school system, with its particular institutional goals and practices (p. 23). Dewey (1897) supports this notion, stating: 'teachers must be willing to tap their general knowledge of the world to help children make sense of their surroundings and experience (p.10). Dance staff, many of whom have had past professional careers in their subject, have first-hand knowledge of the professional industry. Buckroyd (2001) discusses the eagerness of young children to please adults, particularly those who they look up to due to them having had a successful career. This heightened stature, due to the teacher's professional experience, also perpetuates greater respect for that teacher. This leads to further discussion regarding the physical and mental aspects of a

learning environment. Patterns of teaching and learning, rules, studio and classroom etiquette, symbolic objects, dance wear and uniform all contribute to the learning environment and in particular to the world of the vocational dance student. This could suggest that dance students view their world through a dance-perspective lens.

As Peim (2001, p.177) argued: 'We know that things are at least partly what they are because of what we call them, what we do with them, and how we distinguish them from other 'things': in other words, how we 'see' them. He goes on to say how closely we are connected to those things we see: 'how we are positioned, what perspective we take on things, where we 'come from' – all these factors of subject identity are involved in determining the nature of the things in the world that we inhabit' (p.177). In connecting the subject with the object, it is important to consider the role of the physical environment and how this can impact on students' perceptions. If we see space as being socially produced, then this could suggest that physical spaces in schools are mere tools for teachers to maintain order and control of teaching and learning. As McGregor (2004, p.13), referring to the school environment, states: 'space is continually organised to maintain power relations'. She then continues by confirming a strong connection between the social and the physical, by arguing: 'Space is taken to be more than merely a backdrop to social interaction, but as created through interaction with the social' (p.13). This leans towards an ontology suggesting that the subject and object are inextricably linked, that is, the relationship between who we are, and how we make sense of the world. Peim (2001, p.177) describes this as 'the great divide in

western metaphysics between being and consciousness'. Smith et al. (2012, p.13) support this philosophy when discussing Husserl (1970)'s phenomenological approach, stating: 'He invokes the technical term intentionality to describe the relationship between the process occurring in consciousness, and the object of attention for that process'. In this case, the object can be abstract rather than physical, such as 'an act of memory or imagination' (p.13). Evans et al. (2010, p.136) also see the learning space as a useful teaching tool, stating: 'the climate of a student's classroom which is positive in nature has proven to be a powerful support in academic achievement and learning outcomes'.

Thorqvist and Axelsson (2012) go on to discuss certain strategies within vocational training that in many ways bring the subject to life, particularly inviting leading performers and practitioners into school to deliver workshops and masterclasses. It is, again, the link with the performing arts industry that gives these workshops more gravitas and relevance. Working with people who *'have been there, done that'* creates an explicit link between past experience and teaching. This could potentially inspire students to believe they can also achieve such things. This links to the 'club mentality', particularly the experience of mixing with people who are well-known for their performing skills. Sub-consciously, or perhaps consciously, these dance students might ask themselves, how many well-known physicists, mathematicians, artists, or writers come into school to share their professional experiences.



In observing how dance students approached their work and how they made sense of subject knowledge, this study focussed on whether they were 'passive learners' or 'engaged active learners'. Passive learners could be associated with traditional teaching methods, as Borthick et al. (2003, p. 108), quoting Skinner (1953) comment: 'Learners were assumed to be passive, in need of external motivation including reinforcement'. Here, the teacher was in control as the sole expert and students individually attempted to make sense of the information. This singular approach will have worked for some students but may possibly not include elements of differentiation to meet each child's individual needs as a learner. The notion of engaged learners, that is learning through collaboration with others, emerged initially through Dewey (1916) and Vygotsky (1978). Here, as Borthick et al. (2003, p. 109) state the 'focus [was] on the learning activity rather than the individual learner as the unit of analysis'. This suggests a process of collaboration, where sense-making is a shared experience rather than an individual internal action. It could be argued here, that collaborative learning could also encourage passive learning, as not all students will automatically engage in group activity and will potentially take the role of bystander, showing little or no interest. Zhu (1998, p. 234) clarifies this collaborative approach to learning, arguing that it is 'a process of social negotiation or collaborative sense making, mentoring, and joint knowledge construction'. However, this statement does not take into account that joint knowledge construction does require all participants to be fully engaged in the activity. It is therefore essential for the teacher to ensure whole-class engagement in the task. This collaborative approach, by its very nature of interaction, creates a common ground amongst students, a reassurance

through sharing and, in some cases, a sense of safety in numbers. This external shaping and sense-making of knowledge is very similar to the dance-class structure, where students observe, share, and develop new techniques and patterns of artistry together. In essence, it brings the group together to create a 'community of practice', something which is notably less common as a main element in the majority of academic classes.

Like Vygotsky (1978), Lave and Wenger (2017) link learning to activity, context and culture, seeing it as an external process, that is situated, rather than within the learner's mind. However, from a dancer's perspective, learning activity has also to be internalised and demonstrable through physical and artistic skill levels. This suggests a potential difference between the professional and amateur dancer and certainly between vocational training and general dance classes. To dance at the highest level requires a synthesis of physicality, technique, dance knowledge, and artistry. Bockarie (2002, p. 54), citing Wenger (2008), describes a 'community of practice' where all participants share 'similar activities and identities' such as those students belonging to a vocational dance class.

Motivations and expectations of students participating in general dance classes will most likely differ from those in vocational training. These motivations may well be for enjoyment, social interaction, and exercise. However, differences will also occur between different dance classes in vocational schools, depending on the nature and style of the dance being taught. What is more important here is that students in vocational schools will have developed strong identities in their quest to become a professional dancer. This ontological perspective will potentially

determine how they make sense of, and apply knowledge to, their schooling and development. Each dancer will have an expectation and desire to improve, allowing a more meaningful essence to develop. This may not be the same in certain academic classes, where all learners may not have the desire to improve or to see the relevance of that lesson in relation to their future. Through this sociocultural lens, vocational dance students will be led to a higher level of thought or action from someone more knowledgeable or skilled. This, coupled with a strong sense of purpose and common interest, provides a secure platform for learning. The challenge for any classroom teacher is how to present knowledge as being 'situated' and linked to the real world, allowing for more meaningful learning in order to 'facilitate transfer of knowledge from the instructional situation to its application to environments outside the classroom' (Catalano, 2015, p. 653).

Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 33) argued that lived experiences emerge from 'any transaction between people and the world'. Behaviour, they state, comes from the subjective nature of a situation, the lived experience, and not from cultural practices. Therefore, the child's experiences and the nature of the social environment can both determine behaviour patterns. This may well link to a dance student's perception of learning, taking into account the strong symbolic statements of the dance studio against the more generic statements made in traditional classroom spaces. They continue to say that each individual's behaviour will be affected in different ways, depending on how that individual makes sense of it. Referring to Vygotsky (1979), Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014,

p. 34) state that consciousness is the object of analysis and that 'behaviour is driven and mediated by consciousness and consciousness means experiencing lived experiences. Here they argue that 'cultural practices and factors are mediated by psychological phenomena' (p. 34) and that people adapt and show appropriate behaviours to specific situations. Citing Coll & Falsafi (2010) & Lave & Wenger, (1991), Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014, p. 34), state that 'through sociocultural practices, individuals not only learn the actual activities, but they also learn to be members of these social and cultural communities, to experience themselves in a particular way'. Therefore, identity through a Vygotsian lens develops from collaborative practices, social and educational processes, and individual histories. This is defined by Stryker (2000, p. 6) as 'an internalized and externalized set of meaning, practices, and distributed resources, embedded in ways of life and contexts for learning'. It could be argued that, unless the activity or knowledge is of meaningful value to that specific student, then identity will have little or no importance to themselves, potentially affecting the quality of their learning and understanding.

## **2.5 Pedagogical approaches**

This study noted that all students followed the same academic timetable, with dance replacing physical education and extra dance classes taking place between 4.00-6.30pm each weekday. This vibrant and varied community of learning, demonstrated many established approaches and practices to teaching. However, much of this came under the banner of a more traditional teacher-led

model, although evidence of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) was identified at times. Lave and Wenger (2017) described how newcomers became experienced members and eventually old timers within a 'community of practice'. This process allows students to take some responsibility and ownership of their own learning by making sense of information as they explain or discuss it with others. In referring to a more traditional approach to teaching, Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 108), are dismissive of the 'question-answer-evaluation' format of classroom teaching, finding it difficult to relate it to their theory of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). This involves a much greater social process of interaction between group members of differing ability and expertise. However, it could be argued that schooling can be seen as a form of apprenticeship that leads to LPP. Here, similarities occur between both, manifested through patterns of discourse, experience, practical applications, and social interaction. In simple terms you could argue that dance lessons encompass situated learning where everything they learn is geared towards experiences of the real (dance) world. In contrast, classroom-based subjects offer a more general scheme, developing foundations of knowledge and skills that can interlink and create frameworks for further and more specialist development. From this it could be assumed that students' perceptions of dance classes were more meaningful as they contain greater relevance to their future lives. This presents a challenge for non-dance staff in how to create the same levels of meaningfulness and relevance to their own subject areas. Much of this links to the dancer's identity that is wrapped in the powerful culture and expected way of life for this type of performer.

## 2.6 Social perspectives

The social aspect of any environment is also an important consideration. Wilson (1998) supports this argument, suggesting, 'the notion of a learning environment resonates best with a vision of knowledge as meaning constructed by interaction with one's environment' (p. v). It could be argued that students may feel more emotionally secure and engaged with a learning activity if there is a link between social and cognitive elements of those lessons. How a student makes sense of any information often relies on how it links to their existing knowledge in relation to that subject. By observing the social context of a learning environment, it becomes possible to see 'how they manage to collaboratively construct mutually shared cognition and how they work out problems together' (Bossche et al., 2006, p. 493). This sharing of knowledge and understanding, raises learning to a much higher platform, allowing students to take ownership of their development rather than be offered direct instruction from one person (the teacher). This suggests that this more explicit knowledge-understanding platform has some attachment to dance classes, which, although they tend to follow the teacher-dominant model, still have elements of independent cognitive processes through embodied learning. Pakes (2003, p. 141), discussing types of knowledge required for dance argues, 'the knowledge-base of dance involves understanding of the art form's history, of the current state of artistic exploration and of the core medium...including that medium's aesthetic impact on the audience'. Therefore, several thought processes and considerations take place in the creation of any performance, and from this an assumption could be made that the quality of performance relies not only on the technical ability of the dancer but also on their

understanding of the genre and their application (or transferral) of existing knowledge. It could be argued that this is the same for any lesson, as all knowledge requires some level of contextual understanding or prior learning in order to process and make sense of that information. As Bruner (2003, p. 17) states: 'Learning should not only take us somewhere, it should allow us later to go further more easily'. Making and understanding these connections is essential for a student to commit to that subject, and it could be argued this is done through a process of negotiation and problem-solving with others. In exploring educational practices within contrasting learning spaces, strategies that encourage student engagement have been an important element of this inquiry. An important consideration here was to observe and make sense of a dancer's contextual understanding of different dance genres alongside their contextual understanding of other subjects.

Jarvis et al. (2003, p. 7), discussing 'the increasing emphasis on practical knowledge' argued that 'the relationship between theory and practice is changing, and with the decline of the idea of grand theory we are now beginning to see arguments about theory coming from practice rather than the other way around'.

Through a sociocultural lens, this study has explored student interaction, collaboration, and experience. In doing so, it has identified patterns of engagement in lessons and levels of explicit interest shown by students. With this research being essentially inductive, the principal aim was to flesh out key

behaviours in studio- and classroom-based environments within the framework of the social constructivist paradigm (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p. 43). Saldana (2016, p. 47) comments on aspects of the 'social' including; routines, rituals, roles, and relationships' highlighting the significance and complexity in 'what it means to be human in the social world'

It could be argued that these two educational worlds of academic and vocational subjects, with their own ontological perspectives, operate within a structure of opposing agendas, expectations, and histories. Some of these differences are explicit and drive the curriculum content. Others are more hidden and influence certain behaviours within the various classes and are more closely related to teaching and learning styles. McCurdy et al., (2005, p. 35) argue: 'knowledge, including shared knowledge, is stored as a system of categories in the human brain.... [I]f we can find the words that name things when informants talk with other members of their microculture, we can infer the existence of the group's cultural categories'. This suggests that different patterns of interaction and collaboration can be identified between different groups of pupils depending on the specific learning environment and social cultures. Awareness and management of these cultures is therefore essential when working towards effective collaborative learning processes.

The study was framed within the philosophies of educational theorists such as Kolb, Piaget and Vygotsky, focussing principally on their concepts of knowledge



construction from both an internal and external perspective. Piaget's arguments from 1973 link well with dance student activities, stating that a deep sense of learning comes from a personal engagement in the learning activity. He takes this further, stating that observing someone doing a task has little meaning until the student demonstrates the ability to perform this task (Rovegno and Dolly, 2012, p. 243). This is certainly a common teaching method in dance classes where the teacher demonstrates and the student copies. There is also the added layer of students observing each other and responding. Therefore, an explicit building or construction of knowledge, technical, and aesthetic, takes a prominent place within the dance lesson. With Piaget's theoretical perspective being centred on the self rather than the social (Bruner, 1986, p. 147), this study was able to explore similar theories that linked to more social and cultural perspectives. There were strong connections here to Vygotsky's (1978; 1987) theories, who saw a child's development as inseparable from social and cultural activities (Rovegno and Dolly, 2012, p. 244). Vygotsky (1978) suggested that knowledge and understanding was most effectively achieved through interactions and collaborative activities. This allows, to some extent, students to construct their own knowledge and understanding.

In discussing three categories of cognitive constructivism, Rovegno and Dolly (2012) list: '(a) modern information processing theory, (b) radical constructivism, and (c) cognitive schema theory'. These all focus on psychological perspectives, although Phillips (1995, p. 7) expresses this with greater clarity and a stronger focus on the social. He states that constructivism is: '(a) the construction of

human knowledge in general, (b) social interactions as a primary mechanism for learning, (c) the way knowledge is represented culturally, and (d) the ways individuals are acculturated into cultural practices’.

In observing a typical dance class, social and practical elements are at the fore by the very nature of how information and knowledge is traditionally delivered. This fits well with Althusser’s (1984) philosophy, that social intervention and practice are powerful tools in developing deep understanding and knowledge development.

There are three lines of thought around Althusser’s (1984) philosophy which focus on ‘the account of the historical formation as decentred’, that knowledge is gradually constructed through practice, and that identities are developed through social interventions and experiences (Peim 2018, p. 113). From this, it could be argued that traditional forms of teaching in classrooms are generally ineffective due to the passive situations in which students can often be placed.

Althusser’s (1984) account of subjectivity was extended by Judith Butler (1990) affirming that the individual (the subject) is influenced in how they see themselves by how other people see them. This could perhaps manifest itself with an individual ‘feeling inadequate’ following constant put-downs and criticism from another individual. As teachers, it is not uncommon to see the effects that negative critical words can have on young people, particularly when received from their own peers.

This allows us to consider that the educational environment should be a significant and safe place for young people. Sandberg (2017, p. 2) comments on 'different children's perspectives on their learning environment', suggesting that 'both social and academic aspects of children's school lives need to be recognised in their expressions'. Petriwsky (2010, p. 195) supports this argument, by discussing 'diversity and inclusion in the early years'. She implies that 'both these aspects are important to address when identifying factors that may hinder or promote children's participation, learning and development at school' (p. 197).

There is a clear picture emerging here of the impact that social, physical, and institutional practices, can have on shaping individuals' identities and, therefore, their patterns of behaviour in different environments. This does not mean to say that each person acts in the same way for every occasion and scenario. They will potentially talk differently to their friends than they do to their parents. They will have their own opinions and perspectives but may express them in different ways depending on the situation, both physical and social. It is this immersion into culture that constructs and defines the individual from the perspective of others. Sheikh (2017, p. 1) clarifies this by suggesting that 'Subjectivity is precisely the condition of our being which enables us to recognise ourselves as subjects or persons'. Sheikh (2017), quoting Donald (1991, p. 2), argues that the human brain 'cannot realize its design potential unless it is immersed in culture'. Donald (1991) discussed the fact that humans are born to be entirely dependent on other humans in the first stage of their lives, unlike other animals who almost immediately must fend for themselves. This is perhaps not quite the case with

such creatures as birds, who are attended to and fed before they are able to leave the nest. Foucault (1980) gave a similar argument, expressing that subjectivities are not universal, but cultural. A leading question here is how a person's subjectivity is formed. Sheikh (2017) defines the subject as being an individual within a culture and this individual will have their own perceptions of the world they inhabit. Likewise, others around them will have their own perceptions of the world and, indeed, that individual. As Johnston (2018) states: 'this refers to Lacan's three registers of the Imaginary (who and what one "imagines" other persons to be, their meanings when conversing, and having perceptions of others towards yourself)'. This reinforces the notion that as human beings we are all different, and process things in different ways. However, as stated earlier, we can be heavily influenced by those around us, and knowledge and understanding is gradually constructed through social intervention and practice.

### **2.6.1 Experiential learning**

In relating how experience links to reflection, emerging theories, knowledge and sense-making, it was useful, in the context of the study, to consider Dewey's (1897) key propositions for effective educational practice. These four statements link closely with the world of the dancer, where their passion for the subject is deeply embedded in their psyche through experience and a powerful developing identity. Dewey (1987) states...

1. Education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience...the process and goal of education are one and the same thing (p.13).

2. I believe that education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living (p.7)
3. I believe that education which does not occur through forms of life that are worth living for their own sake is always a poor substitute for genuine reality and tends to cramp and to deaden (p.7)
4. I believe that interests are the signs and symptoms of growing power. I believe they represent dawning capacities. I believe that only through the continual and sympathetic observation of childhood's interests can the adult enter into the child's life and see what it is ready for (p. 15)

This is further supported by Kolb (2015, p. 1), offering an interesting perspective on learning, who argued that it is not just about what is known, but also how that knowledge is used to develop new ideas. 'Our survival depends on our ability to adapt not only in the reactive sense of fitting into the physical and social worlds, but in the proactive sense of creating and shaping those worlds'. This relates to dance pedagogy that links closely to the 'real world' of performance. Kolb (2015) goes on to argue that it potentially provides a bridge between the 'classroom and the real world' (p. 4). This suggests a potential need for a change of direction in curriculum planning that moves away from basic concepts and factual knowledge to more applied and practical-related subject material. The emphasis then relies on the process (combining theory with practice), which Kolb (2015) argued 'distinguishes experiential learning from the idealist approaches of traditional education' (p. 33). It is through experience that ideas and understanding are formed and reformed (p. 34) in a process that accepts that existing knowledge is there to be disposed of or modified to develop new perspectives (p. 36). Kolb's powerful statement brings these arguments together, suggesting that...

If the education process begins by bringing out the learner's beliefs and theories, examining them and testing them, and then integrating the new more refined ideas into the person's belief systems, the learning process will be facilitated (Kolb, 2015, p. 36).

Dewey's (1987, pp. 7-15) propositions for experiential learning support this notion and place the learner at the centre of all educational processes. He argues that learning is continually being reconstructed from our own experiences and that 'the process and goal of education are one and the same thing' (p. 13). He saw 'education [as] a process of living' (p. 7) rather than something we would use later in life and that it has to have a purpose and relate to the real-world of the learner. These explicit propositions lean heavily towards education as being a process of developing and constructing knowledge, through sense-making, understanding and application, rather than being a tableau of factual information that may or may not relate to the learners real-world or past experiences.

It could be argued that viewing experience as a structure or framework for our lives, could potentially provide us with a foundation on which to adapt and develop ourselves but also an operational tool. Therefore, our actions and behaviours could be linked to our past experiences and sense-making. With this scenario we see experience not as a fixed structure but as something that can be easily modified and built upon. Furthermore, Lewin (1951) argued that behaviour is a product of the person and the environment. Kolb (2015), citing Bandura (1978), states: that 'personal characteristics, environmental influences, and behaviour all operate in reciprocal determination, each factor influencing the others in an interlocking fashion' (p. 43). This offers an insight into why students

differ in their approaches and behaviour in contrasting learning environments. Therefore, lack of motivation towards a particular subject is not necessarily due to simply not liking the subject, but more to do with a combination of the above factors. Kolb (2015, p.63) argued that 'knowledge results from the combination of grasping experience and transforming it', although this will not apply if the student resists that particular subject from the outset. Kolb (1984) brings concepts of three theorists together in relation to his experiential cycle: Lewin's model linked to a practical process (p. 21); Dewey's concept of how learning transforms inner feelings from 'concrete experience' into 'higher-order purposeful action' (p. 22); and Piaget's 'characteristic learning patterns in the four stages from new born to adult (pp. 24-25). Kolb (1984) argues that all learning is experiential and adds that another important element is the excitement or fear of the unknown in relation to understanding.

Later, Kolb (2015) describes this concept of apprehension as an essential element to learning. This fits well with the dancer, who will often follow the path of visual and then kinaesthetic learning, with feelings of apprehension that 'further stimulates the student's internal reflections and feelings' (Kolb, 2015, p. 120). This notion of apprehension is expressed as fear by Kagan and Kogan (1970), who discuss levels of performance and commitment to learning, stating: 'Reflectives seem to be overly concerned with making mistakes and wish to avoid error at all costs. Impulsives seem minimally apprehensive about error and consequently respond quickly (pp. 13-14). I would argue that behaviours are not as clearly divided as this suggests, with the potential for a dancer to behave

differently towards a lesson depending on the learning environment. This infers the potential for a dance student to demonstrate extensional transformation (impulsive) within a dance class and intentional transformation in a classroom-based lesson, depending on past experiences and the present learning environment. This would certainly explain some diverse behaviours in contrasting environments by the same student. In discussing Kolb's (2015) experiential cycle, Illeris (2017, p. 50) highlights the process of 'concrete experience through reflective observation and abstract conceptualisation, to active experimentation, and then back to a new concrete experience'. Kolb (2015, p.41) defines this process as 'knowledge is created through the transformation of experience'. This presents a strong argument towards practical applications of knowledge within the real world.

### **2.6.2 A collaborative model for learning**

In focussing on aspects of social learning environments, Powell and Kalina (2009, p. 241) state that language precedes thinking for social learning, as opposed to cognitive constructivism, where thinking precedes language. Woolfolk (2004, p. 245) supports this theory stating, 'language usage in the classroom is the most important process in a social constructivist setting'. Salomon and Perkins (1998, p. 1) describe 'social mediation as participatory knowledge construction', emphasising the importance of collaborative learning. This reflects common practices in dance teaching, where the teacher demonstrates and describes the lesson content which is then absorbed and applied by the learners. This is set in



an environment where all learners can observe and learn from each other, associated with Vygotsky's (1962) social theory where 'children learn more effectively when they have others to support them'. Powell and Kalina (2009, p. 244) refer to this as scaffolding, where students learn from a number of people and sources. This scaffolding creates an internalisation through students being asked to perform a task (p. 244). This also reflects the social theory of Vygotsky (1962), who argued that effective internalisation emerges from social interaction. Woolfolk (2004, p. 326) builds on this social concept by emphasising the importance of a particular cultural setting. Dancers rely on following instruction, applying this knowledge through practise, and making sense of the task through internalisation (Vygotsky, 1978; Ernest, 2010, p. 43). In this context, the mind is seen as a separate entity that 'is expanded to a broader social and cultural context' (Belbase, 2014, p.100) that leads to 'construction of meaning' as a social phenomenon. This is in contrast to Glasersfeld's (1995) theory of radical constructivism, which builds knowledge away from the social model of learning. Belbase (2014, p. 102) describes an environment 'in which students feel free to learn at their pace, ability, and interest'. Ernest (1995) expresses the significance of individual knowledge construction but argues the greater importance of 'the social constructive paradigm'. This internal construction of knowledge (Glasersfeld, 1995; Belbase, 2014) is far removed from the social learning environment of the dance studio (Vygotsky, 1978; Ernest, 1995) reflected in Knapp's (2019) argument that the very fact that each person's knowledge is unique allows for powerful collaborative learning processes. In emphasising the importance of this unique knowledge, she argues that knowledge is socially

constructed within specific social contexts ‘impacted by a myriad of factors including gender and power relationships and mediated by the tools of knowledge of the multiple cultures to which each of us belongs (p. 87).

Watkins et al. (2012, p. 35), in focussing upon ‘learning’ rather than ‘teaching’, argue towards a constructivist approach, defining the two approaches as ‘Learning = being taught’ and ‘Learning = individual sense-making’. They provide a useful framework for classroom observation showing emphasis either towards (1) the teacher or (2) the pupils (see Table 2.1 below).

Table 2.1: Comparison of transmission and construction models.

<b>The ‘transmission model’: ‘Learning = being taught’</b>	<b>The ‘construction model’: Learning = individual sense-making</b>
Teachers show good command of subjects	Student work shows evidence of conceptual understanding, not just recall
Teachers plan effectively	Students are engaged in activities to develop understanding and create personal meaning through reflection
Teachers have clear learning objectives	Students are presented with a challenging curriculum designed to build effective learning
Teachers interest pupils	Students apply knowledge in real world contexts
Teachers make effective use of time	Student work shows evidence of conceptual understanding, not just recall
Students acquire new knowledge or skills in their work	Students are asked by the teacher to think about how they learn, explain how they solve problems, think about their difficulties in learning, think about how they could become better learners, try new ways of learning
Students show positive responses to teaching	Students are engaged in active participation, exploration and research
Students show engagement and concentration	Students are engaged in active participation, exploration and research
Teachers assess pupils’ work thoroughly and constructively	Assessment tasks are performances of understanding, based on higher order thinking
Teachers use assessment to inform their planning	Students are presented with a challenging curriculum designed to build effective learning

Students understand how well they are doing	Student work shows evidence of conceptual understanding, not just recall
Students understand how they can improve	Students are asked by the teacher to think about how they learn, explain how they solve problems, think about their difficulties in learning, think about how they could become better learners, try new ways of learning

(abbreviated from Ofsted, 2003) (abbreviated from Brown and Fouts, 2003)

Although both models clearly attempt to engage students with a transfer of knowledge, the ‘construction model’ encourages more high-order thinking. Greater meaning is given to the applied knowledge through encouraging questioning, conceptual appreciation, and activities linked to the ‘real world’. This knowledge development is also reinforced by Bruner’s (1966) constructivist theories. Discussing this, McLeod (2008, 2<sup>nd</sup> para), describes Bruner’s three essential concepts of the learning process: enactive (action-based), iconic (image-based), and symbolic (language-based). Although this is associated with age ranges, similar to Piaget’s modes of development, it is interesting to link these with the pedagogic processes of dance. Enactive may refer to the experience of doing a specific movement or combination of moves. Secondly, iconic may be linked to gaining knowledge from watching the teacher or their peers doing these movements with varying degrees of success and therefore going through the process of reflection and evaluation. Thirdly, symbolic may refer to aesthetic descriptions and dance terminology being applied to those movements and potentially opportunities for the use of symbolism in expression and communication. When observing dance classes, there have been many examples of dance-related symbolic terminology that transfers well across all dance disciplines. This language is essentially associated with dance positions

and movement. This transfer of terminology and knowledge allows students to make connections and reinforce their learning and sense-making processes. Rovengo and Dolly (2012, p. 245) support this notion by stating: 'The goal is for students to develop a deep, meaningful grasp of concepts and knowledge of new settings and situations'. However, this line of thought could be taken further in that if something is to become meaningful, it should develop our own understanding and perceptions and, therefore, initiate change. This sits well with Mezirow's (2000, p. 7) philosophy on transformative learning that implies a 'change of identity in the learner' (Illeris 2014, p. 40) as their understanding of a concept develops. Although this links more to 'topical worldwide developments' (Illeris 2017, p. 45), it could be argued that any change in knowledge and understanding in an individual, no matter how small, will have some impact on their ontological and epistemological perspectives. Rogers' (1961, p. 280) description of 'significant learning' suggests a clearer definition to this internalising of knowledge and understanding by stating....'It is learning which makes a difference – in the individual's behaviour, in the course of action he chooses in the future, in his attitudes and in his personality'. This supports the fact that students will approach different lessons with varying levels of enthusiasm and commitment. If the learning is not only meaningful but impacts positively on that person, then it will take on a greater significance, potentially leading to higher levels of understanding, progress, and pleasure.

Approaches to dance training within a vocational dance school vary depending on the nature and genre of the dance style. However, there is much criticism of

traditional dance forms, such as classical ballet being transmission-focussed and not transformative. Many classical dancers would argue that classical dance is such a fine art that the dancer develops through constant repetition of technical and artistic moves. In November 2018, Darcy Bussell, former principal of the Royal Ballet, talked about the importance of muscle memory when dancing. This is built through constant repetition of techniques which develop into dance form by linking these moves to music. It was indeed the music that allowed her to remember long ballets and demanding technical sequences, that is, recall through a conceptual framework. This notion is echoed by Pickard (2015), who argued that being a dancer is not simply 'a state of mind but it is a bodily state of being' (p. 29). Being immersed into an established and powerful culture such as classical dance allows for a deep intrapersonal learning and sense-making, as Pickard states: 'individuals achieve understanding of the social world of ballet through bodily practice' (p. 31). This then establishes the identity of the dancer.

This identity is developed not only through their training but also through their desire to become a professional performer. This adds a greater significance to learning within the dance-based studio in that their dance training has a more meaningful purpose. Therefore, it could be argued that all dance training is transformative in that it leads to a change in identity. This transformative perspective is defined by Illeris, (2014, p. 40), as 'all learning that implies a change in the identity of the learner'.

Watkins et. al. (2005) also emphasised the relevance of the social with regard to learning which is not a feature of the construction model. They, therefore, suggest the 'co-construction' model, 'Learning = creating knowledge with others' (p. 36). This model encourages interaction and collaborative learning and offers a useful inventory when observing dance and academic classes.

The 'co-construction' model: 'Learning = creating knowledge with others'

Students operate together to improve knowledge

Students help each other learn through dialogue

Learning goals emerge and develop through enquiry

Students create products for each other and for others

Students access resources outside the class community

Students review how best the community supports learning

Students show understanding of how group processes promote their learning

The classroom social structures promote interdependence

Students display communal responsibility including in the governance of the classroom

Assessment tasks are community products which demonstrate increased complexity and a rich web of ideas.

Watkins (2005) – (cited in Watkins et al. 2007, p. 36)

Constructivist theories of learning, as argued by Jarvis et al. (2003, p. 43), 'emphasize the ways in which learners construct knowledge for themselves into an integrated and holistic understanding'. This focuses on an understanding of the meaning and significance of what is being taught rather than delivering knowledge that bears little relevance to a student's mind. This is not just about practical performance but encompasses all knowledge including, contextual, historical, technical, artistic and creative elements. Identifying patterns of social interaction and collaborative learning would suggest a vibrant learning community

within those classes. Jarvis et al. (2003, p. 45) argue that 'the idea that learning consists of social adaptation by individuals has continued to be a very powerful one'. This suggests that students may naturally adapt to the learning conditions, changing their patterns of learning and behaviours as they experience good practice. This may be a conscious or subconscious decision. Mertz (2002, p. 108) sees this as a more conscious process, arguing that as pupils become more aware of differences between themselves and their peers, they also become more appreciative of other people's feelings and attitudes. This suggests that, conscious (and potentially subconscious) decisions would become part of the process of constructing their own knowledge and behavioural and personality traits. Students may then subconsciously adapt their behaviours related to a number of factors: physical environments; school rules or etiquette; past histories; and individual student and teacher expectations. In subconsciously adapting their behaviours to fit different lessons, students begin to consciously develop positive and negative feelings towards each subject and learning environment.

Getzels (1977, p. 89) argued that 'the link between collaboration and effective learning is dependent on the sort of talk which takes place between the participants'. Bossche, Segers, and Kirschner (2006, p. 491) reinforce this argument, stating that 'research indicates that fruitful collaboration is not merely a case of putting people with relevant knowledge together. Understanding is required in the factors that make up successful collaboration'. This suggests that skilful management by the teacher is essential to achieving effective collaboration. However, it could be argued that, given a task, deeper learning

could take place if knowledge and understanding is created through students taking ownership of their problem-solving and thought development. Again, this links to students being immersed in their own learning processes, motivated by having a meaningful connection to what is being taught.

Jacobs and Eccles (2000) discuss Vygotsky's (1997b) theory of intersubjectivity highlighting the importance of a shared solving when constructing knowledge. This suggests that students with differing perspectives who work together, can often develop a deeper meaning and understanding of a task. Woolfolk (2004) supports this diversity as 'a combination of ethnicity, identity and biological differences that give varied experiences and understanding to each individual'. In a studio or classroom, this external processing would be supported by the teacher or expert student; a process referred to by Vygotsky (1978), as scaffolding. Here the teacher becomes the facilitator who encourages and instigates social collaboration as an essential part of knowledge construction. It could be argued that not all deep understanding comes from social interaction, but that personal reflection and drawing on past experiences is also an essential element to the learning process. Bonk and Cunningham (1998, p. 38) argue that successful understanding develops from individual processing after a collaborative process has taken place. This fits well with Lave and Wenger's (1991) *Legitimate Peripheral Participation*; that is, students work together until they have the necessary skills and knowledge to work independently.



### **2.6.3 Social constructivism**

It could be argued that effective learning is dependent on the whole environment, although Piaget (1971) focusses on the learner being the main element within that learning environment. He argues that 'elementary knowledge is never the result of a mere impression made by the object or the sensorial organs, but it is always due to an active assimilation of the subject who incorporates the objects to his sensorimotor schemes' (pp. 107-108). There is an argument to say that this continual activity process, although essential, needs greater levels of social connection to develop a deeper understanding. This is supported through such theories as Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD and Lave and Wenger's (2017) LPP. Cole et al. (1978, p. 86) define ZPD as 'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers'. Analysing different forms and levels of collaboration in learning environments became an integral part of this study. Gray (1997, p.99) discusses the importance of a democratic environment where 'interaction becomes crucial in learning'. To achieve this then trust and openness between teachers and students must be in place 'for all students to become engaged and attentive' (Powell and Kalina, 2009, p. 248). It is the experience of this interaction that adds a deep meaning to a student's understanding (p.241), with 'knowledge and understanding [being] in a constant construction and reconstruction process' (Walker and Shore, 2015, p.2). In contrast, Belbase (2014, p. 100), emphasises the importance of the individual learner within the social context, in line with a radical-constructivism view. Here, greater

responsibility for learning is placed on the individual learner rather than within the social context. Belbase (2014, p. 99) supports Glasersfeld's (1996) radical constructivist theory, that 'knowledge is not passively received either through the senses or by way of communication, but is actively built up by the cognizing subject'. This seems far removed from the sociality of the typical dance class, where there is explicit openness and interaction in many forms: a process of instruction; practice; teacher and peer observation; and immediate experience of the teaching material in a practical form.

Dance classes, although teacher-led, rely on student interaction due to the practical nature of the lessons. Youniss and Damon (1992, p. 284) discuss how the 'quality of particular social experiences [can] influence the nature of ideas and values that arise from that experience'. This notion suggests that the quality of work and outcomes are dependent on effective social interaction, in that knowledge and understanding are constructed through interpersonal, rather than intrapersonal, activity. Vygotsky (1987) had similar strong opinions about constructivist theory, seeing a child's development as inseparable from social and cultural activities (Rovegno and Dolly, 2012, p. 244). Illeris (2017, p. 55) offers the Vygotskian perspective that learning 'is a particular form of activity on a level with play and work', thereby connecting the social with cognitive activity. Vygotsky (1987, p. 49) argued that 'only when we learn to see the unity of generalization and social interaction do we begin to understand the actual connection that exists between the child's cognitive and social development'. Following this social constructivist philosophy allows the researcher to seek evidence of students

working collaboratively and to develop personal views and knowledge construction as a direct result of these social interactions. Vygotsky (1997) stated that: 'For us to call a process 'external' means to call it 'social' (p.105). Here he emphasises the notion that learning takes place on a social plain before being internalised by the individual. This is a strong point, although it could be argued that to fully understand something in depth requires a level of intrapersonal reflection. This is supported by Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 260), who state: 'the constructivist stance maintains that learning is a process of constructing meaning; it is how people make sense of their experience'. Therefore, the initial social aspect must then be followed by personal reflection and processing for a deep understanding to occur.

This sits well with Kolb & Kolb (2017), who offer the notion as seen by the foundational scholars of experiential learning theory, that deep thinking and not just concrete experience, is an essential part of the learning process. They argue that 'experiential learning was not techniques or methods but a general theory of learning that emphasized the role of conscious experience in the learning process' (p. 5). Therefore, it promotes thinking, analysing, and application of knowledge together with concrete experience, as essential elements to learning.

In identifying behaviours in different learning environments, this study focussed on Vygotskian philosophy, where knowledge construction emerges from social interaction and not as an individual process in the mind (Bryman, 2001; Lantolf,

2008). Vygotsky's theories in recent years have had the biggest impact on sociocultural research (Limberg and Alexandersson, 2010). Vygotsky (1978, p. 57) argued that, every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first...between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to 'voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts' (p. 57). This 'construction of knowledge is a socioculturally mediated process affected by the physical and psychological tools and artefacts' (Shabani, 2016, p. 2). Wang et al. (2011, p. 298) comment that 'the social and cultural engagement is mediated by culturally constructed tools, such as language, materials, signs, and symbols that create uniquely human forms of higher-level thinking'. Kozulin (1990, p. 190) argues that language is formed from consciousness rather than thought through the mode of meanings. 'The work of consciousness with meanings leads to the generation of sense'. This sits well with notions of embodied learning in dance classes.

Walqui (2006, p. 160) lists the following in support of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory: 1) 'Learning precedes development', suggesting the importance of understanding before any progress; 2) 'Language is the main vehicle (tool) of thought', emphasising the importance of interaction and collaboration between learners; 3) 'Mediation is central to learning', highlighting the importance of discussion, questioning, problem-solving, and resolving, in order to fully understand a concept. 'Social mediation together with dialogic negotiation triggers higher forms of human's mental functioning' (Shabani, 2016, p. 3) Learning is a process of apprenticeship and internalization in which skills

and knowledge are transformed from the social into the cognitive plane'. This suggests that knowledge only becomes more effectively understood to the individual once it has gone through that process of social interaction; and, 5) 'The zone of proximal development (ZPD) is the primary activity space in which learning occurs' giving a framework for discussion of an individual's progress.

Vygotsky drew close relationships between the mind and social interaction (Shabani, 2016, p. 7), making 'a clear distinction between biological forms of development and socio-historical forms of development'. Shabani's argument here, in support of Vygotsky, is that these biological developments do not 'constitute development' but lead to new patterns of behaviour and social interaction (p. 2). Powell and Kalina (2009, p. 248) add to this, arguing that, 'learning can occur when students are challenged, open, and comfortable'. It could be argued that this reflects the vocational dance studio, with high expectations, a collective and determined spirit, and a close connection between dancer and learning environment. Eun (2008, p. 139) discusses the important notion of Vygotsky's (1979) development theory stating that behaviour and the mind should be seen as 'aspects of a single system'. In discussing the process of transformation (internalisation), Eun (2008, p.140) argued that it is 'a complicated and prolonged process that requires engagement of two or more people in a practical activity'. He goes on to discuss that social activity does not guarantee development, as this will only happen if understanding has been created through effective interaction. This identifies an important element of understanding in that students need to be equipped with the necessary skills to be able to effectively

follow the correct paths of discovery. In line with the apprenticeship model, this would initially be directed by the teacher, with students gradually taking ownership of this process as they build the essential and relevant skills. Therefore, not only identifying models of interaction and collaboration in classes is of significance, but also how these models are organised to ensure effective learning is actually taking place.

In describing Vygotsky's (1978) interpretation of the 'social' as being all elements of an environment including 'things as well as people' Scribner (1990, p. 92) argues that 'the world in which we live is humanised, full of material and symbolic objects that are culturally constructed, historical in origin, and social in content'. This, of course, implies that in school, as human beings, we are placed into set situations that rely on tradition, fixed expectations, and materials and symbols that define the world we live in. He goes on to say that all actions, including thought, 'involve the mediation of such objects as they are...social in essence' (p. 93). This draws together many aspects of the learning environment, suggesting that any empirical research in teaching spaces should embrace all facets of the situation. The teacher, being an important element of this environment, is seen by Hoover (1996) as a guide who provides the students 'with opportunities to test the adequacy of their current understandings' (p. 2). Similar concepts come from Bauersfeld (1995, p.264), who labels teachers as 'facilitators' rather than teachers.

One important aspect of social constructivism and Vygotsky's (1987) ZPD is that 'development is preceded by a set of leading activities in which experienced adults or capable peers guide students along a pathway from incompetence to competence' (Bockarie 2002, p.47; Werstch, 2000).

As Leach and Scott (2003, p. 96) stated when citing Vygotsky, this is 'the fundamental assumption of Vygotsky's view of development and learning, that higher mental functioning in the individual derives from social life (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 128). Student behaviour patterns in engagement can present the difference between understanding and not understanding. Making sense of information does not simply come from being told something directly. When following the Vygotsky notion of internalisation, 'there must be a step of personal interpretation, where the individual comes to a personal understanding of the ideas encountered on the social plane' (Leach and Scott, 2003, p. 101).

This social process, where knowledge is constructed through a shared process of individuals' interpretations (and particularly those with greater expertise, referred to by Lave and Wenger (1991), as 'old-timers'), allows for a more rigorous engagement in problem solving and cognitive processes. This essentially builds a team spirit, a belonging to 'a club', much like the learning community of the dance classes. The term 'old-timer' is perhaps misleading, as it refers to the person with the most expertise and not necessarily the one with the most experience. An example might be related to computer technology. Younger people seemingly

have less fear, more desire, and a greater aptitude to solve technical computer issues than people of an older generation (this is said with a level of apology for generalising). Those people offering advice, demonstrating new skills, or helping to understand, are building a scaffold to support and then make sense of the knowledge (Lave and Wenger 1991). This is essentially the theses of Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger, whose theories focus directly on learning and making sense of information rather than teaching. This constructivist philosophy provides a framework that focuses on how students are engaged in their work and making sense of the task, through interaction with their peers and their own personal reflection. The construction and sense-making of this knowledge initially takes place in the social environment and many advocates of this philosophy argue that it creates a more meaningful and deeper understanding of knowledge. The social environment, if planned well, can facilitate 'authentic tasks that are anchored in meaningful contexts' (Bockarie, 2002, p. 49). Although this may be an easier task for the dance teacher, whose classes are situated in an authentic dance-environment, it is certainly a concept that could lead to new approaches to learning and understanding in certain academic classes. This could potentially bring greater aspects of the social and context to their learning environments. However, it could also be argued that traditional style dance classes are run in a dictatorial style. Here the teacher would be in complete control with students responding to instruction without the facility to work collaboratively. The other side to this argument, is that by situating knowledge in the social environment and relating it to more meaningful contexts, students may then become more engaged in what they are doing and, therefore, able to make more effective



sense-making of their subject. It could be argued that increased confidence comes through a greater understanding of the task, which occurs when students appreciate the value and application of the knowledge being given. This sense-making and constructing of knowledge allows the student to eventually develop their own strong identity through being part of this 'community of practice' (Wenger, 1998, p. 44). Being part of a community allows the learner to observe and identify 'puzzling aspects of the practice' (Bockarie, 2002, p. 51). From this they are led through any confusion or lack of understanding by an 'expert', thus allowing the learner to develop through the ZPD and become part of that community.

Sociocultural theories have been further developed by Lave (1991), Wertsch (1991) and Rogoff (2003). In confirming previous statements, Wang et al. (2011, p. 297), citing Bryman (2001) state: 'sociocultural theories are based on the social constructivist paradigm which considers that knowledge is constructed socially through interaction and shared by previous individuals'. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 67) argue that 'learning, thinking and knowing are relations among people engaged in activity in, with, and arising from, the socially and culturally structured world'. Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise the importance of relating theory and knowledge to the real world, hence their term 'situated learning'. This concept, therefore, suggests that formal academic classrooms, where 'knowledge must be demonstrated out of context' (Floding and Swier, 2011, p. 194) are not necessarily fit for purpose as they inhibit real life situations and experiences. This concept could then be taken further by arguing that we are all capable learners,

dependent on how knowledge and information is presented to us and how it is allowed to develop.

#### **2.6.4 Zone of proximal development**

Vygotsky's (1987) ZPD, although not a scientific measure for a learner's progress, does offer a theoretical framework in which to observe cognitive development through collaboration and the assistance of others (Bockarie, 2002; Wink and Putney, 2001; Powell and Kalina, 2009). This interaction seems to rely heavily on language and it is through this that 'children learn the cognitive and communicative tools and skills of their culture' (Hodson & Hodson, 1998, p. 36). Wertsch (2000) argues that instruction is what creates ZPD, although this perhaps simplifies the process too much as it can be argued that instruction comes from negotiation, mediation, and questioning (Wertsch, 2000). Key concepts of Vygotsky's (1987) theory are 'assistance and experience at the level a student can handle so that he or she can learn' (Powell and Kalina, 2009, p. 247). In line with Vygotsky's (1987) social learning theory, Liu and Chen (2010, p. 64) state that 'psychological phenomena emerge from social interaction'. ZPD is, therefore, a scale or area of a student's development when assisted by others. Dance classes exhibit explicit strategies involving teacher-student interaction with a strong element of the situated environment. Cole and Wertsch (1991, p. 64) express the importance of the 'active individual' and the 'active environment'. This close link between teacher, student, and the environment is, therefore, essential where 'teachers and learners develop trust and openness in the classroom for all

students to become engaged and attentive' (Powell and Kalina, 2009, p. 247). This again reflects the 'club culture' atmosphere of the dance studio with explicit examples of teacher as facilitator, collaborative learning, familiar symbolic aids, and a common aspiration towards learning.

Mooney (2000) defines Vygotsky's (1978) theory as 'the distance between the most difficult task a child can do alone and the most difficult task a child can do with help' (p.85). Barohny (2017, p. 3), interpreting ZPD, identifies three dominant forms:

1. The distance between individual performance and assisted performance
2. The distance between understood and active knowledge (citing Hedegaard 1988)
3. The distance between individual activity and societal activity (citing Engestrom 1987)

At the heart of this are two forms of knowledge each acquired in different ways Barohny (2017, p. 3) describes understood knowledge as emerging from formal instruction, while active knowledge 'is gained by informal interactions of the individual with the world'. There is a strong argument here, that both are equally important and, in most cases, feed each other. An example of this is in dance training: you can demonstrate a particular movement or sequence of moves to a student, but unless that student has a good understanding of the stylistic context of those moves then the execution of body movement may lack appropriate

artistry and expression. Cole and Wertsch (1991, p.65) reinforce this notion of learning being constructed by the student, arguing that 'the role of the teacher is a facilitator who provides information and organizes activities for learners to discuss their own learning'.

Key aspects of ZPD relate to the student's future and are 'not a dialogue between the child and an adult's past (Griffin and Cole, 1984, p. 62). As Illeris (1917, p. 57) argued, it is the social activities and learning opportunities that are essential for deep understanding to take place. Engestrom (1987, p.169) supports Vygotsky's (1978) reformation theory, highlighting the importance of the 'creative processes' and not what has already been developed. There is a clear process to this philosophy that requires the student to ask questions related to; the purpose, for whose benefit, and why it is there (Engestrom, 1987, p.151). This allows the student to make meaningful connections to their developing understanding. This fits with Vygotsky's (1987) ZPD theory where key concepts are 'assistance' and 'experience' (Powell and Kalina, 2009, p. 247). This sits alongside the key elements of a typical dance class; assistance from the teacher followed by immediate physical experience and practice of the task given.

In summary, it is clear that the expert has a central role in ZPD in leading activities which allow students to develop. This form of constructivism links well to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of apprenticeship, where the expert offers new knowledge and demonstrates its practical applications.

### 2.6.5 Legitimate peripheral participation and the apprenticeship model

In referring to Lave and Wengers' (2017, p. 40) legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) emphasises that 'it is [only] an analytical viewpoint on learning' and therefore not a theoretical framework. However, this concept provided a useful lens for observing and analysing phenomena within the different learning spaces of this study and, in particular, how students interact within this LPP. However, Thunqvist and Axelsson (2012) argue that schools, unlike some organisational institutions, are not predictable social entities. As Cox (2005, pp. 529) states, these are not stable communities of practice with 'a smooth trajectory of socialisation by "old timers"'. This is potentially the case with fourteen-year-old students all with their own ambitions, expectations, histories, and perceptions and meaningfulness toward their studies. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 29) comment that LPP is 'a way to speak about relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice'. There is, therefore, a strong focus on interaction and constructing knowledge and understanding within a group. This then links closely to their apprenticeship model which supports differentiated learning.

Lave and Wenger's (2017) apprenticeship model was used as a measure to what activities were taking place, with a focus on the role of the learner within that space. These are labelled: *Status Subordinate* (learning the basics through observations of multiple approaches and practical applications), *Learning Practitioner* (participating in tasks and applying existing knowledge to new), *Sole*

*Responsible Agent* (taking on responsibility for completing part of a task leading to completing full tasks independently), and *Aspiring Expert* (taking responsibility to help and guide other learners as an expert in a particular activity). Bockarie (2002, p. 51) comments on what is perhaps the crucial part of this process, stating that 'cognitive apprenticeship emphasizes teaching learners different ways of thinking about whatever they are learning, as well as any skills associated with the apprenticeship'. As a teaching tool, this encourages self-reflection, evaluation, and decision-making development within a student. Finding the correct level of guidance is perhaps crucial here: if pushed too hard through ZPD, then a high level of tension may be created from a lack of understanding and, likewise, too little guidance may create tension through boredom.

### **2.6.6 Situated learning**

In exploring learning through a situative lens, interesting perspectives come from the field of professional learning such as the work by Peressini et al. (2004), Lave and Wenger (1991), Makopoulou and Armour (2009), Leach and Scott (2003) and Hodkinson et al. (2007). Whilst these papers focus on mathematics, physical education, and the sciences respectively, there is much here to underpin this empirical research into the performing arts. Peressini et al. (2004) discuss differences between cognitive and situative perspectives and the processes of transfer of knowledge between subjects. This prompts potentially poignant research questions, such as, do dance students learn most effectively,

independently, or collectively? This also includes how teaching methods/decisions can be identified by focussing on, as Greeno (1998) states:

Classroom social practices and examining such features as the patterns of discourse, the kinds of participation that are afforded to the teacher and students by the classroom practices that are in place, and the personal identities developed by the teacher and students through participation in these practices (Greeno, 1998, p. 11).

Although this is not based around performing arts students, it does emphasise the importance of identity within a social context and, as Peressini et al. (2004, p. 79) comment, 'Social perspectives coordinate cognitive and sociocultural aspects of identity and identity construction'. It could be argued that dancers, through the very nature of their own expectations and ambitions, come equipped with an already established identity. In their own minds, they know 'who' and 'what' they are, and 'where' they want to be. This potentially can generate high levels of confidence and be interpreted as arrogance by some staff. This may be seen when students do not show the same work ethic in their academic lessons as they do in dance classes. Dance-class structures could also be linked with apprenticeship models and this has links with Vygotsky's (1978) social theories and Lave and Wenger's (2017) views on situated learning. Bockarie (2002), citing Merriam and Cafarella (1999, p. 245), argues that learners should be encouraged 'to express the essence of their thoughts, which may otherwise be unspoken, while they demonstrate how to do a particular aspect of the task' or solve a specific problem. This process of being told (or shown) something, then working through the task (or problem-solving), allows the student to reinforce and further construct their knowledge. This deeper understanding allows them to

facilitate further learning. Bockarie (2002, p. 52) discusses Lave and Wengers' (2017) perspective on learning through apprenticeships, describing the social aspect and practical application that is attached to knowledge, which is gained through 'participation and engagement', that is to say, social activity. Catalano (2015, p. 654) supports this notion, arguing that 'situated cognition' through linking theory with authentic activity develops 'knowledge...[that is] a product of the environment in which it is learned'. It is the nature of the activity and its contextual setting that allows for a deeper understanding and potential to transfer knowledge to other situations (Catalano, 2015, p. 654)

Greeno (2015, p. 248) states that scientific methods to support 'analyses of cognition and learning occurred during the 1950's' and onwards. The concept of "situated" focussing on interaction was given prominence by Suchman (1987). In using Lave and Wengers' (1991) concept, Thunqvist and Axelsson (2012, p. 30) describe situated learning as 'a particular articulation of learning, defined as a process of changing participation in sociohistorical and situated practices rather than individual acquisition of knowledge presented to participants'.

## **2.7 The physical learning environment**

In investigating what impact, if any, different learning environments had on a student's motivation to work, Choi, Van Merriënboer, & Paas (2014) comment that little work has been done on the impact that the physical learning environment has on learning. This was taken further by Nordquist & Laing (2015,



p. 556) who argued that little attention is paid to physical learning spaces, stating that schools are 'more or less living museums of past concepts of curricula and learning'. The term 'environments', as described by McRobbie and Ellett (1997, p. 269) 'refers in particular to the psycho-social, cultural, and organizational aspects of the educational setting'. Kolb and Kolb (2017, p. 18) refer to the importance of grasping 'the life space of the learner in its totality'. By this they see the learning space 'in terms of the learner's experience' (p. 18). The term environment, therefore, embraces all aspects of that space including social, historical and cultural perspectives.

Learning environments, as previously stated, can be viewed from a physical and social perspective. Regarding the physical, schooling is generally 'located' in a number of contrasting learning spaces and, taking into account the explicit differences between the dance studio and majority of academic classrooms, it could be argued that cluttered academic teaching rooms with a linear desk pattern may inhibit opportunities for collaborative learning as opposed to the open, freer spaces of the dance studio. This includes, how these spaces are managed, including assessing their capacity to allow for varied learning approaches, how the physical space engages students with meaningful activity, and, how it can be used to inspire the natural senses of those students.

Dance students often begin ballet classes from the age of three and are therefore subject to a way of teaching that is teacher-led, in a specialised learning space;

the dance studio. As Myers (1990, p. 176) asserts: 'Type development starts at a very early age. The hypothesis is that type is inborn, an innate predisposition like right or left-handedness, but the successful development of type can be greatly helped or hindered by environment from the beginning'. This may suggest that three-year-old ballet dancers build a predisposition about how people should be taught i.e. in large uncluttered spaces, being teacher-led, with everyone doing exactly the same thing repeatedly and learning through a combination of kinaesthetic and visual techniques. Being placed into a cluttered traditional classroom at the age of four may potentially seem quite alien to these young people to the extent of them feeling inhibited. These early impressions could play a part in their views and attitudes in later schooling. This is supported by Engel (2015, p. 93), arguing that children's dispositions often stay with them as they move into adulthood. Machles (2003, p. 25) argues that 'learning is not necessarily a result of teaching, but instead is a result of living and actively participating socially in a community of practice'. This seems to over-simplify the process and does not account for the actual physical environment where the learning is taking place and, more importantly, the management and guidance of activity by a teacher or someone with a higher level of knowledge. However, the physical space of a learning environment often remains static and is therefore not seen as particularly relevant or directly linked to the many facets of a school curriculum.

Physical layout of classrooms varies enormously, often governed by available space and the nature of the subject. Traditional factors may also affect space, with some classrooms looking very similar to the regimented Victorian layouts.

Getzels (1977, p. 26) offers four different 'descriptions of classrooms', each having differing effects on learning. Descriptions of these four learning environments are examples of how teaching areas have changed from cluttered spaces allowing very little movement, to much freer open spaces without desks and chairs. However, it was observed that most classroom-based areas presented the seats and tables in line formation. Wlodkowski (1985, p. 315) also suggests interesting notions about classroom layout, including U and V shapes of desk formation having a positive impact on a child's learning, as do 'seating choices, comfort levels, and lighting'. Getzels (1977, p. 27) goes on to state: 'what children see in classrooms has an influence on the way they understand learning, and especially learning in school'. This would support the argument that students approach different learning spaces with differing levels of expectations and motivation. This may well be influenced by the physical environment of each space, with students bringing different histories and experiences, having constructed knowledge in a variety of processes (Catalano, 2015). Plotka (2016, p. 18), under the banner of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), discusses good design and how this is measured. She defines good design as, 'a comfortable, responsive environment which effectively and efficiently supports educational activities, whilst minimising operational burdens and risks'. Although this lacks specific detail, it does at least focus on learning activity. Further good design measures are then offered which include: 'good quality natural light, supported by good artificial lighting, pupil sense of ownership... that creates dedicated social or self-directed learning spaces' (p. 22). Other design factors include natural ventilation systems, thermal comfort and control over temperature,

colourful décor without being distracting, integral storage space, flexible spaces, good acoustics and simple design that reduces reliance on complex mechanical systems. This reinforces my earlier statements that the condition of classrooms, compared to the condition of studios, potentially sends messages to students and parents that certain areas of the curriculum are given greater prominence and significance within the whole school development plan.

Discussing the design of physical learning spaces, Konings and McKenney (2017, p. 249) suggest that 'policies about alignment between school buildings and offered curricula are often missing'. This implies that little attention, if any, is given to the relationship between the physical space and the subject curriculum.

In support of the positive impact physical learning spaces can have on learning, Nordquist and Lang (2014, p. 555) argue, equating them to computer technology, that 'the physical environment is our 'hardware' and should better support our 'software' – the underlying ideas of our curriculum...[is] to achieve inter-professional, learning-centred and student-activated learning'.

Greeno (1998, p. 17) argues that the way in which 'instructors organise learning environments and create learning opportunities affect the ultimate outcomes'. This is supported by Herrington and Oliver, (2000, p. 26), who discuss the close relationship that learning should have with the physical space, stating that the environment should 'reflect the way [the] knowledge will be used in real life'. Due to the restrictions in actual teaching spaces within a school, this may not always

be possible and perhaps there should be a greater focus on the activity rather than the space in supporting their theories. This latter suggestion is supported by Brown and Duguid, (1996, p. 51) who state: 'the context in which instruction occurs is vital to understanding the associated outcomes'. In an argument for 'universal design' where the space is usable and accessible to all, Bucholz and Sheffler (2009, p. 3) state that 'the design of the classroom should contribute 'to the learning of all students'. They argue that desks laid out in neat rows may not be the best formation to create an effective learning environment, stating that 'Ideal desk arrangements create opportunity for students to be actively engaged in learning and have the opportunity to work, cooperatively, when appropriate, with their peers'. This fits well with social constructivist theories and suggests a close relationship between the physical and social space of the learning environment.

### **2.7.1 The concept of space**

The concept of space lends itself well to dance, as by its very practical nature, dance presents an aesthetic form that could be seen as tangible, and certainly visible and emotional. Briginshaw (2001, p. 5) gives a holistic view of this, stating: 'Space...is a human or social construct'. Her study concludes that when physically dancing you take ownership of the space that you occupy. For each brief moment it is your space and there are clear connections between the performer and the space they occupy. This affirms that the dancer's space is an extremely important element in what they are doing and links with McGregor

(2004, p. 13), when she refers to the concepts of space and the social, being inextricably linked. To perform successfully in these social spaces requires high levels of technical skill, artistry and contextual knowledge. As Hanna (1999) suggests, this involves a complex mix of knowledge and creativity as students experience such concepts as, 'abstraction, representation, symbolism, imagery, communication, expression, transition, mirroring, performance... solo and ensemble' (p. 13). Hanna (1999, p. 14) goes on to discuss how important correct stimuli are to achievement in dance as 'a dancer responds physiologically and makes cognitive inferences about the stimulus'. This suggests an important connection that dance pupils make between their contextual knowledge, skills and technique, and the physical space they occupy when dancing. Blanchard (2014, p. 19) argues that 'this then places the importance on the classroom as a social learning environment as well as academic learning environment'.

In discussing the classroom, Blanchard (2014, p. 19) argues that 'The emotional climate of this environment gives them either the necessary sense of belonging and security or a sense of anxiety and insecurity'. In discussing the importance of interpersonal relationships, Di Salvo (2013) talks about how young minds are genetically conditioned to react and sync with those around them, suggesting that emotional security comes from their peers rather than the physical surroundings and design. This again goes back to the essence of the learning space, which must consider both the social and physical dimensions. Blanchard (2014, p. 22), citing Whitefield (1987) discusses a compiled 'hierarchical list of human needs'. On this list, 'safety is second only to survival' (Blanchard, 2014, p. 22), reinforcing

the point that emotional safety is a priority in a child's perception of education. It could be argued that consistency in our lives gives us a greater sense of security in the sense that we know what to expect. This raises a key area of interest in exploring the nature and structure of dance and academic lessons and, in particular, identifying patterns of predictability and unpredictability.

Perry, a New York headteacher (2013) commented...

safety is created by predictability, and predictability is created by consistent behaviours. And the consistency that leads to predictability does not come from rigidity in the timing of activities it comes from the consistency of interaction from the teacher (p. 1).

This again links closely to the set teaching patterns in dance classes. In support of this, Strange and Banning (2015, p. 252) 'propose that educational environments are most powerful when they offer students three fundamental conditions: a sense of security and inclusion, mechanisms for involvement, and an experience of community'. Evans (2010, p. 134) states that 'research has validated the connection between the climate of a classroom and the development of a student's motivation and social connections as well as their cognitive and academic success'. This suggests a strong need for a sense of belonging and a close connection to the subject content and physical environment. Although many questions seem to have been asked over the years about how a physical learning environment can impact on a child's learning, what might be called 'traditional teaching spaces' have remained generally static over the past hundred years, apart from some experiments with open-plan teaching prevalent in the 1980's.

## **2.8 Emerging themes**

This literature review has focussed on social perspectives of learning, drawing principally on the theories of Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger, and Kolb. This includes concepts about situated learning, collaborative practices, and the external influences on learning. A theoretical framework under the banner of social constructivism, was used in the current study to support the empirical data from observations and interviews. This provided a platform to analyse students' perceptions of learning and investigate the impact these varying social environments have on dance students' approaches to their studies.



## **Chapter 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study explored students' perceptions of learning, within studio and classroom-based environments. Methodology and data collection were guided by the nature of the inquiry, specifically taking into account that the learner participants were all specialist dance students, who also followed a full academic curriculum. A specific aim of this research was to inform whole school development planning and establish effective teaching strategies for individual departments that support the educational needs of specialist dance students. This has taken into account: dance students' perceptions of learning, their personal future aspirations, and what they refer to as meaningful subject content throughout all of their subjects. This study was guided by the literature towards a social constructivist perspective. In doing so, all aspects of the learning environment were considered, with the intention of developing strategies that encourage greater interaction and collaborative practices. The initial questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was given out in November 2018, and all lesson observations took place between January and May, 2019. Student interviews were arranged over a six-week period from February to the end of March 2019. During this latter period, students also recorded their 'student voice' reflections.

This chapter describes the research sample and nature of information that was required to build a rich source of data related to the students' approaches and their perceptions towards their lessons. Following this is a description of the study's research methodology, comprising details of the research design, methods of data collection, analysis and synthesis of data, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and a concluding summary.

### **3.2 Rationale for qualitative research design**

In approaching this research through an interpretivist lens, the researcher has reinforced their own ontological perspective acknowledging that each person will view the social world in a different way, 'with words and events carrying different meanings in every case' (Thomas, 2017, p.110). This philosophical approach guided the study, viewing students' behaviours as interpretations of their world rather than reactions. This allowed the researcher to add meaning to those behaviours through analysis of their words and events (Thomas, 2017, p.110). The researcher's epistemological perspective similarly guided the research inquiry, with a focus on how students interacted and developed understanding through this collaborative and linguistic process. In exploring how their knowledge was constructed, the study was able to link behaviour patterns and work ethics to their processes of learning as managed by the teacher. Accepting that everyone views the world and knowledge in different ways allowed the researcher to appreciate the significance of the participants' perceptions, and how important the 'social landscape' was in providing a platform for understanding and

development. As this research was centred around students' learning experiences, knowledge construction, and perceptions of learning, the study adopted a social constructivist approach, with particular reference to Vygotsky (1978).

Participants' interpretations were therefore valued as significant sources of data within these socially constructed and ever-changing learning spaces. This study identified and classified key behaviours and levels of student-engagement within these environments. Emerging data was then linked to teaching strategies and specific studio and classroom management. By exploring these personal constructions of the individual's world, a rich vein of data was generated, leading to a redefined set of meanings and understanding from the researcher's perspective.

Focusing on approaches to learning rather than previous attainment, particularly from a collaborative viewpoint, gave a strong perspective to the social aspect of education. Identifying patterns of learning and engagement was a key area when observing classes, particularly measuring levels and types of interaction between the teacher and class and between the students themselves. In aiming to achieve a full understanding of student experiences in these learning spaces, an interpretivist approach with elements of symbolic interactionism, was deployed. Thomas (2016, p.52) states, 'the social world is constructed by each of us differently, with words and events carrying different meanings for each person

and in each situation'. This highlights the importance of taking into account individual perceptions and beliefs as part of a whole.

### **3.3 Socio-cultural perspectives**

In wanting to fully understand how students work in different learning environments it was important for the researcher to be placed at the centre of the research domain. This included semi-structured and participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and student questionnaires. Being present in this central position, the researcher was able to be immersed in these situated activities and, in doing so, 'interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings' and behaviours, demonstrated by students. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p.3).

In 'being concerned with how the complexities of the sociocultural world is experienced, interpreted, and understood in a particular context', (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p.169) it was necessary to approach the area of research from a number of perspectives in order to gain accurate and valid data through the process of triangulation. Student perceptions and interpretations were central to these investigations as, Gray (2014, p.191) comments, 'qualitative research is more closely linked to a constructivist paradigm, which sees truth and meaning as constructed and interpreted by individuals'. This interpretivist approach is supported by Thomas (2017, p.109), who argues: 'knowledge is everywhere and is socially constructed; all kinds of information are valid and worthy of the name knowledge; specific accounts inform each other'. Along with this it may be argued

that the researcher's own knowledge and experience should be considered. This perspective on knowledge and the social world provided an initial framework for these investigations, with the research participants being the main focus. From the social-constructivist theories listed in Chapter two, it was taken into consideration that these participants have their own individual views of the world and that each situation is constantly being recreated or constructed depending on environmental and personal factors. These interactions and student interpretations were at the heart of these investigations, providing a view of the various learning environments through a sociocultural lens. From the perspective of how students build knowledge through interactions and experience, this investigation was drawn to a social constructivist paradigm. The literature review directed the study towards a notion that knowledge and understanding are developed more effectively through participation and interaction with others (see Chapter two: 2.6). This is supported by Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 24) who state 'Meaning does not exist in its own right; it is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation'. It could also be argued that this interpretation includes such factors as symbolic, physical, and historical elements. Of interest here is how these individual dance students interpreted and made sense of their world, and how this related to their perception of their personal understanding and development. This then leads to the importance of considering all aspects of their social learning environments, including observing behaviours, social interaction, and forms of collaborative learning. This interpretivist approach focussed on understanding the phenomena within these learning spaces. Regarding the research participants, it was important to gain a

full picture of each individual's perspective, leading to a greater understanding of these multiple realities. This social constructivist lens allowed the researcher to explore how knowledge and meaning were constructed and how each participant made sense of their world. Drawing from the literature review (2.6.3, p. 69), dance students explicitly demonstrated a 'club culture' which immediately created a world or culture, removed from other non-dance students. From this social constructivist theory, the researcher's intention was to gather subjective meanings of participants' experiences and use emerging themes to explain behaviours and approaches to their lessons. These 'subjective meanings' will have been 'negotiated socially and historically' and are 'formed through interaction with others.... and through historical and cultural norms that operate in [their] lives' (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 24).

Social constructivism informs that each individual will interpret this world from their own experiences, aspirations, and interactions with other people around them. This process of shared meanings (Sayre, 2001) is reliant on collaboration and construction of knowledge that leads to sense-making. This fits well with the literature review on how dancers perceive and construct meaning to their school activities (see Chapter two: 2.3 and 2.4). In addressing the research questions, it was essential to understand how each dance student perceived themselves and their surroundings in the two contrasting learning spaces. The investigation included the following: what inspired them, how their behaviours differed in studio and classroom-based lessons, how much importance they attached to various sources of information, and how important school work was in relation to their

future aspirations. Taking a holistic view of this social world was an important element of this research. Pickard (2015, p. 25), referring to Bourdieu's notion of 'field' as a 'social space', comments, 'Investment in 'playing the game' moulds the habitus, which in turn shapes the actions of the actors that reproduce the field'. This suggests that dance students are consumed by 'the world of dance', thus creating a process of subconsciously constructing their identities and behavioural patterns. This links to the explicit 'club culture' that was observed on a number of occasions.

With dance students being immersed in this world of dance, and seeing 'experience' as playing a central role in their learning and development, the findings were also supported with aspects of experiential learning. Keeton and Tate (1978, p. 28) define this as 'learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied'. They go on to argue that there is far more to experiential learning than just the learning itself. However, their detail of the learning process is not always explicit, particularly concerning aspects of reflection. Kolb (2015, p. 37) discussed the importance of a process which included the following practices: reflection and observing their experiences from different perspectives, 'creating concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories', and, finally, to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems. This helped inform this study by looking at learning processes and patterns of behaviour in lesson observations, included making judgements on how students were making sense of their lesson content. This provided a platform

to assess whether a synthesis of practical experience and internalised cognition was actually taking place.

### **3.4 The research sample**

The research site was selected because of the researcher's own personal knowledge and experience of that specific learning environment. Although all subject areas were observed and considered, two main areas of learning were selected: dance studios, and academic classrooms. The researcher had over fifteen years of experience, teaching in both learning environments as a music teacher in the classroom and as a musical director in dance studios. This included working alongside choreographers and acting coaches. This study was therefore developed through the researcher's own interest in how dance students worked in these two contrasting spaces.

Research participants were drawn from the cohort of year nine (13 and 14 years old) students who specialised in dance and, most notably, classical dance. Initially, twenty-four students took part. After four had opted out, twelve were finally selected from the remaining 20 students, using a purposeful sampling procedure. As Bloomberg and Volpe (2016, p.148) comment, 'purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases, with the objective of yielding insight and understanding of the phenomenon under investigation'. This is in contrast to 'random sampling procedures that characterize quantitative research' and 'theoretical sampling... used in grounded theory studies' (Bloomberg and



Volpe, 2016, 148). Stratified random sampling with some adjustment to proportionate sampling was chosen, as it ensured a good cross-section of dance students. This included: gender, age, skill-sets, and information from the student pilot questionnaire (see Appendix one).

Table 3.1 Triangulation of student details and data from the pilot questionnaire (see appendix 1).

Student ID	Gender	Boarder	MDS Scholarship	Age	Principal Dance Skill	Questionnaire Responses
A	M = Male	Y = Yes	Y = Yes	14yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Studio space/ Professional atmosphere/ Interesting/ Intense/ Imagination/ Open
B	F = Female	Y	Y	14yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Good teachers/ Small classes/ Fun/ Interesting/ Working in groups
C	F	Y	N = No	13yrs	Modern/Tap	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Nice teachers/ Opportunities/ New skills/ Freedom/ Enjoyable/ Interesting
D	F	N = No	N	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Feeling free/ Good teachers/ New skills/ Interesting/ Varied activities
E	F	Y	Y	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Lively/ Fun/ Relevant/ Performing/ Being creative/ New skills
F	M	Y	Y	14yrs	Modern	Classroom preference Favourite lesson Dance Expression/ New steps/ Being creative/ Performing/ Singing
G	M	Y	Y	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance

						Feeling free/ Challenging/ Competitive/ Creative
H	F	N	N	13yrs	Modern/Tap	Classroom preference Favourite lesson Maths Challenging/ Feeling Free/ Enjoyable/ Relaxing
I	F	Y	Y	13yrs	Modern	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Expression/ Performing/ Challenging/ Exploring/ Creative
J	F	Y	Y	14yrs	Modern	Classroom preference Favourite lesson History Movement/ Working hard/ Freedom/ Expressing myself
K	M	Y	N	14yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Feeling free/ Makes me happy/ Expressing myself/ Builds confidence/ New skills/ Performing
L	F	Y	N	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Learning new things/ Performing/ Improving/ Interesting/ Good teachers/ Being creative/ Expressing myself
M	F	Y	N	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Space/ Feeling free/ Improving/ Being creative
N	F	Y	Y	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Feeling free/ Expressing myself/ Being over the top/ Being creative/ Being different
O	F	Y	Y	13yrs	Modern/Tap	Classroom preference Favourite lesson Maths Expression/ Freedom/ Discipline/ Achieving/ Challenging/ Learning about new things

P	F	Y	N	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Ballet/ Good teachers/ Improving/ New techniques/ Concentrating
Q	M	Y	N	14yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Learning new things/ Feeling free/ Expressing feelings/ Being focussed/ Creative
R	F	Y	Y	14yrs	Modern	Studio Preference Favourite lesson Dance Freedom/ Thrilling results/ Work at own pace/ Variety of topics/ Understanding other faiths/beliefs
S	F	N	N	13yrs	Modern/Tap	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Satisfying/ Makes me feel good/ Relaxing/ Good atmosphere
T	M	Y	Y	14yrs	Modern/Tap	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance New skills/ Fun/ New techniques/ New facts/ Assessments/ Discussions/ Learning from others
U	M	Y	Y	14yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Art Creative/ Enjoyable/ Fun
V	F	Y	N	14yrs	Ballet	Classroom preference Favourite lesson Art Creative/ Performing/ Learning how your body works
W	F	Y	N	13yrs	Ballet	Studio preference Favourite lesson Dance Learning new steps/ Improving/ Expressing emotions/ Being challenged/
X	F	N	N	14yrs	Ballet	No preference Favourite lesson Music Performing/ The classroom/ Being creative/ Observing others/ Space

The 12 research participants were selected using the following criteria: gender, MDS scholarships, age, principal dance skill, and elements of the initial questionnaire. All 12 participants were boarders, as all non-boarders had opted out at this stage. Eight girls and four boys were selected: five girls were aged 13 and three aged 14; one boy was aged 13 and three boys were aged 14

Year nine students were chosen because most of them were approaching a watershed in their schooling, specifically, losing the full national curriculum and choosing GCSE options. By year nine, they had also gained considerable experience in dance tuition, with the majority expressing strong ambitions to enter the professional world of dance and performance. These students came from a variety of backgrounds, with the majority receiving government scholarships through the 'Music and Dance Scheme' (MDS). An initial questionnaire was given to 24 year-nine dance students which included the 12 selected participants. The intention here was to gain a broad overview of students' perceptions regarding notable elements of their favourite lessons, preferred learning spaces, subjects that supported their future lives and, most significantly, their perceptions of learning. Two focus groups were also used, consisting of one group of dancers and one group of non-dancers. This generated a completely different dynamic to the other methods, with the intention of encouraging deeper thought through open discussion. Students talked freely about their experiences and feelings of education, and the group dynamic provided a platform for all participants to contribute a rich amount of data. Informal discussions also took place with staff from studio and classroom-based subjects in the form of follow-up meetings after

observations in order to confirm correct interpretation of events by the researcher. These data collection methods provided a broad range of perspectives and descriptions, providing a strong foundation for cross-referencing and triangulating information and the conclusions drawn from the research area (see Appendix 7). In all areas, researcher bias and prestige bias were monitored, and alleviated by giving clear instructions and by ensuring that all participants were not distracted or felt obliged to behave in different ways. Assurances of anonymity were given, together with provision to cease participating should they wish to do so, without recrimination or having to give reasons. All participants were used to being observed by the researcher, due to his senior teaching role within the school.

### **3.4.1 Culture and perception**

Dance students' backgrounds - to understand the dancer's world it was important to be aware and appreciate their historical contexts and past experiences.

Dance students' perceptions - an essential part of this research was to understand how dance students view their world of education including what they see as relevant and meaningful learning experiences.

Socio-cultural traditions in studio and classroom environments - it was also important to observe the school's environment and traditions, and ways of

working as a useful comparative tool with those perceptions of the dance students'.

Physical learning spaces - physical space was an important consideration particularly because of the vast differences between the studios and classrooms. Identifying good practice and effective ways of managing learning was important to this enquiry.

Socio-historical context of educational practices for dance and other subjects - this allowed a focus on studio and classroom rules and etiquette. It also identified key strategies linked to independent and collaborative practices through viewing how methods of learning were being utilised in the contrasting learning spaces.

### **3.4.2 Learning applications**

Student engagement and work ethic - this focussed on learning behaviours and how dance students were working in all subjects. Engagement was measured, through observations, by judging levels of work-related activity and interaction with others in the class or resources. Off-task activity was also recorded.

Students' perceptions and approaches to all subjects - this was seen as an important element of the empirical research as it allowed students to express their own personal feelings on any aspect of education they wished to discuss.

The study also reflected on how these feelings converted into their approach to various lessons; whether an automatic 'off button' was consciously, or even sub-consciously, deployed as they entered certain learning environments.

Teaching methods and styles - this essentially gave a focus to how each learning space was being managed. Were classes being teacher-led? Were a variety of teaching resources being used? Were collaborative methods being deployed to support student learning? Another important element was to compare the differences, if any, between the studio and classroom-based environments.

Students' learning styles - this attempted to look at students' preferred learning styles and cross-reference this with collated data from lesson observations and interviews. The intention here was to see if a student's learning style influenced their opinion of specific lessons, not due to the subject content, but on how the learning environment was being managed.

Students' experiences - this gave a lens to capture learner activity in all learning environments. This included the nature of those activities and how students were responding to specific events.

School climate/course aims - this attempted to capture the essence and cultures for each of the learning spaces. What was each subject area, and indeed the school, aiming to achieve? Was there an acceptance that dance students want to

dance and, therefore, potentially attach less importance to their other subjects, or did the school believe their performing life styles should not impact on their overall education?

### **3.4.3 Emotional engagement and investment**

Student outcomes, achievements and rewards – This was concerned with questions such as what the students gained from their lessons, and what areas could be improved to generate increased levels of engagement, application, motivation, knowledge and understanding. What were the ultimate goals for these students, and what realistic rewards were there for their futures? Was it possible to judge how much value-added a vocational course can offer, and did the students generally have a singular outlook for their futures in the performing arts world?

Meaningful Learning – This explored whether the dance students made conscious decisions regarding what they might perceive as useful knowledge, as opposed to knowledge that they saw as having no bearing or relevance to their future careers. If their future aspirations did impact on their commitment to learning, then was their perception of meaningful learning connected to subject-based or skill-based curricula?



### 3.5 Areas of study

A variety of contrasting behaviours regarding motivation and work ethic were observed in these different learning environments. This generated data that linked to the essence and specific aim of the study, helping to understand students' perceptions of learning. This included what impact, if any, management of these spaces had on a student's work ethic. Links to Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development and Lave and Wenger's (2017) Situated Learning were used as theoretical frameworks to guide the inquiry. The information needed for these research questions was initially guided by the 'Presage, Process, and Product' concept (Tsompanaki, 2009; Benn, 1988, 1991). Three main areas were then established that related to the research questions: (a) **culture and perception**, which gave a holistic view of their motivation, background, family, peers, teachers, taught curriculum, experience of physical spaces, cultural links and symbolic features; (b) **learning applications**, which included approaches to learning, levels of engagement, responses to teaching approaches, and perceptions of confidence/success/failure; and (c) **emotional engagement and investment**, which included perceptions of meaningful learning, making sense of learning, ambition, and motivation. This data was supported and cross-referenced with relevant literature to give the study an academic underpinning (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p,171).

### 3.6 Research design

Taking Bloomberg and Volpe's (2016) description of case study, 'that seeks to investigate participants' experiences in a particular bounded context', with similar definitions from Gray (2014), Yin (2014), Robson and McCartan (2016), Thomas (2017), and Creswell and Poth (2018), this investigation adopted a case study methodology. Thomas (2016) discusses three potential routes to take when initially planning a case study: 'key case, outlier case, and local knowledge case' (p. 99). Key and outlier cases apply to investigations where the researcher does not have any specialist knowledge of the study domain. The local knowledge case refers to someone who has a close connection to the area of study, such as their place of work. In using Thomas's descriptions, this study conducted a 'local knowledge case' investigation, as the researcher had close connections with, and knowledge of, the field of study (Thomas, 2016, p. 114).

Opposing Yin's (2014) use of the word 'method' in defining case study, Creswell (2018, p. 96) refers to case study research as a methodology: 'a type of design in qualitative research that may be an object of study as well as a product of the inquiry'. For this investigation, students' work-related behaviours (subject), and the reasons for those behaviours (object) defined this project. Empirical research underpinned by relevant theory was the path to creating an analytical perspective of students' engagement in their lessons. Thomas (2016, p.16), citing Wieviorka (1992, p.160) on case study methodology, states: 'It is significant only if an observer...can refer it to an analytical category or theory'. In relation to student

behaviours in lessons, this study forged theoretical links to sociocultural research, particularly from Vygotsky and Lave and Wenger, with Kolb's (2015) experiential cycle providing further support regarding approaches to learning. With the research centring around how students were, if at all, engaged with their work, investigations looked for variables in student attention and interest. From this, analysis took place that was linked to teaching approaches including identifying provision for interaction and collaborative learning. To seek rich descriptions of the phenomena, multiple methods were used, including observations, interviews, and questionnaires. Thomas (2016, p. 21) supports this in describing the merits of a case study, stating: 'What it does offer you is a rich picture with many kinds of insights coming from different angles, from different kinds of information'. This includes insights of students, teachers, and the researcher, all with different opinions and perceptions of each lesson and their learning spaces. With all of this linked to theoretical paradigms and rules of the school establishment, it created a complex and fluid research area. As Thomas (2016, p. 23) states, 'A case study is about seeing something in its completeness'. This is supported by Cresswell and Poth (2018, p. 96) in viewing case study research as a methodology, and commenting that it is 'defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system... over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information'. Although a number of researchers do not see case study as a methodology, it could be argued that it does provide a framework and system for gathering detailed data from a specific field. Thomas (2016, p. 121) discusses the purpose of the study as being: 'evaluative, explanatory, or exploratory'. Various authors have used

different headings with similar meanings. Hancock and Algozzine (2017, p. 39) list the three major types of case study as 'descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory'. Thomas (2016) describes being evaluative as researching something that has changed, or a new idea that needs assessing. Being explanatory provides the researcher with a framework to 'seek to establish cause-and-effect relationships' (Hancock and Algozzine, 2017, p. 39) and in doing so, to analyse how 'events occur and which ones may influence particular outcomes' (p. 39). Definitions of 'exploratory' are not always agreed upon, as Hancock and Algozzine (2017, p. 39) define this as being a 'prelude to additional research', suggesting that it is used to define research questions for further study. Thomas (2016, p. 126) defines being exploratory in simpler terms, arguing that it is useful when 'you need to know more: what is happening and why?' Gray (2014, p. 57) defines this approach as: 'A question which seeks to identify themes when little is currently known about the subject'. Figure 3.1, below, maps out the design for this case study.

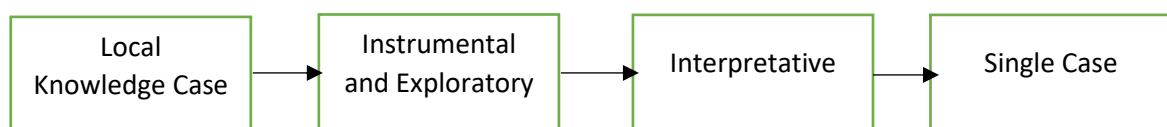


Fig. 3.1 Design framework

### 3.7 Case Study

In order to view how each dance student approached their different subject areas and learning environments, it was important to observe the whole picture, exploring all related phenomena throughout the establishment. This study took

place within specific learning environments in order to capture a holistic view of the field. Hancock and Algozzine (2017, p.15) describe this as: 'the phenomenon being researched is studied in its natural context, bounded by space and time'. Here, it was essential that the research participants felt familiar with their surroundings and that any distractions, such as the researcher being present, were kept as low key as possible. A comprehensive definition by Simons (2009, p. 21) guided the methodology for this project towards a case study approach: 'Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project'. The descriptive words of 'complexity' and 'uniqueness' were seen as elements essential to the whole inquiry. This then linked to the researcher's intentions and it was recognised as important for the researcher to understand how each participant made sense of their individual situations within different 'communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 2017). Simons (2009, p. 21) offers a definition of case study that reflects the nature of this inquiry: 'The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic... to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development [and] professional practice'. In 1998, Merriam described case study as 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis... of a social unit' (p. 5). Interestingly, ten years later, she changed her emphasis to the process of the study rather than the outcomes. Merriam (1988, p. 27) emphasises the importance of seeing case study as 'a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries'. Therefore, a case study provides a structure to contain the study, helping to prevent any watering down or moving in other directions. Following Merriam's (1998) description of three types of case study: particularistic,

descriptive, and heuristic, this inquiry followed a heuristic perspective. Here, the aim was to discover 'new meaning, extend the reader's experience [and] confirm what is known' (p.30). Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013) drill down a little deeper and discuss case study in two forms: 'Intrinsic and Instrumental' (p.12). They present intrinsic as a case that is captured in its entirety, and instrumental as having a focus on a specific 'aspect, concern, or issue' (p.12). Hancock and Algozzine (2017) argue that an 'enhanced understanding of the particular issue is of secondary importance to a greater insight into [a] theoretical explanation that underpins the issue' (p. 38). This highlights the importance of linking data to theory and is particularly relevant due to the vast amount of information that a case study can generate. This inquiry had a specific focus on students' perceptions of learning and, therefore, can be described as an instrumental case study.

Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier (2013, p. 5) described the emergence of case study in education research occurring through the 1970s and 1980s as 'a reaction against the heavily quantitative bias of research in education up to that point'. Meyer (2001, p. 349), in exploring different perceptions of case study, writes: 'Case studies have been regarded in various formats: as a design (Cook and Campbell, 1979), as a qualitative methodology (Cassell and Symonds, 1994), as a particular data collection procedure (Anderson, 1997), and as a research strategy (Yin, 1989). Meyer (2001, p. 329) states that there are 'virtually no specific requirements guiding case research'. This is both a strength and weakness of this approach. She argues that having a flexibility to the design and

data collection can be seen as a strength, although it is essential for the researcher to closely monitor and review 'design requirements, data collection procedures, data analysis, and validity and reliability' (Meyer, 2001, p. 330). Bloomberg and Volpe (2016, p.170), citing Merriam (1998, p.19) state: 'A case study...[focusses] in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation'. This is supported by Gummeson (1998, p. 76), who states: 'the detailed observations entailed in case study method enable us to study many different aspects', thus providing a lens to view the environment holistically. These statements, again, lead to this being an instrumental case study. As Wieviorka (1992, p.160) stated, the essential element in any case study is to analyse the object of study in which you 'also need the means of interpreting it or placing it in a context'. This fitted well with the aim of this project in interpreting how students approached their work in different educational environments and how they made sense of learning within these contrasting spaces. This is supported by Robson and McCartan (2016, p.150) who state that, a case study is 'focussed on a phenomenon in context, typically in situations where the boundary between the phenomenon and its context is not clear'. This provided a useful framework when observing such a complex field, which included individual student perceptions, contrasting curricula and learning spaces, and a broad range of individual expectations and aspirations from the selected participants. Both Merriam (1998) and Yin (2002) discuss the confusion that occurs when seeing case study as a recognised methodology. Stake (1995, p. xi) presents an interpretive model of case study research that includes: 'naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research'.

Stake's (1995) epistemological perspective is grounded within the constructivist paradigm, as opposed to Yin (2002) who leans more towards positivist traditions (Crotty, 1998; Yazan, 2015). Crotty (1998) discusses three positivist fundamentals: objectivity, validity, and generalizability. Although Yin (2002) does not explicitly declare a positivist approach, many of his arguments lean towards positivist philosophy. Yin (1983) writes from a broad social science perspective rather than a direct link to education. His background is in quantitative work reflected in his view of case study (Hamilton and Corbett-Whittier, 2013). It could be argued that in presenting data analysis as facts through a scientific, quantitative approach, potential rich information gained from the researcher's and participants' interpretations could, essentially, be lost. Yin (2002, p. 19) stresses the importance of 'four conditions related to design quality: 'construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability'. Relating to measuring these, he argues that there is 'essential common ground' between qualitative and quantitative research (Yin, 2002, p.15), suggesting that he does not fall completely within the positivist paradigm. Stake (1995, p. 100), in contrast, emphasises the importance of the researcher's notions of 'knowledge and reality'. He argues that 'most contemporary qualitative researchers hold that knowledge is constructed rather than discovered (Stake, 1995, p. 99). This suggests that he sees the researcher as someone who gathers interpretations of others and creates a 'constructed reality or knowledge that they gather through their investigations' (Yazan, 2015, p. 137). Stake (1995, p.108) reinforces this notion, arguing: 'there are multiple perspectives or views of the case that need to be represented, but there is no easy way to establish, beyond contention, the best



view'. Following a similar perspective, Merriam (1998, p. 22) argues: 'reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality'. This study followed this philosophy, viewing the participants' perceptions and interpretations as important elements of the analyses and conclusions. Merriam (1998) takes this a little further than Stake (1995) by emphasising the importance of the researcher's own interpretations and constructions of the area of study. This allows for the researcher to play an active role within the research environment. Gummesson (1988, p. 5) sees specific pre-knowledge of an establishment as a strength, but in doing so warns against researcher-bias, suggesting it is only an advantage to 'those who are able to balance on a razor's edge using their pre-understanding without being its slave'. Meyer (2001) suggests that one way to guard against researcher bias is to acknowledge his or her presuppositions and set these aside in the analysis. It could be argued that the researcher's knowledge and perceptions can potentially be a useful tool in making sense of, and understanding, other people's perceptions. Therefore, this study viewed both the researcher's and the participants' perceptions and understanding as important elements in qualitative case study research.

### **3.8 Research methods**

Qualitative research methods allowed the researcher to gather rich descriptions of how the students approached and made sense of their lessons in a variety of different learning spaces (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This resulted in taking a holistic view of the research domain, allowing data to emerge from a broad range

of methods. These took the form of questionnaires, observations, and interviews. Through collating and categorising the data from these mixed methods, analysis was established by going through an inductive process of building meaning from the co-constructed data (Wang 2011, p. 302). This was essentially a form of *thematic coding analysis*, where codes were identified, reflected on and categorised, providing a process that generated emerging themes. These themes were then narrowed down and triangulated with data from other methods to look for common threads/main themes. These were then linked to the main research questions (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014). Figure 3.2, below, tracks the research process, demonstrating how emerging themes were linked to the supporting literature before being triangulated with data generated from each method. These findings were then linked to the three main research questions.

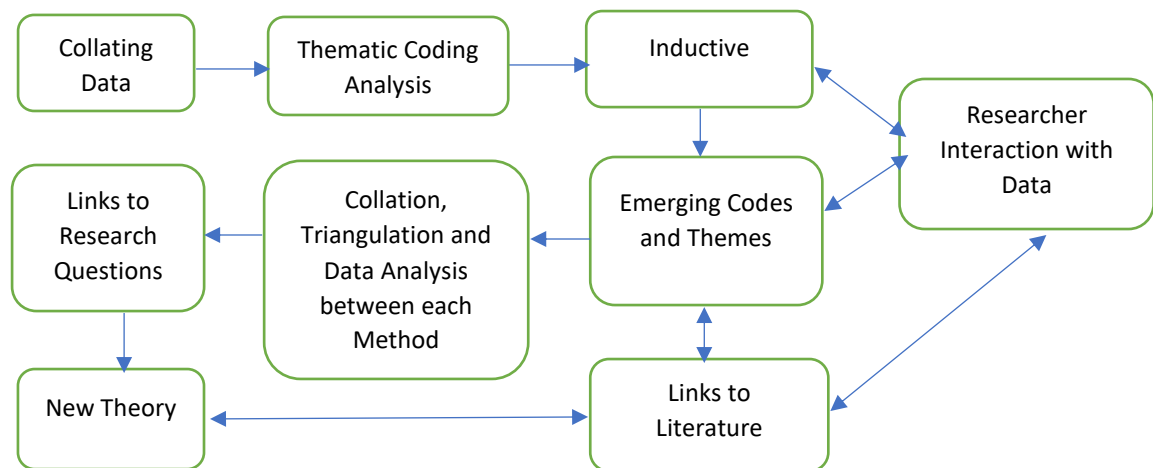


Fig: 3.2 Research process

Triangulation was deployed as a way of synthesising multiple methods of data collection and was used to tease out common themes and phenomena. Denzin

(1988) lists forms of triangulation: data (using multiple methods of data collection), observer (using more than one observer), methodological (using quantitative and qualitative approaches), and theory (deploying multiple theories or perspectives). Although Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 171) argue that triangulation counters 'all the threats to validity', they also point out that using multiple sources can 'open up possibilities of discrepancies and disagreements'. The potential for this to happen is increased with case studies due to the amount of data that is generated. Bloor (1997) supports this in discussing the potential issues of comparing incoming data that creates conflicting information. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) reinforce the process of using peer review and member checks as part of triangulating data to avoid researcher bias and misinterpretation of gathered information.

Student participation and engagement was at the heart of this investigation, with close attention paid towards what students believed was beneficial to their learning experiences and overall development. Twelve semi-structured student interviews were conducted, generating rich data regarding participants' perceptions towards learning. This particularly focussed on what significance they placed on different areas of their education and the impact it may have on their future lives. The strength of this process is in analysing data from a panoply of methods. Combining data and viewing it holistically allowed for emerging common themes (See Appendices 2 and 7) The map below (Fig. 3.3) shows the sequence of data gathering methods used for this study:

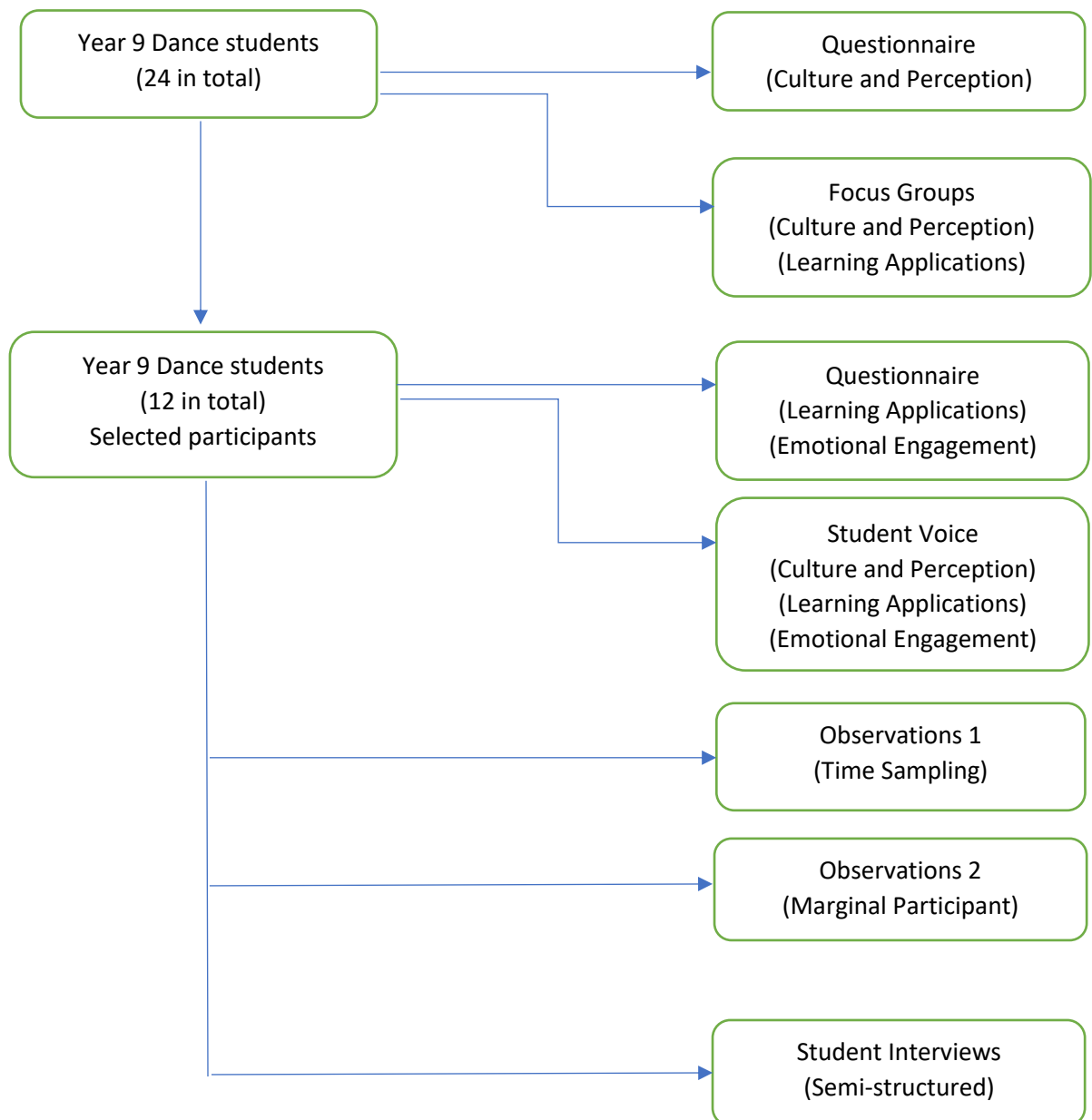


Fig: 3.3 Sequence of data gathering methods

### 3.8.1 Questionnaires

A pilot questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was given to all year 9 dancers (24 in total) giving them opportunity to reflect and comment on personal feelings towards their lessons. It consisted of seven main questions: favourite lessons, most interesting aspects of lessons, preferred learning spaces, which subjects

were important to their futures, what they found most challenging, what was the main source of their learning (four models were offered), and how they defined learning. This questionnaire was designed to establish a thought process that would encourage students to think and reflect deeply about their educational experiences. All 24 questionnaires were completed and although there was a broad range of answers, the majority of students, focussed on dance as their most enjoyable experience. A substantial and rich vein of data allowed the researcher to initiate and explore these perceptions in more detail through focus groups, observations and interviews. The example below (Table 3.2) shows how statements from participants were coded, linked to research questions and combined to form main themes. The words highlighted in green are data taken from the 12 student interviews that relate to data from the questionnaire. This reinforces and gives value to the emerging themes (see Ch.4, p.155).

Table 3.2 Coding of answers from the pilot questionnaire

Statement: Coded words	Research Question	Researcher notes:	Emerging themes:
Classroom/studio discipline	1&2	21 students mentioned discipline – links to dance studio etiquette from early age.	Dance studio discipline – patterns of learning
Teacher support	2	Reliance on teacher – Teacher-led style of delivery popular – mentioned by 16 students. Teacher delivery style ranked high on priority list – fun, engaging, supportive, encouraging.	Teacher – supportive, engaging, encouraging.
Being challenged	1	Evidence suggests that dance students want to achieve/learn – in all subjects? Evidence shows a willingness to learn in majority of subjects but certain triggers affect quality of engagement	Student engagement reliant on external factors.
Clear explanations	2	Evidence of level of frustration when they are not achieving. Critical comments referring to	Teacher – supportive, engaging, encouraging.

		delivery of information in some lessons – teacher delivery style important	Delivery of information.
Teacher delivery	2	Reliance on teacher – clear links made between theory and practice. Transfer of information between teacher/pupil – preference for livelier proactive style	Teacher – supportive, engaging, encouraging. Delivery of information.
Meaningful content	3	20 students highlighted importance of subject content to their future careers. All 12 students expressed the importance of curriculum content that supports their future aspirations	Meaningful curriculum
Self-belief	2	18 students mentioned confidence as an important element to effective learning. All 12 students expressed the relationship between confidence and enjoyment in lessons. This was measured by achievement rather than interest in lesson	Personal aspirations. Teacher – supportive, engaging, encouraging.
Respect for teacher	1	Trust/ reliance on teacher. Context and links to performing arts industry. 10 students mentioned teachers who have had professional performance careers. These were explicit deep-rooted feelings of respect. Only one classroom-based teacher afforded the same level of respect – based on their teaching expertise rather than on their past experience.	Personal aspirations. Industry links.
Interesting space	1	Physical environment – equate interesting with practical/appropriate. All 12 students described important elements of physical environment – negative = cluttered, unorganised, not related to subject, desks in rows Positive = empty space, barres, mirrors related to subject, own learning space, easy to observe in studio, ability to do practical work.	Physical space – inspiring Physical space – stressful.
Life skills embedded in lesson	3	14 students linked life skills to their future careers as dancers. Clarity of content and particularly life skills of relevance to them were prioritised	Skill-based learning Meaningful curriculum

### **3.8.2 Focus groups**

These two groups, consisting of six students in each group, were designed to create a different dynamic in order to develop different or deeper lines of thought through social interaction. Group A consisted of six volunteers from the 12 selected dance students, and group B was made up of six non-dance students from the same year group. The intention here was to explore whether there were any explicit signs of different cultures between these two groups, as discussed in the literature review. This refers particularly to the 'club culture' amongst dance students. It was also of interest to identify other variables, particularly whether students felt they consciously approached lessons with different attitudes and whether expectations for each lesson differed between the two groups. These discussions were led by the researcher, although the main concern was to allow the discussion to move in any direction that the students wished. Each one began with the only prepared question, which was "Tell me how you feel about your lessons in school". Main areas that were discussed centred around teaching styles, contrasts in learning spaces, and what subjects mean to them. The researcher felt this process allowed students to relax more and be more open with their feelings. Data from these discussions were collated and coded, allowing themes to emerge that were then combined and triangulated with data from other methods (see Appendix 7). From this, the researcher was able to identify key themes that then fed into the diamond ranking questionnaire. These two sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed, mostly verbatim, by the researcher. This allowed for a deeper reflection on how the students were expressing themselves, with interesting developments in conversation content, generated from the social

aspect. (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4 in Ch. 4). Emerging themes were combined with data from other sources using methods of triangulation, producing common themes that could be linked to the main research questions.

Although focus groups are seen as a method that allows participants to relax and be open with their thoughts (Robson and McCartan, 2015; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016), there are potential issues that need to be managed. These include power dynamics, where ‘some views held by a minority of participants could be minimized’ (Bloomberg and Volpe (2016, p. 156) or, indeed, excluded, as ‘a common problem is when one or two persons dominate’ (Robson and McCartan, 2015, p. 299). Another potential issue is what Bloomberg and Volpe (2016, p.156) call ‘groupthink’. Here, participants may feel obliged to agree with other group members without considering their own opinions and perceptions.

In a post-research participant evaluation, the six dance students described the focus groups as being really enjoyable and felt they had expressed more feelings there than in any other part of the project.

### **3.8.3 Student voice**

The 12 selected dance participants were then given an opportunity to talk freely about their learning experiences in school. They were presented with just one question: “Describe what works well for you in school and discuss if anything could be better”. As with all methods in this research, participants were given the



opportunity not to take part if they wished. The researcher was not present during the filming as it was important that the students felt they could talk freely without any distractions or influence. Again, researcher and prestige bias were considered, being addressed by reassurances of anonymity when being transcribed, and provision for them to stop recording at any time. All students were given time to watch their recording after the event and, at this point, they gave permission for the recordings to be transcribed and used. Filming the students was a deliberate strategy as it gave a higher-level focus for the students, creating a deeper and more thoughtful process. A camera was set up in the Art room, identified in their first questionnaire as being one of their favourite learning spaces and students worked in groups of two or three. At this point they were now familiar with the research focus, having completed the pilot questionnaire and taken part in the two focus groups (see Tables 4.3 and 4.4 in Ch. 4). Although the student voice statements gave some interesting data, it could be argued that the majority of participants were affected by the camera, resulting in a potential lack in depth of thought and openness by certain students.

#### **3.8.4 Observations**

Although the majority of classes included combinations of all year 9 students, only data gathered from the 12 participant students were used. Students were notified in writing of the type and nature of the empirical research and permission was sought from both students and their parents. The method of inquiry was guided by two forms of observation: *time sampling* and *marginal participant*

(Robson and McCartan, 2016, pp. 322-338). Twelve studio and twelve classroom-based lessons were observed using the time sampling method (Table 3.3, below)

Table 3.3 Example of time sampling observations in studio and classroom environments

	<i>Barre</i>			<i>Centre</i>				<i>Teacher demonstrations</i>							
<b>Minutes</b> →	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
Teacher-led	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Teacher-student interaction (praise given)						✓			✓	✓				✓	✓
Teacher-student interaction (Develops student's ideas)								✓	✓						
Teacher-student interaction (questions student)			✓				✓								
Student - independent											✓				
Student/student collaboration											✓	✓			
Class discussion			✓												
Enactive (action-based)	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Iconic (image-based)				✓	✓					✓		✓	✓		
Symbolic (language-based)			✓				✓								
Students fully engaged in work	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Students active but off-task															

*Excellent focus*

*Response to teacher other Quick - Impulsive (extensional transformation)*

*Observing each*

Above is an example of one of the 15-minute lesson observations for a year nine ballet class. This data was then collated and combined with other observations. This gave a holistic view, which presented thematic material relating to patterns of learning and behaviour. As can be seen from the chart above, the researcher was able to identify different types and levels of social interaction. There was a particular focus on Bruner's concepts of learning, social interaction between the teacher and students, and also collaborative practice between the students themselves.

Marginal participation observations brought a different perspective to the lessons. Although the researcher was not directly involved, there was opportunity to collect more detailed data whilst experiencing some of the activities first hand. This also allowed for observing immediate reactions from the student participants. These observations focussed on the three areas of culture and perception, learning applications, and emotional engagement (see Tables 4.7 and 4.8 in Ch. 4).

Much of the gathered data from these observations came principally from the teacher's strategies. This included delivery of knowledge, how the teacher managed the overall learning environment, and physical space and collaborative practices. These observations allowed for a much clearer picture of how students were responding to working in different learning environments, allowing the researcher to observe closely and experience any phenomena related to those lessons. Verbatim conversations, behavioural activities, body language, and

social interaction were all part of the data net. This gave a rich source of information when data was collated and triangulated with other methods.

Although observations can generate a vast amount of data, it is important to consider the limitations of this method. Gray (2014) discusses the issue of the researcher's own 'values, prejudices and emotions' (p. 413) and how observations are interpreted, and be influenced by these personal factors. Therefore, it is essential for the researcher to be fully aware of these limitations and to continually review the observational process. Gray (2014, p. 413) also suggests that 'we often see what we want to see and disregard other phenomena', highlighting the need for an objective view of any situation. Another factor is 'positionality' (Gray, 2014; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016), where events or participants in the field can be potentially influenced by the presence of the researcher (Gray 2014).

Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 331) suggest four issues to consider when observing: selective attention ('data is subject to bias), selective encoding ('researcher's expectations 'can affect how we interpret things'), selection memory (often occurs when field notes are not written up immediately), and interpersonal factors ('not connecting equally to all participants). Therefore, it was important to monitor all aspects of data gathering with careful consideration of the above points.

### **3.8.5 Informal staff discussions**

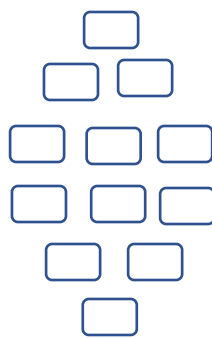
These informal discussions, lasting no more than 15 minutes were designed to allow staff to confirm and explain events or behaviours that had taken place in the observed lesson. In most cases, where possible these were completed immediately after the class and certainly on the same day. They were essentially semi-structured interviews that allowed the researcher to ask specific questions related to any key observations for that lesson. Staff were given the opportunity to talk freely and discuss other key elements that may have been missed during the observation. This allowed for a greater reliability of evidence and acted as a security against researcher-bias or misinterpretation by the researcher. It also gave the teacher an opportunity to reflect on the lesson and give explanations and reasons for any teaching strategies that had been used. Written notes were made of these interviews and used to support the lesson observation notes when needed. See Appendix 6 for abbreviated transcripts of meetings.

### **3.8.6 Diamond ranking exercise**

The data gathered produced twelve reoccurring themes as follows:

- A** -Teacher (engaging)
- B** - Physical space
- C** - Learning from peers
- D** - Group work
- E** - Repetition
- F** - Meaningful curriculum
- G** - Past experience
- H** - One to one help
- I** - Practical work
- J** - Clear instructions
- K** - Resources (books etc.)
- L** - Teacher (encouraging)

These themes had been identified by the 12 dance participants as key elements of effective learning. As this was a hierarchical exercise, an attempt to lessen any ranking bias was offered by presenting the elements in circular form. Students were asked to rank these elements in the order that was most important or influential to them with the most significant one being at the top of the diamond (see Appendices 3 and 3.1).



Data gathered from the diamond ranking event was used to guide sections of the semi-structured student interviews, particularly concerning the role of the teacher, the physical environment, transfer of theory to practice, and the meaningful curriculum.

### **3.8.7 Student interviews**

All 12 participating dance students agreed to take part in an individual semi-structured interview. This allowed the researcher to dig deeper into the research findings of previously gathered data and gave the students an opportunity to offer any new thoughts and reflections. As with all stages of this project, students were informed that they did not have to answer any questions they felt uncomfortable

with or that they found difficult to explain. Before each interview it was confirmed by the researcher that all information given would remain anonymous. However, in line with the school safeguarding policy, it was also made clear that if they were to offer information of a concerning personal or sensitive nature, then it would have to be shared with the school's designated safeguarding lead. These interviews were designed to encourage students to talk in detail about what creates a good learning environment. This included aspects of teaching, interaction, learning styles, physical spaces, collaborative learning, and comparisons between studio and classroom-based learning environments (see Ch.4, 4.6)

The researcher was always aware that students, in particular, may have offered answers that they wanted him to hear or that they deliberately held back any criticism regarding a lesson or teacher. Although these interviews were semi-structured, all inquiries related in varying degrees to aspects of the three main research questions. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016, p. 155) argue that 'the success of an interview depends on the nature of the interaction between the interviewer and the research participant'. They also argue that 'people are not equally cooperative, articulate, and perceptive'. This suggests that a high level of expertise is required from the researcher to successfully gain useful and accurate data. The quality of the data is, therefore, dependent on the interaction between the researcher and the participant (Fontana and Frey, 2003; Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Seidman, 2012).

### 3.9 Data analysis and synthesis

It became clear during the process of this empirical research that careful management and organisation was required regarding the extensive amount of data being gathered. Each different method of data collection generated a broad range of detail, much of it having close connections and similarities. Boeije (2002, p.34), describing the coding process states: 'Coding data is an iterative process with researchers individually identifying codes and creating definitions, synthesizing their individual codes to create a unified master set of codes, and reapplying the unified codes to the data'.

The principal aim of this case study was about gathering evidence rather than specific facts (Thomas, 2016, p.239). Main themes that emerged were essentially key elements that combined to form the *real world* of the dance student. Many of these overlapped each other and linked closely to student perceptions, student identities, and a dance-club culture. In identifying recurring words or phrases in the data collected from the range of methods, a process of coding took place to establish main themes. These were then linked to the three main research questions. (see Fig. 3.4, below).



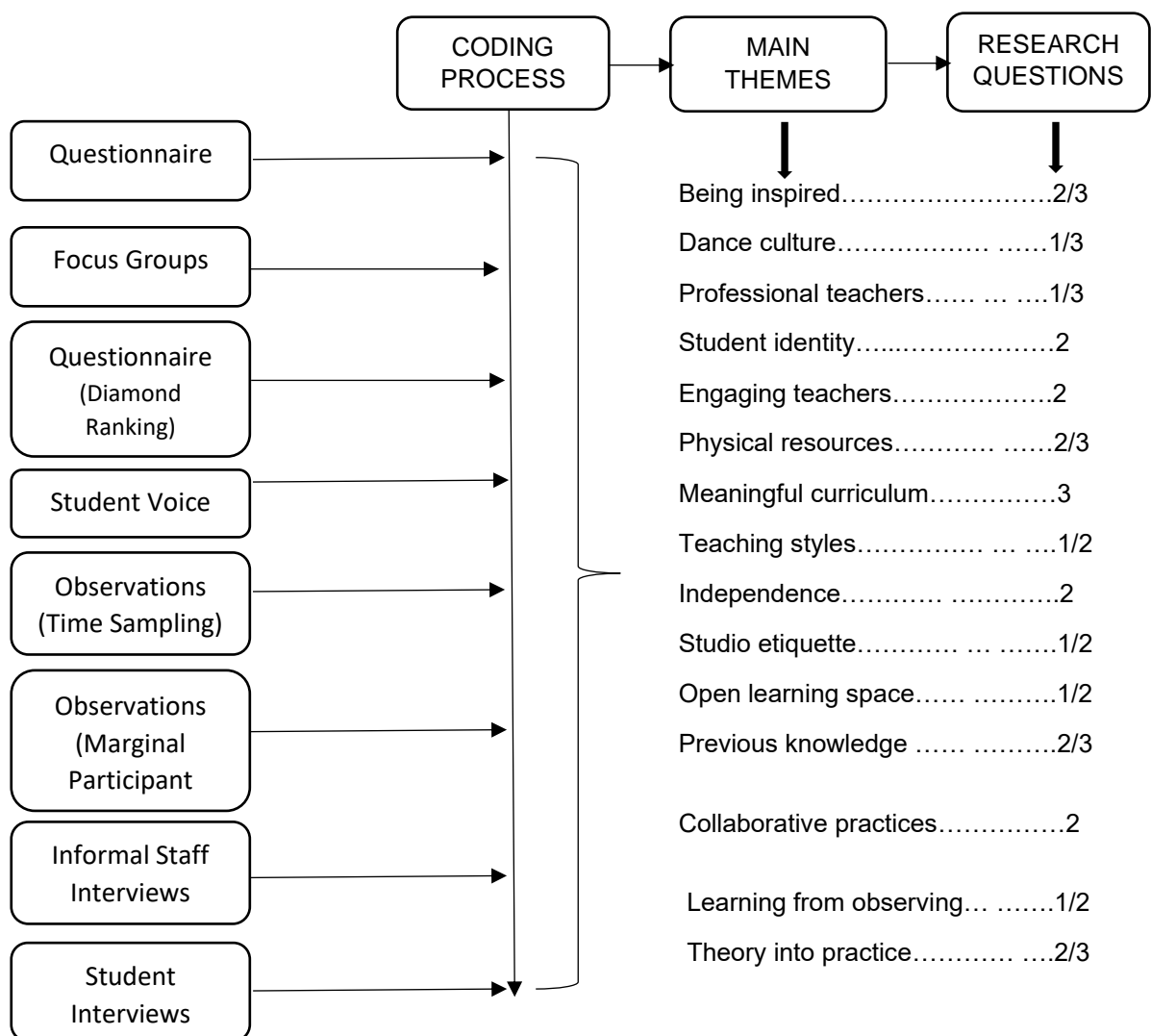


Fig. 3.4: Process of establishing main themes from research methods

### 3.10 Ethical considerations

Although it was anticipated that there would be no serious ethical threats or negative effects on the participants' well-being, careful management of ethical considerations underpinned all empirical research for this thesis. Protection of participants when considering ethical issues is of the utmost importance

(Bloomberg & Volpe 2016; Robson & McCartan 2016; Creswell & Poth 2018,

Thomas 2017). Permission was gained from parents and the school management team to allow the researcher to interview and observe students in class. Clear and explicit protocols were offered to ensure anonymity and protection of all participants taking part in this project. Discussions also took place between the researcher and the students in order for them to understand the nature and scope of this research. As a full-time senior member of staff at the participating venue, the researcher already had full DBS disclosure and again received permission from the school to undertake empirical research, including questionnaires, group discussions, interviews, and lesson observations. All participants, including staff, remained anonymous and none of the analysed data refers to specific students, staff, or any named lessons. All participants' names will remain confidential and have been safely stored with access only available to the researcher and Principal of the school. Any follow up discussions after interviews or observations only took place with those members of staff and students who had initially agreed to participate in this project.

Ethical aspects for all areas of this research were seen as ongoing and an essential part of all data gathering (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 208). Permission was sought through the university's ethical review board prior to seeking permission from the school and parents of participating students. This included 24 year nine dance students, six non-dance students (focus group), and members of staff who had agreed to take part. With the majority of participating students being aged 13-14 years, the researcher was fully aware at all times that measures were put in place allowing students to stop taking part at any point

without any recrimination or ill-feeling. Students, parents, and the school were kept informed of any empirical research and, except for the student voice and interviews, other members of staff were always present. The researcher's position in the school, as a Vice Principal with full DBS certification and level three safeguarding training, enabled him to work under normal conditions, always abiding by school policy in line with national safeguarding and data protection procedures. In a post-research review, all 12 selected dance students agreed that they were not affected by the researcher's presence in lessons and that they had been able to speak freely in interviews. Three students commented that they were cautious with comments made in the student voice, having felt slightly wary of the camera. As part of this inquiry it was also important to ensure that the school and its reputation were not put at any risk. This included guaranteeing complete anonymity of any collected data, keeping all data and records safe and away from other parties, storing all data and materials in a secure location for five years, and immediately reporting to the Principal any concerns that may have been raised which could potentially damage or have a negative impact on any of the participants or the school (Thomas, 2017; Cresswell and Poth, 2018; Robson and McCartan, 2016). All participants are referred to as alphabetical letters and care was taken to avoid any recognition of individuals or their experiences and situations.

### **3.11 Credibility, dependability, transferability**

For a high level of credibility to be achieved it was important to ensure that the researcher accurately represented the participants' thoughts and beliefs. This comes under the banner of validity and takes account of researcher bias, transparency of research methods, use of triangulation and multiple methods when interpreting data, and seeking advice from someone external to your research field. It was important for the researcher to demonstrate clear, transparent processes of how data was collected and analysed, thus giving reliability and dependability. Regular weekly meetings were set up between the researcher and the 12 selected dance students, allowing the researcher to ensure that any analysis had not been misrepresented or misinterpreted. This form of member checking allows for any participant's concerns or ambiguous areas to be openly discussed (Bloor, 1997; Robson and McCartan (2016)). This investigation looked at specific teaching and learning processes, identifying themes that represent key transferable skills, effective teaching and learning practices, and explicit behaviours by the selected dance students. It was hoped that main concepts from this study would transfer across all subject areas, allowing teaching staff and school leaders to reflect on both students' perceptions of learning and the curriculum they are being offered. From this, the aim was to establish improved and relevant teaching and learning processes for all areas of a dance student's education. Although this research focussed on just one establishment, it was hoped that there would be potential for the data to be used by other similar vocational schools, as the majority operate with a similar system of full curriculum timetable alongside vocational dance classes.

It was also important to ensure that ‘the analytical procedure fell essentially into the following sequential phases: organizing data, generating categories, coding the data, and identifying patterns and themes’ (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p.189). Having gathered a large amount of data through various methods, including questionnaires, interviews and observations, effective processing to bring order, structure, and meaning was seen as an essential process. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and included nonverbal aspects, such as pauses, gestures, and any other notable reactions. All material was placed into categories and clearly dated, and all recordings were backed-up to a separate external hard drive. In being concerned with understanding the “situation” of the research area, and, the different perspectives of the participants, the principal research approach was inductive. It therefore aimed to gather evidence and explain the situation leading to establishing more effective and efficient teaching strategies for vocational dance students. As an interpretative case study, the data contained rich descriptions of the setting and the participants, including a bias towards capturing the “essence” of the research area ‘with an analytic description of the phenomena not affected by prior assumptions’ (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p.192).

### **3.12 Limitations and delimitations**

This qualitative research relied on accuracy of information given by students and how effectively it was interpreted and analysed by the researcher. There were a number of threats to the validity of this study, including: researcher bias,

positionality, participant hierarchy, groupthink, interpersonal factors, and selective attention, encoding, and memory (Gray, 2014; Robson and McCartan, 2016; Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016; Thomas, 2017). There were also limits on how many lessons could be observed including availability of the researcher to do this. With the researcher being employed in the organisation being researched, it could be seen as a distinct advantage because of their insider knowledge and close contact with the students. However, the researcher had to fulfil other responsibilities within the school, limiting the time available for empirical research within the establishment. Detailed timetabling was needed to ensure that the researcher was able to observe all planned year nine classes. Familiarity was also a potential issue as all participants knew the researcher well as a teacher and school leader, and, of course, the researcher knew the students well before the research began. Students may, therefore, have said what they thought the researcher wanted to hear: perhaps being more positive in an attempt to please the researcher. The researcher also had to look at the field with as much objectivity as possible, ensuring that they were not influenced by past experiences of those students. As with any case study, a vast amount of data was generated and had to be carefully managed, again due to limitations of available time of both the students and the researcher within the organisation.

Delimitations were imposed from the outset of this study to ensure the focus remained tight and that data was generated in manageable amounts. Year nine students were chosen because of the watershed students reach at that particular age. Choosing GCSE options and beginning to think seriously about future

careers, all played a significant part in deciding who to include in the project. Although the number of research participants was small, they were carefully selected due to their age, boarding status, scholarship support, and individual perceptions of their training and education. It was important for the study to have a tight focus and exploring students' perceptions of learning provided a useful gateway to understanding how students operated and developed within two contrasting learning environments. The time period of the study was over a period of seven months with an equal amount of observations allocated to both studio and classroom spaces. Interviews, focus groups, and student voice sessions took place in spaces that students were familiar with, and the researcher met with the 12 participants on a weekly basis for feedback and research checks.

## **CHAPTER FOUR – PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS BY METHOD**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports the findings of the study by method: questionnaire, focus groups, student voice, observations, and interviews. From these methods, data was gathered in relation to exploring students' perceptions of different educational subjects within their contrasting learning environments. It was important to consider the potential variables when collecting and analysing data. This included the following: teaching strategies, students' preferred learning styles, perceptions of meaningful learning, what they found challenging, and the impact that future aspirations could potentially have on their focus and willingness to learn in non-dance-based subjects.

### **4.2 Questionnaires**

A pilot questionnaire was given out to 24 year-nine dance students which included the 12 selected participants for this study (see Appendix 1). Dance, in most cases, was given as their favourite lesson, with drama, music, and art, also being popular. The aim of the questionnaire was to allow students to reflect on different elements of their education including curriculum content, physical spaces, daily challenges, and favoured approaches to learning. Much of this questionnaire was based around their three favourite subjects but did allow students to reflect on teaching and learning approaches in a variety of subject areas. The researcher felt it was important to begin drawing out positive feelings



towards lessons by asking them to list what they found enjoyable about their three favourite lessons. This data (see Appendix 4) has been linked to the six emergent themes (see ch.4, 4.2).

Table 4.1 shows students' definitions of learning, with links to the emergent themes shown in brackets. These definitions were not linked to any specific lesson but were aimed at the participants' own personal view on best practice towards effective learning. Again, data has been linked to the six emergent themes. The participants used such phrases as "wanting to be challenged" and "achievement can inspire you", suggesting an enthusiasm and desire to learn. Many of these statements related to the culture of the dance studio in highlighting the importance of discipline, context of knowledge, being inspired, being dedicated, and having resilience. In the majority of cases this related to the teacher and teaching style, how the studio space was managed, and how learning was developed through building on previous knowledge and skills. Much of what they stated related very closely to social constructivist theories and particularly Vygotsky's ZPD, with the teacher drawing out a higher level of learning through their expert knowledge and experience. This was also recognised by students, demonstrating a high level of respect for their dance teachers and their professional stature.

Most notably, students identified four key elements of learning: the teacher, inspirational subject content, linking new with existing knowledge, and observing

other students. The teacher, as an expert, links to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development. The subject content links to what students perceive as relevant or meaningful curriculum content, which in turn links to their future aspirations to become professional dancers. Merging new, with existing knowledge shows an awareness of how they construct meaning and understanding. This links to the constructivist philosophies of Bruner, Piaget, and Vygotsky. Observing other students, again shows an awareness of their learning processes. This links to the social aspect of learning in particular social constructivism and the philosophies of Vygotsky.

Table 4.1 Students' definitions of learning.

<b>Students' Definitions of Learning</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Quality of teaching; classroom/studio discipline; order in teaching space; fun teachers; help from teachers; purpose of subject material; being challenged; understanding the teacher; explaining things slowly; professional atmosphere of studio.	Learning coming from the teacher (2)	Responsibility of learning comes mainly from the teacher (2) Key elements are management of learning environment and delivery of lesson (2/3)
Understanding subject content; using previous knowledge; knowing; understanding context of knowledge; impact of knowledge on their own development; understanding personal levels of attainment through assessments, exams and test scores.	Importance of current knowledge and understanding (4)	Constructing knowledge from previous understanding – Constructivist theory (4) Self-awareness of current personal standard/ability (3)
Building new skills onto things you can already do; making sense of new facts; self-awareness of improvements to skills and knowledge; growing; help from others in class; developing; exploring; sense of achievement can inspire/motivate you; trying new things keeps it interesting; trying new things out – practical; new	Importance of new skills and knowledge (6)	Constructing knowledge using current skills and understanding Constructivist theory (4) Being inspired by new subject content (6) Practical work to support theory (4)

information – connecting it to previous knowledge and understanding; meaningful content is easier to learn; discovering new things can be exciting.		Support from others – Vygotsky ZPD, Lave and Wenger LPP (4)
Self-belief is very important; discipline to repeat things over and over again; listening with concentration; being able to retain information; having good focus and concentration; enjoy being challenged; being positive and finding information interesting; remembering facts; well-organised and good at revision; ability to explain things to others; being good at observing; being creative; dedicated; good at communicating; good at learning from others; resilience.	Personal traits connected to effective learning (4)	Personal attitude linked to self-belief and confidence (3) Enjoyment of learning experience (5/6) Appreciation of other people’s skills – collaborative/ social learning (4) Kolb’s learning cycle (4) Vygotsky ZPD (4) Lave and Wenger LPP (4)
Using past experience; Finding lesson content interesting; finding lesson content helpful; having respect for subject/ teacher; satisfaction – sense of achievement; good environment – nice atmosphere and helpful resources. Interesting teaching space; understanding how much you have improved and what you have learnt; developing life skills as part of lesson; learning space is relevant; importance of practical work; relating theory to practice; having links to future career.	Importance of meaningful activity/subject content (6)	Linking subject content to personal aspirations and skills (6) Having a personal goal and an understanding of what is needed to achieve (4) Ability to learn from a variety of sources (3) Kolb’s learning cycle, Vygotsky ZPD, Lave and Wenger LPP. (4)

#### 4.2.1 Learning environments

Students were asked to reflect on their various learning environments and what they perceived as meaningful learning. The participants were not given any definition of the word meaningful, in order to avoid any researcher bias or influence. Twenty of the twenty-four dance students stated that the dance studio was their favourite learning environment (see Fig. 4.1).

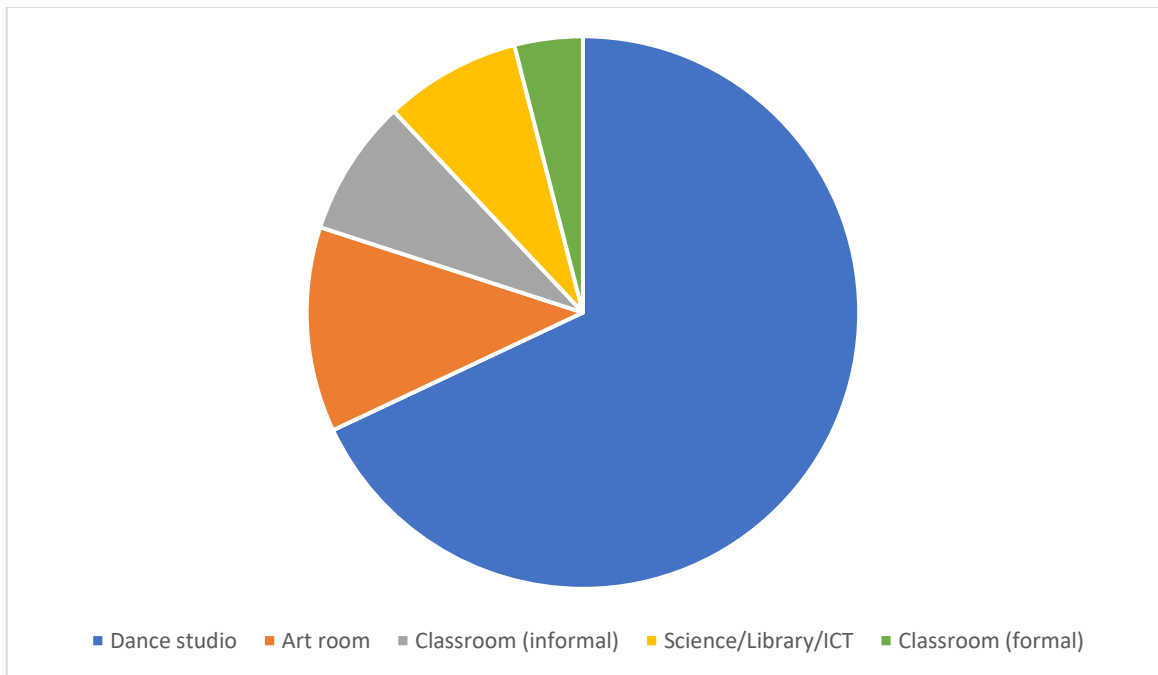


Fig. 4.1 Favourite learning environments

This chart represents their first choice from all learning environments and clearly shows a distinct gap between the dance studio and the formal classroom. When asked to consider their **three** most favourite spaces, it was noticeable that the majority of dance students opted not only for the studio but also classrooms that were larger, with more airy spaces. Data also identified that the drama studio (similar size to many dance studios) was not chosen as a favourite learning space, even though this subject featured highly in favourite and more meaningful subjects (Fig. 4.2). The drama studio spaces, although spacious, have black painted walls and ceilings and blackout curtains around the perimeter.

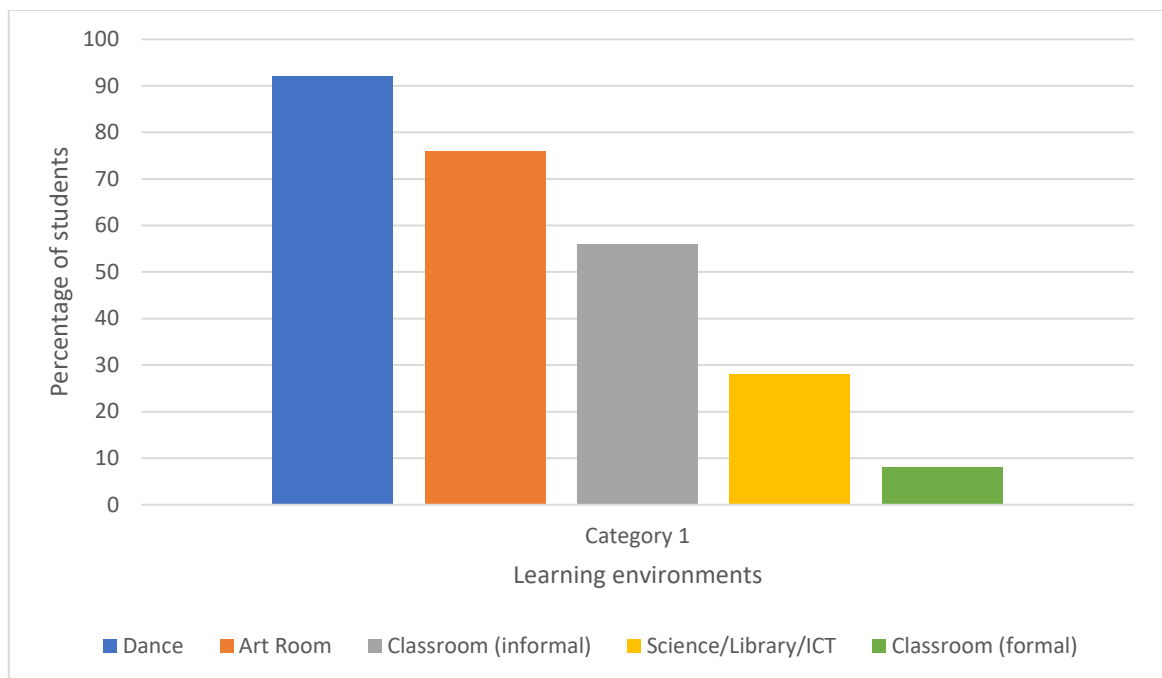


Fig. 4.2 Students' three favourite learning environments

#### 4.2.2 Students' perceptions of subjects

It was also important to identify which subjects students found most meaningful. This then became a measure for judging their approach and commitment to work, and whether this had any significant impact on their learning and understanding of those particular subjects. (see Fig.4.3)

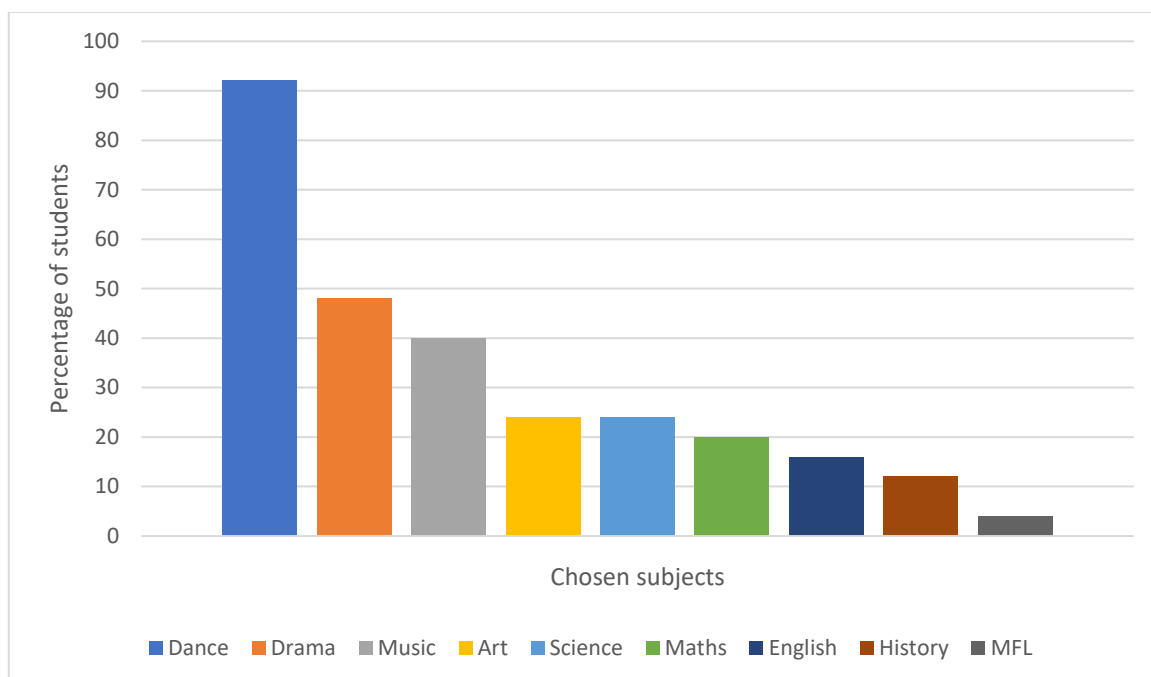


Fig.4.3 Students' perceptions of their three most meaningful subjects

From the data received on meaningful subjects, dance stood above all others. Students' perceptions clearly showed that little importance was attached to those subjects that did not have a direct and explicit connection to their world of dance. This was further explored through interviews and lesson observations as a form of triangulation to validate how students were interpreting the term 'meaningful'. During interviews, students kept referring to their aspiration to be a professional performer. In doing so, they linked a small number of subjects to their dance studies, describing subject-specific content rather than transferable skills. Two of the twelve students used such words as 'creative', 'artistic', and 'expressive' as being key elements of their learning. Subjects included art, drama, English, and maths. The student who mentioned maths described the collaborative practices deployed in their lessons. This student was also observed in a maths class taking

the role of the aspiring expert, linking this to Lave and Wenger's (1991) Legitimate Peripheral Participation. The creative aspect the participant was referring to was the freedom offered in communicating and supporting other students within a social context.

#### **4.2.3 Most challenging aspects of lessons**

Students reflected on the most challenging aspects of their three favourite subjects and comments were recorded verbatim. Key words and phrases were then linked to the six emergent themes (see ch.4, p.180). Participant responses varied from positive comments, suggesting their need to be pushed, to more negative statements reflecting their insecurities in certain subjects. There were also interesting links to their most enjoyable aspects of favourite lessons, indicating that many dance students associate 'challenging' as a positive attribute to their education. Although challenging did surface as a positive in dance classes, seven students saw it as a negative in other lessons (see table. 4.2). Bracketed numbers refer to the six emergent themes that link directly to the three main research questions.

Table 4.2 Most challenging aspects learning

SUBJECT	MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS	THEMES
<b>Dance</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Effort; tiredness; staying quiet; always being focussed; (2/5)</li> <li>2. Learning new steps; remembering steps; anxious about new techniques; learning new combinations; anxious about not being good enough; not getting something right; picking things up; assessments; challenging steps; splits and other similar techniques; (4)</li> <li>3. Using core strength; picking things up quickly; flexibility &amp; strength; technique – turn out; flexibility; (4)</li> <li>4. Wanting to be better; pressure of expected standards; peers being judgemental; competitive atmosphere; (6)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ1&amp;3)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ3)</li> </ol>
<b>Drama</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning new words; (5)</li> <li>2. Written work; (4)</li> <li>3. Accents; voice work; not mumbling – diction; remembering lines; (4)</li> <li>4. Confidence; Solo performances; (5&amp;6)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ3)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ3)</li> </ol>
<b>Music</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Being organised; (3)</li> <li>2. Theory; (4)</li> <li>3. Being creative; (3&amp;4)</li> <li>4. Singing in front of class; Performing; (4)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ1)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ2)</li> </ol>
<b>Art</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Time consuming; (4)</li> <li>2. Realism; learning about different artists; writing about art; (4)</li> <li>3. Drawing; having new ideas; (3&amp;4)</li> <li>4. Anxious about finished work; explaining own work; not getting my art work perfect; doing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ2)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ1&amp;2)</li> </ol>



	pieces out of my comfort zone; (2&4)	
<b>History</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Writing about things I'm not interested in; (6)</li> <li>2. Learning facts; Remembering facts; Remembering things; A lot to take in; (4)</li> <li>3. Not much practical work; (3)</li> <li>4. Competitive; (5&amp;6)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ3)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ3)</li> </ol>
<b>Maths</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Concentration; (2)</li> <li>2. Learning new things; (3&amp;4)</li> <li>3. Working with calculators (4)</li> <li>4. Not getting something right; (2)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ1)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ1)</li> </ol>
<b>Religious Studies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lots of written work; (2)</li> <li>2. Memorising things; (4)</li> <li>3. Understanding the different religions; (4)</li> <li>4. Not doing well in tests; (2)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ1)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ1)</li> </ol>
<b>Food and Nutrition</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Slow at times – boring; (2)</li> <li>2. Remembering how to do things; (4)</li> <li>3. Cooking doesn't always work out; (4)</li> <li>4. Keeping up; Anxious about how cooking will turn out; (4)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment to subject (RQ1)</li> <li>2. Technical knowledge and subject content (RQ2)</li> <li>3. Technique and practical applications (RQ2)</li> <li>4. Internal and external pressures (RQ2)</li> </ol>

### 4.3 Focus groups

The following tables show samples of verbatim conversations from the two focus groups: Gp1 – dance students; Gp2 non-dance students. Sections of these discussions were removed due to having no relevance to this inquiry. Data from these two groups suggested that there were strong feelings of a ‘club culture’ and that at times this acted as a barrier between dance and non-dance students. There was no indication of bad feelings here, but rather an acceptance that dance students had a different purpose and vibe to the majority of other students. The bracketed numbers in Tables 4.3 and 4.4 refer to the six emergent themes.

**Table 4.3 Focus group (dance students) – Transcription of discussion**

Researcher: “Tell me how you feel about your lessons in school?”	
Dance Students (A-F) - Sample only	Emerging themes:
<p>A – They’re fun            B- Well some are            A – I mean dance. I like being in a studio            C – It’s our space  <b>Researcher - what do you mean by that?</b>            C- We’re dancers            B – We’re here to dance so the studios are for us            C – We all want to perform because most of us have danced all our lives            D – I like the calmness in the lessons and the control the teacher has. It’s like being in a dance company.            A – Sometimes the atmosphere in class is amazing.            B – Most of our dance teachers have been professional dancers so we learn lots from them. This really inspires us to work hard.            E – Yeah, they’re all good teachers and give us lots to do  <b>Researcher – do you like being busy?</b>            A – We like learning new steps and routines and being pushed.            C- I like being challenged</p>	<p>Expression of enjoyment (2) RQ2             Physical space – ownership (1) RQ1            Club culture (5) RQ3             Dance culture (5) RQ3            Symbolic (5) RQ3            Future aspirations (6) RQ3             Physical space – studio etiquette (1) RQ1            (5) RQ3             Professional experience of teachers (5) RQ3            Respect for teachers (5)(6) RQ3            Source of inspiration (6) RQ3            Practical activity – sense of being busy (4) RQ2             Being challenged in dance (positive) – a personal need to be good (3)(4) RQ2            High level of confidence (2) RQ1            Being challenged (negative) (3)(4) RQ2</p>

<p>B – Yes but not in other lessons [classroom-based] It can make you feel stressed  F – Some lessons the teacher doesn't inspire you and you switch off  A – or the lesson is just boring  <b>Researcher – What makes a lesson boring?</b>  C- Something that we're not interested in  A- Some teachers are [hesitation] boring. They look bored and don't try to make their lesson interesting  E – Most of the dance teachers are amazing and have loads of energy. It makes you want to work harder.  F – A lesson is also boring if it is not going to help us in the future  B – There is always lots to do in dance classes but other lessons sometimes move really slowly.  C – It's okay if you are learning a skill but most things are just not of any use  D – Sometimes what we do in other subjects helps us with our dance, like science and art.  <b>Researcher – tell me more</b>  D- In science you learn about the body and so you can understand what's happening to yourself when you're dancing  A – Yeah, if it relates to dance then it becomes more interesting.  D – In art we do lots of creative things and that helps us think about styles and things.  B- Art makes you think in a different way like dance.  <b>Researcher – Can you give me an example?</b>  B- You make lots of connections with technique and making something look good [artistry] so it all joins together and makes sense. In other subjects you have lots of bits of things that don't always join together  A – You can sometimes tell if you are getting it right by how you feel. Certain movements or positions give you a special feeling [artistry]. That's why practical work is very important, not just in dance.  C- When we learn something new in dance it is to make things we already know, much better.  F- Yeah it means we can see why we're being taught something. Sometimes in other subjects there doesn't seem any point to what we are learning.  B – We also know how well we are doing by feedback from the teacher and comparing ourselves with each other. In other subjects we don't really know how we are doing and you can become really anxious</p>	<p>Anxious feelings (3) RQ2  Lacking confidence (2) RQ1    Uninspiring lessons (6) RQ3    Meaningful curriculum (6) RQ3  Curriculum linked to future aspirations (6) RQ3  Teacher not inspiring (2) RQ1  Meaningful curriculum (6) RQ3  Animated/enthusiastic teachers (2) RQ1    Transferable knowledge (3)(4) RQ2 (6) RQ3  Related to dance (6) RQ3    Student focus (2) RQ1    Transferable skills (3)(4) RQ2 (6) RQ3    Perceptions of learning (3) RQ2    Technique and artistry – connecting and applying knowledge (3)(4) RQ2    Students' perceptions of learning (3) RQ2    Constructivist theory (3)(4) RQ2    Practical work reinforces understanding of theory (3)(4) RQ2    Meaningful curriculum (6) RQ3    Adding new to existing knowledge (4) RQ2  Instant feedback (4) RQ2  Learning applications (2) RQ1  Students' perceptions of learning (3) RQ2    Collaborative practices (4) RQ2</p>
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<p>A – We all listen to each other's feedback from the teacher and practice what they are being told.</p> <p>C- It's better when we work in small groups</p> <p>A- Except some people just sit back</p> <p>C – I think you can learn better from others in the class as everyone understands how you think.</p> <p><b>Researcher – can anyone give me a good example of working together in a classroom?</b></p> <p>D – Sometimes we help each other if someone is good at something. They show us what to do so we can understand it.</p> <p>B- Because we're all the same age we know how we all think so we can explain it better</p> <p>F – Yeah we should do more of that cos it does help. It happens in maths sometimes.</p> <p>B – Yeah Mr ..... lets us help each other if we need it. It can be really helpful and I also like to help other people in the class.</p> <p><b>Researcher – what about the actual rooms and studios – which do you prefer to be in?</b></p> <p>B – The dance studios. I like the space and freedom and it makes you feel special.</p> <p>F – The dance studio. Some classrooms are really cluttered and it just makes you feel stressed.</p> <p>C- Some classrooms don't have any space so you don't feel very free. You can't move about and we hardly ever do practical work in some lessons because the rooms don't have any room.</p> <p>A- I learn best when we do practical work. When we do practical it makes you understand the subject more and then you begin to like it better.</p> <p>D- I just like the open space of the studio and it makes you feel like you are special. I like the barres and mirrors...it makes you want to dance.</p> <p><b>Researcher – Do you think that learning mostly takes place outside or inside your bodies?</b></p> <p>B – In dance, we learn everything we need to know outside of our bodies; the teacher showing us what to do and then discussing it in more detail. Then we have a go and try to remember everything we have seen and been told.</p> <p>C – Yes, so it [learning] starts outside and then goes inside.</p> <p>F – We can't do things properly until we have all seen and understood what we are supposed to be doing. A lot of dance is built up outside our bodies.</p>	<p>Peer support (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Sources of learning (2) RQ1 (4) RQ2</p> <p>Vygotsky ZPD (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Lave and Wenger – apprentice model (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Age appropriate support (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Learning from each other (4) RQ2</p> <p>Physical features of dance studio – symbols and culture (1) RQ1 (5) RQ3</p> <p>Clutter = stress (1) RQ1</p> <p>Lack of practical work (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Practical work (4) RQ2</p> <p>Theory to practice (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Symbols and culture (5) RQ2</p> <p>Physical learning environment (1) RQ1</p> <p>Social or individual learning (3)(4) RQ2</p>
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<p>C – I would say that it isn't the same in other lessons as we do not work together so we have to work things out in our own heads.</p> <p>A – I suppose it is similar sometimes, when the teacher explains something to the class and we have to then work on our own.</p> <p><b>Researcher – Is learning being told something or understanding something?</b></p> <p>A – Understanding</p> <p>C – If you do not understand something, then you haven't learnt anything</p> <p>D – Yes, that happens a lot to me [classroom-based subjects]</p> <p><b>Researcher – okay thank you year 9 for your very interesting opinions.</b></p>	<p>Understanding definition of learning (3) RQ2</p>
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Cultural and symbolic references were frequently mentioned in the dance focus group. Meaningful learning was connected to their future aspirations, with specific examples given, related to either science (anatomy) or artistic subjects (art and drama). In discussing their dance classes, they emphasised the importance of specialist training to support their ambitions to become professional performers. Although they accepted that other subjects had to be covered, they generally viewed them as something they had to do, rather than something they wanted to do. This was the consensus of the whole group. Practical work was also seen as a key part of their learning with all students agreeing that this reinforced any technical or theoretical work. Artistry was also mentioned as something that can only be developed through practical application and comes from observing, copying, and practising [internalising]. The students spoke about feeling the sensation of certain movements or dance positions and how important practical work was in developing their understanding of techniques and style. They briefly discussed how this might apply in other non-dance classes and agreed that there

were many times that practical work might have helped them understand the theory or task in greater detail. Reference was also made regarding the respect they have for their dance teachers, linked to the professional world of performance. All six students had strong ambitions to become professional dancers and spoke about the importance of having a teacher who had professional experience. They all agreed that this gave them a sense of reassurance and trust in their dance teachers, knowing they would have been through similar training and have a knowledge of what standards are expected within the industry. This was reflected in lesson observations, where students were fully engaged in watching the teacher's demonstrations. This focus group spoke of the importance of watching a professional dancer, knowing that that was the standard they had to achieve. This is something that would be difficult to replicate in many other classroom-based subjects and as the focus group confirmed, observing a professional dancer is a powerful source of inspiration to them. Overall, comments regarding style of teaching pointed towards preferring a livelier approach and enjoying the sensation of being busy. Although they talked about a calmness in dance, this generally referred to their ballet and contemporary classes. However, it was agreed by all six participants that a teacher who showed enthusiasm and a passion for their subject, always demanded high levels of focus and engagement. They saw these teachers as important sources of inspiration, and expressed negative feelings towards those teachers who did not show an explicit connection with their own specialist subject.

The dance focus group also discussed the importance of “being challenged” and welcomed feedback from their dance teachers. This was all linked to their ambitions to become professional performers, and therefore, was seen as an essential part of the learning process. However, when questioned further, they discussed the “highs” and “lows” of being a dancer and confirmed that constant criticism, although important, was not always easy to take. From their discussions around this, it was clear that there was generally a high level of support for each other, although it was also accepted that dance does become very competitive at times.

The group also discussed the physical aspects of their learning environments. The consensus was that as dance students they all enjoyed the space and atmosphere of the dance studio. One student viewed the cluttered spaces of some classrooms as a source of anxiety, leading to others in the group discussing issues around not being able to move about in class and feeling “hemmed in”. Many students expressed similar thoughts in the questionnaires and student interviews. Dance students seemed to be very aware of their physical surroundings and in almost every case preferred the freedom of the open spaces within a dance studio. This was taken a little further by one student who mentioned the significance of having your own area to work in within a studio space; although classrooms offered a desk, it did not feel quite the same due to the general lack of space.

When asked about where learning takes place, all students agreed it was a process of external then internal processes due to the visual and practical nature of dance. When asked about classroom-based subjects, they thought it was mainly an internal process but suggested they would prefer a shared experience before the information is internally processed. These students were presenting a social-constructivist philosophy, inspired mainly from the structure and teaching philosophies within their dance classes.

Table 4.4 Focus group (non-dance students) – Transcription of discussion

Researcher: “Tell me how you feel about your lessons in school?”	
Non-dance Students (M-R) - Sample only	Emerging themes:
<p>M – They’re okay  N – Some are good, others are boring  <b>Researcher – What makes a lesson boring?</b>  N – When it moves slowly or we keep doing the same things  O – Some teachers make it interesting and others don’t  N – If it’s interesting, we work harder.  M – I like it when we can work together but that is usually just in drama and a few other subjects like maths  P – We don’t get to do as much as the dancers- we’d like to do more performing  N – The dancers are always dancing even at the beginning of some academic lessons  Q – We’re friends with them and do lots of things together but most of them live in boarding and spend a lot of time together  <b>Researcher – What makes a good lesson?</b>  R – When we learn new things and move on quickly to other things. I don’t like going over and over the same thing  N – It’s good when the teacher shows an interest in us and tries to help  O – I like it when we do practical work after learning about something  M – Some teachers are good at making the class work hard</p>	<p>Being inspired (3)(4) RQ2  Pace of lesson (2) RQ1  Repetition – negative feeling (3)(4) RQ2  Teacher – inspiring (2) RQ1  Collaborative practice – would like more (3)(4) RQ2  Division between dance and non-dance students (5) RQ3  Always aware of dance students (5) RQ3  Dance culture (5) RQ3  Club culture – dance (5) RQ3  Prefers fast pace to lessons (3) RQ2  Repetition – negative feelings (3)(4) RQ2  Teacher/student relationship (2) RQ1  Theory to practice (3)(4) RQ2  Teacher – inspiring (2) RQ1</p>



<p><b>Researcher – How?</b>  P – They are passionate about their subject  R – Yes and they tell us lots of interesting things that we can relate to  Q – Some weeks we work on our own then the teacher will tell us to work in twos or small groups so we can help each other  N- And some teachers are boring and don't want to help us.  O – If you're a dancer, you know what you want to do when you leave school but most of us don't know what we're going to do so we have to do our best in every subject.</p> <p><b>Researcher – are you saying that dance students don't work hard enough in some lessons because they just want to dance?</b>  O – Some of the dancers just work hard in a few lessons and are always saying they just want to dance.  M – They just need to be good at dance and we have to be good at everything.  N- I know loads of dancers who want to do well in their GCSEs.  R – They just do more dance so are good at it.</p> <p><b>Researcher – do you like being busy?</b>  M- No, I like it when we don't have much to do unless it's something good.  R – I prefer to be busy and hate it when there is nothing to do or the teacher takes their time with everything.  N – It's a nicer atmosphere when everyone is busy. Some people mess about when they haven't got much to do. It's also better if we can work together cos we get lots done and everyone works harder.</p> <p>Q – I don't think we are pushed hard enough and some teachers talk to us as if we are little children.  P- We only work hard for the teachers who believe in us and want us to do well  M- I like it how it is  N- I agree with ..... I think we should be pushed harder in some lessons..... it would make them more interesting</p> <p><b>Researcher – what are your favourite learning spaces?</b>  O- Art and drama  P- Art and science  M- Art and drama</p> <p><b>Researcher – why?</b>  P- I like open spaces and calmness  M- Some classrooms are too busy with no room and you feel hemmed in. I like open spaces but sometimes the drama studio can be full of props and costumes and it makes it harder to concentrate.</p>	<p>Teacher – inspiring (2) RQ1</p> <p>Subject content – meaningful (6) RQ3</p> <p>Collaborative practice – popular (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Teacher not inspiring (2) RQ1</p> <p>Future careers – dancers (6) RQ3</p> <p>External expectations (5) RQ3</p> <p>Dance culture (6) RQ3</p> <p>Curriculum pressures (2) RQ1</p> <p>Future careers (6) RQ3</p> <p>Engagement to work (2) RQ1</p> <p>Teaching and learning styles (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Collaborative practices (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Approach to learning (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Work ethic (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Physical spaces (1) RQ1</p> <p>Open spaces – calm (1) RQ1</p> <p>Cluttered spaces – restricting (1) RQ1</p>
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<p>O – I like science because it is always tidy and it looks good when we do experiments. The art room is always quiet and I find it really relaxing.</p> <p>N- Yeah, The art room is my favourite one and I also like maths cos you can move around if anyone needs help.</p> <p><b>Researcher – Do you think that learning mostly takes place outside or inside your bodies?</b></p> <p>P – It takes place inside your brain...</p> <p>M- Sometimes you work things out with others, so you could say it takes place inside two brains at the same time</p> <p>Q – To understand something, you have to have worked it out inside your own brain</p> <p>N – Except if someone else works it out for you... is that outside or inside?</p> <p>Q – I suppose that could be outside but your own brain still needs to understand it.</p> <p><b>Researcher – Is learning being told something or understanding something?</b></p> <p>Q – Learning is about understanding something. You can be told lots of things but if they don't make sense, then you haven't learnt anything.</p> <p>M- I agree, you have to understand the work...</p> <p>P – Sometimes in lessons we can be taught for a whole hour and still not understand what the teacher is saying</p> <p>N – When we have class discussions, everyone throws their ideas in and we sometimes work things out together.</p> <p>[All agreed that could be described as external]</p> <p><b>Researcher – thank you year 9 for your very interesting comments.</b></p>	<p>Tidy classrooms – effective (1) RQ1</p> <p>Open spaces – calm (1) RQ1</p> <p>Management of learning space (2) RQ1</p> <p>Social or individual learning (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Understanding definition of learning (3) RQ2</p>
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Much of the discussion in the non-dance group centred around the need to be inspired. The six participants felt that not all teachers were enthusiastic enough about their specialist subject. They suggested that this had an impact on how students engaged with the subject and that favourite lessons were actually decided more by the teacher than the subject content. The group also discussed working collaboratively in small groups, all agreeing that they would like this to

happen more often. When questioned further, one student stated she enjoyed helping other students as it also improved her understanding of a task [maths]. Two other students expressed similar comments, stating that receiving help from another student often made things easier to understand. However, data also suggested a desire to be pushed more in class-based subjects. The general consensus from the group was that they were not stretched enough in classroom-based subjects and this lack of challenge often led to the lesson becoming boring. One student disagreed with this, stating that some subjects were really difficult, although this was often a result of certain teachers not offering enough support. This led to all of the group agreeing that individual help from a teacher or [an able] student was often the best way to fully understand something. When asked about where learning takes place, they all agreed that it is an internal process and that problems have to be processed in the brain.

#### **4.4 Student voice**

A series of presentations then took place with the twelve selected dance participants SVA - SVL. These were labelled, *Student Voice*. They were asked to describe what they liked about the school and what could be improved. There was no intervention from the researcher, as it was important to ensure no researcher bias or influence could change the dance students' statements. These were video recorded and transcribed verbatim (see Table 4.5). Key themes from the student voice focussed mainly on teaching styles, teacher/student

relationship, practical work, and interactions. Categories were then linked to the six emergent themes and main research questions (p.10).

Table 4.5 Student voice statements

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>
SVA	<p>What I like about school is that teachers understand us. There is a mutual respect with most teachers and a good bond between us which allows us to focus in lessons. We can have normal conversations with them – it gets us into the classwork – helps us a lot.</p> <p>I trust my dance teachers and that gives me more confidence.</p> <p>What could improve – sometimes in a lesson a teacher may speak as if we were younger students and this doesn't get the best out of us.</p> <p>In boarding we need more downtime – help us to feel more comfortable in the environment.</p>	<p>Connection with teacher (2) RQ1</p> <p>Normal conversations (3) RQ2</p> <p>Age-appropriate instruction (3) RQ2</p> <p>Downtime important (2) RQ2</p>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>
SVB	<p>We like the kind of environment the boarding houses offer – being around everyone (friends) – well most of the time. We all want the same thing: to become professional performers.</p> <p>In school, double lessons need to stay interesting with multiple activities.</p> <p>We usually follow the same structure in our dance classes which breaks up the lesson. It also makes sure we are warmed up and in the right frame of mind. Sometimes our other lessons can be really boring or just hard to concentrate in. Sometimes we just do one thing which lasts the whole lesson and I don't know why we have to learn some of the things we do.</p>	<p>Friendships (5) RQ3</p> <p>Community (5) RQ3</p> <p>Varying activities (3)(4) RQ2</p>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>
SVC	<p>What I like about lessons is when we do a practical in a double lesson. If we have a 1.5-hour lesson and just do textbook work, it can get really boring and it feels like your brain is going to explode. So it's nice to do practical work. If you do your work from a textbook for a long time, it doesn't sink in as well – when you are trying to learn something, you want to be doing it physically.</p> <p>What helps me learn is when they [teachers] do mind maps or lists of key words – plot the meaning.</p>	<p>Practical work (4) RQ2</p> <p>Theory into practice (3)(4) RQ2</p> <p>Structure to learning (3)(4) RQ2</p>

	When we're at the boarding house we operate better with matrons when they are more chilled with us and relaxed. I feel better if they're less strict with us.	Staff/student relationship (2) RQ1
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Name	Statements	Themes
SVD	Sometimes the teacher is teaching us but not really involved in the lesson which makes us work less. I like it when we do different practical work that supports our written work. It's much easier to understand something if you can have a go at doing it. I like the atmosphere of the dance studio. It makes you feel special sometimes and no-one messes around. I enjoy doing our warm-ups and barre exercises best.	Teacher engagement (2) RQ1  Practical work (4) RQ2  Culture and symbols (5) RQ3

Name	Statements	Themes
SVE	I work better in the subjects I find really interesting. I make more progress in the lessons I enjoy and like it when the teachers try to make it more interesting for us. I also like the relationship between teachers and students but writing down from textbooks does get a bit boring sometimes. If teachers interact with students it normally helps me. I enjoy the dance classes with the teachers I have the most respect for. That's because those teachers make me feel good and give me loads of confidence. I also want to have the same career they have had. I always work harder in those classes.	Interesting subject content (3)(4) RQ2 (6) RQ3  Staff/student relationship (2) RQ1  Respect for staff (5) RQ3  Work ethic (5) RQ3

Name	Statements	Themes
SVF	I like when teachers get to know you as a person so you've got mutual respect. If you are struggling with a lesson you might feel uncomfortable going to them. I enjoy lessons where we do actual work instead of what teachers think are the fun activities, because although you might be learning it doesn't feel as productive. I also enjoy being pushed as I want to become the best I can be. I don't mind being criticised as I have a lot of respect for the dance teachers.	Teacher knowing students (2) RQ1  Work – fewer fun activities (3)(4) RQ2  Wanting to be stretched (3) RQ2  Respect for teachers (5) RQ3

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>
SVG	<p>I don't really like working in big groups or getting put with people by the teachers – I would rather pick who I wanted to work with and then if the standard of work wasn't what the teachers expected, then they could intervene.</p> <p>I don't like being put in a seating plan with someone I'm not really friends with because if you're told to do an activity you might feel a bit uncomfortable working with them.</p>	<p>Independent learning (4) RQ2</p> <p>Pressures of working with others – not friends (3) RQ2</p>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>
SVH	<p>I like it when teachers make things interesting in lessons because it makes me want to learn things and makes me want to know things about the subject.</p> <p>I also like it when teachers give me a challenge because I feel I can make good progress by not just doing the easy things I already know.</p> <p>When the teacher gives you encouragement and support with things that challenge you, it helps a lot.</p> <p>One thing that would help me is a lesson for prep as when I'm at the boarding house I feel less motivated and I feel tired and just can't be bothered. Whereas in school, I've still got the energy and the brain power to do homework.</p>	<p>Interesting subject content (6) RQ3</p> <p>Being challenged (3) RQ2</p> <p>Encouragement (3) RQ2</p> <p>Downtime (3) RQ2 Less-motivated at boarding (2) RQ1</p>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>
SVI	<p>Homework is all jam packed. We get more than one piece for some subjects in a week.</p> <p>It would be helpful if academic teachers knew our dance timetable so they could see we have hard days and not give us so much when we are busy dancing.</p> <p>Essays in the week is very stressful. It doesn't always help us learn stuff. It's more helpful to do the questions/ work in the lesson</p> <p>Instead of getting so much homework. It would be nice to get prep lessons instead of PSCHE so we don't have it all building up at the boarding house or home.</p>	<p>Too much homework (4) RQ2</p> <p>Communication between staff (2) RQ1</p> <p>Nature of work (3)(4) RQ2</p>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Themes</b>
SVJ	<p>Things that are helpful in the lessons are when teachers make the lessons more fun and enjoyable so you get your head around it a bit more.</p> <p>I like it when they give feedback in your books and ask you to act on the feedback so then you've</p>	<p>Lessons more fun (3) RQ2</p> <p>Feedback in books (3) RQ2</p>

	got more time to process where you went wrong and do better next time. Things that could probably improve on would be, not giving us enough time to process a task to do and then you become more stressed and worried	Pace of lesson (4) RQ2
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Name	Statements	Themes
SVK	Things that help me learn. It helps when teachers set relatable homework to the topic we have been doing in class, instead of racing ahead on different topics. It's good when teachers ask you about your week or what's coming up, so it makes you feel comfortable and builds a good relationship. This makes us feel we want to learn with that teacher. Things that could be improved. At times, instructions aren't clear so it makes us not write a lot as we don't understand the topic as much.	Homework – relates to lesson (3)(4) RQ2  Teachers taking an interest (2) RQ1  Connection with teacher (3) RQ2

Name	Statements	Themes
SVL	I like the good atmosphere in most lessons. Feel like I can talk to the teachers – in lessons and outside of lessons. When we do fun activities in our lessons it helps us to stay focussed. When we do work, then an activity, then work again, it helps us to stay focussed. Things that prevent me from learning are when teachers describe things in a 'primary school' way and not like we are working towards our GCSEs. One thing I would change is the atmosphere in the boarding house – we don't get much downtime and constantly feel we are being monitored. This could be helped by the matrons being more laid back at times. After a long day at school it's nice to go back to the boarding house and have some time to yourself.	Separating work from activity (4) RQ2  Age-appropriate instruction (3) RQ2  Downtime important (3) RQ2  Self-time (3) RQ2

The emerging data suggested how much importance students attached to communication and interaction with the teacher. This included both verbal and written feedback and some students (SVA,C,E,H,J,K) highlighted the impact that encouragement and interest can potentially have on their learning. The word 'fun' was used quite regularly and when asked to discuss this in the semi-structured

interviews, students associated the word 'fun' with 'interesting' and 'meaningful.' Another area mentioned was boarding, which only offered a small amount of relevant data other than highlighting the fact that these students are living away from their families and living in their own specialised 'community of dancers'. Much of what students described related to teaching and learning patterns in the dance studio: respect for the teacher, varying activities, theory to practice, practical applications, being challenged, linking information and knowledge to create better understanding, and being given clear instructions. Data from other sources, including the questionnaire and focus groups, triangulate with these statements and highlight the potential frustrations these dance students experience in some classroom-based subjects. It suggests that students would be more responsive and develop greater understanding if these elements were deployed in all classroom-based subjects. This strengthens the concept of the *dancer-learner* identity who has an embedded approach and perception towards learning that originates from being immersed in dance culture from a very young age. Age-appropriate instruction was also mentioned. This also emerged from student interviews. Dancers saw themselves as aspiring experts, living in a world that follows professional behaviours and etiquette. This potentially creates issues in other learning spaces, where their status is lessened and teacher-expectations may be lower. This perceived concept by dance students, created friction and frustration as they moved between the two contrasting worlds of the dance studio and the classroom.



## **4.5 Lesson observations**

Twenty-four structured observations were undertaken, targeting specific themes generated from various theoretical perspectives. These observations used a time sampling method adapted from the Flanders' Interaction Analysis System (Flanders, 1970, p. 34; Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 336). This consisted of 24 observations equally split between the two learning environments, creating useful data that gave clear indications of teaching and learning patterns (see Fig. 4.11).

### **4.5.1 Student activity at start of lessons**

Collated data focussed on how students approached their lessons including on and off-task activity, engagement with topic/lesson, and identifying sources of learning. Content, other than identifying whether it was on or off-task activity, was not recorded verbatim as the principal aim here was to observe behaviours at the beginning of each lesson. At the beginning of each lesson, in almost all cases, students were engaged in on-task activity for dance, and off-task activity for the majority of academic classes giving reference to a variance in culture between studio and classroom-based environments. From the WAV screenshots below, it is clear to see the higher levels of sound created from off-task activity in academic lessons and continuous but low levels of on-task activity at the beginning of dance classes (photos 4.1 to 4.4)

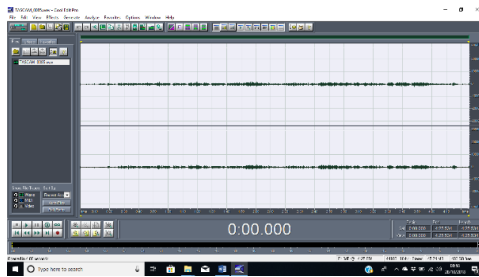


Photo 4.1 Dance Class 27/09/18

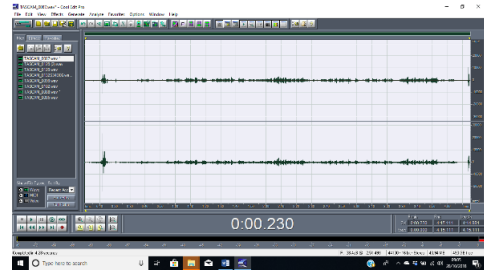


Photo 4.2 Dance Class 4/10/18

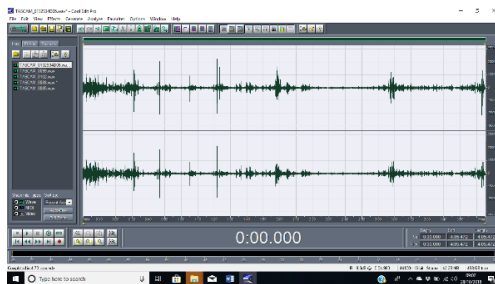


Photo 4.3 Academic Class 5/10/18

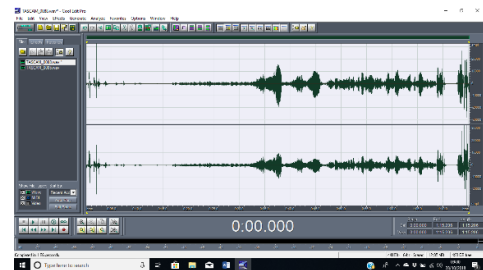


Photo 4.4 Academic Class 18/10/18

#### 4.5.2 Sources of learning

These observations enabled a process to identify and categorise main sources of learning which included the teacher, the student working independently, or students working collaboratively with other members of the class. Other information gained from interval recording (Robson and McCartan, 2016; Thomas, 2016) included how much time students were engaged on task, and if learning was developed from enactive, iconic, or symbolic concepts. These observations also identified examples (through recording of students' conversations and actions) of Lave and Wenger's (1991, 2017) concepts of 'Status Subordinate', 'Learning Practitioner', 'Sole Responsible Agent', and 'Aspiring Expert'. On and off-task interaction was also noted as a way of judging

student engagement with the lesson content. Main findings from these observations are as follows (Table 4.6):

Table 4.6 Time sampling of studio and classroom-based observations

Each number represents how many times observation was made in that particular minute over 12 sessions. Top number = Studio. Bottom number = Classroom.															
Minutes →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Teacher-led	5 4	6 4	8 6	10 7	9 6	7 8	5 5	6 4	4 3	6 3	7 3	8 4	10 5	10 6	8 5
Teacher-student interaction (praise given)		3	2	2 1		3	2 3	4 4	1 4	3 2	2		1 2	2 3	4 1
Teacher-student interaction (develops student's ideas)			1	3 1	3 5	3 2	2	1	3 2	3 3	3	1	2 1	2 3	1 3
Teacher-student interaction (questions student)	3	4	2			4 1	3 2	2 2		1 1	1	3		1 2	4 3
Student - independent	7	6	3	1 1	1		2 2	2 1	2 3	1	2 3	2 2	4	5	3
Student/student collaboration			2	1 2	1 5	6	1 6	1 3	2 6	1 7	1 6	3 3	2 1	1 1	1
Class discussion	2	3	1 1	2	1 1	1	2				1	1 2	1 1	1	3
Enactive (action-based)	2	5	4	8	8	9 1	6 2	8 2	8 1	8	6 2	6 2	6 3	7 2	8 2
Iconic (image-based)	4	5	6	5	4 2	3 3	4 3	5	3	4 2	5 2	6	9	6	3
Symbolic (language-based)	2 8	1 7	4 7	3 3	2 5	2 6	5 3	4 4	3	2 2	3	2	3 3	2 4	6 5
Students fully engaged in work	11 2	11 1	11 2	9 2	11 3	11 3	11 5	11 7	8 6	9 2	8 3	10 3	10 3	11 4	10 4
Students active but off-task	9	10	1 5	1 5	6	1 3	1 2	1 1	2 1	2 4	2 3	1 4	1 1	1 1	1

Evidence from these observations suggested a much higher and more regular input of teacher-led activity in dance classes, particularly regarding encouragement and feedback. This culture of almost instant feedback and instruction was identified by the 12 selected participants as a positive aspect of dance tuition. This linked well to Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, where the students are pushed to a higher level (their potential) by an expert (the dance teacher).

Evidence showed that there was more questioning from the teacher in classroom-based lessons, particularly at the beginning of lessons when the previous week's work was being discussed. Data from post-observation staff interviews showed that staff found this a useful way of feeding back to the class. However, interview and student voice data suggested that students found the delay in feedback from previous lessons, unhelpful. Bruner's (1966) constructivist theory based on enactive, iconic, and symbolic, provided an interesting viewpoint. All three styles featured throughout the dance classes, whereas the symbolic approach was only prevalent in classrooms. It is also clear that students demonstrated a much deeper focus in their dance classes and were easily distracted in class-based lessons by other students, classroom layout, and other physical aspects such as displays and windows.

#### **4.5.3 Marginal participant observations**

Following this, more formal observations took place allowing the researcher to be fully immersed in the social situation (Thomas, 2016, p. 197). From these, general overviews were constructed of how lessons were being managed and

delivered, including looking for patterns of behaviours in the students. This took the form of a 'marginal participant' observation (Robson & McCartan, 2016), giving the researcher freedom to take notes, and to also move freely around the teaching space, whilst avoiding any direct influence on activities. The researcher was still fully aware that their presence could influence both teacher and student behaviours, either by a potential need to impress or to instigate things they thought would be of benefit to the study. Tables 4.7 and 4.8 show examples of collated notes from the marginal participant lesson observations. Again, numbers relating to the nine emergent themes were added and then linked to the three main research questions. The main differences to be found between the data presented in the two tables focusses mainly on sources of learning, and how knowledge is constructed. The following judgements were made in reference to key elements of effective learning in dance studios: independent approach, respect for the teacher, a meaningful curriculum, learning from an expert [the teacher], learning from observing, theory into practice, situated learning, and dance culture. In contrast to this, observations relating to classroom subjects included the following: students listening but not being fully engaged, students take less ownership of their own learning, fewer examples of knowledge construction particularly applying past knowledge with new, uninspiring atmosphere, and lack of a strong and identifiable culture.

Table 4.7 Marginal participant lesson observations: Studio-based learning environment.

POINTS OF INQUIRY	SOURCE	FIELD NOTES	THEMES
How is knowledge being constructed?	<p>Teacher-led</p> <p>Students observing and copying teacher</p> <p>Students observing other students</p>	<p>Strong discipline – students are fully engaged. All seem aware of studio etiquette Positive body language from students</p> <p>Students being pushed by teacher – firm approach – positive response from students.</p> <p>Students responded well to feedback demonstrating an understanding of what was being taught.</p> <p>Students observing each other, particularly when feedback is being given to individuals.</p> <p>Some showing frustration by not achieving standard. Repetition featured throughout lesson</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Independent learning (4) RQ2</li> <li>• Respect for teacher (2) RQ1 (5) RQ3</li> <li>• Meaningful curriculum (6) RQ3</li> <li>• Learning from expert and peers (3)(4) RQ2</li> <li>• Repetition (muscle memory) (4) RQ2</li> </ul>
What social interventions were taking place?	<p>Teacher/student dialogue</p> <p>Visual support through teacher demonstrations</p>	<p>Students being given group and individual feedback Vygotsky – ZPD</p> <p>Process of learning: instruction from the teacher; demonstration from the teacher; students perform task; feedback from the teacher. Symbolic, Iconic, and Enactive learning. (Bruner)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging teacher (2) RQ1</li> <li>• Student working in own space (4) RQ2</li> <li>• Learning from observing (3)(4) RQ2</li> <li>• Theory into practice (3)(4) RQ2</li> </ul>
How was knowledge linked to the particular culture of a lesson?	<p>Physical environment – professional</p> <p>Industry links</p> <p>Studio etiquette</p>	<p>Professional atmosphere – similar to professional company class</p> <p>Teacher made constant links to professional world – inspiring</p> <p>Teacher – ex professional dancer – inspiring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situated learning (5)(6) RQ3</li> <li>• Meaningful curriculum (6) RQ3</li> <li>• Inspiring (5)(6) RQ3</li> <li>• Professional teacher (5) RQ3</li> </ul>

<p>What symbolic evidence was there to show that students were working in a particular culture?</p>	<p>Dancewear  Dance terminology  Physical features – barre, mirrors, piano, open space</p>	<p>Student reactions to dancewear is far more positive than school uniform  Students perform with confidence and fully understand terminology  Physical features provide professional setting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sense of pride/club culture (5) RQ3</li> <li>• Club culture/ownership of language (5)(6) RQ3</li> <li>• Situated learning (5) RQ3</li> </ul>
<p>Further notes: Peer observations were quite frequent throughout the lesson but this was not always recognised by the students in student voice and questionnaires, although was seen as a positive in student interviews. Regular routines and repetition were frequent, something that non-dance students labelled as boring or unnecessary in classroom-based subjects. Evidence from dance student interviews showed they welcomed repetition and a slower pace to learning in all lessons, to ensure full understanding of work given.</p>			

Table 4.8 Marginal participant lesson observations: Classroom-based learning environment.

POINTS OF INQUIRY	SOURCE	FIELD NOTES	THEMES
<p>How is knowledge being constructed?</p>	<p>Initially teacher-led  Students working independently  Interactions from teacher</p>	<p>Good discipline – students not focussed when entering classroom  Students sitting in rows facing teacher. Instructions given and students responded independently  Some students given individual support to help understanding – could potentially be pushed to higher level.  Some students not fully engaged – quickly tired of activity – too easy or too difficult?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of focus/culture (5) RQ3</li> <li>• Independent learning with some instruction (3)(4) RQ2</li> <li>• Learning from teacher (2) RQ1</li> <li>• Examples of students lacking motivation (3)(4) RQ2</li> </ul>
<p>What social interventions were taking place?</p>	<p>Teacher/student dialogue  Students asking questions  Explanations from teacher</p>	<p>Teacher-led at beginning then individual interaction for majority of lesson  Students seemed happy to ask questions when needed and occasionally the teacher would explain to whole of class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students listening but not all fully engaged (3)(4) RQ2</li> <li>• Students working as one group (4) RQ2</li> </ul>

		Mainly individual support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students develop knowledge through individual intervention and independent work (3)(4) RQ2</li> </ul>
How was knowledge linked to the particular culture of a lesson?	<p>Information posters on walls</p> <p>Minimal resources specific to subject</p> <p>Physical environment – cluttered/ desks and chairs</p>	<p>No reference to wall posters throughout lesson.</p> <p>No links were made throughout lesson to the ‘real world’</p> <p>Some equipment was placed around various parts of class but not referred to during lesson</p> <p>Cluttered spaces – desks in rows. Student interaction took place with those sat together. Limited space for moving around classroom.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No reference to specific culture of subject (5) RQ3</li> <li>Subject content – no transferable skills or connections made to the ‘real world’ (6) RQ3</li> <li>Limited space for students in majority of classrooms (1) RQ1</li> </ul>
What symbolic evidence was there to show that students were working in a particular culture?	<p>School uniform – not subject-specific.</p> <p>Subject-specific equipment not explicitly linked to industry/ job role</p> <p>No industry-related setting</p>	<p>No sense of industry link or ‘real-world’ culture</p> <p>Atmosphere was collective (institutional) – all wearing same uniform, therefore not subject-specific</p> <p>No links made to industry or application in the ‘real world’</p> <p>Classroom setting provided environment that lacked meaningful connection with the ‘real world’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uninspiring atmosphere (5) RQ3</li> <li>No relationship between subject material and practical application (1) RQ1 (5) RQ3</li> <li>Transferable/ essential skills/ purpose of material – not discussed (6) RQ3</li> </ul>
Further notes: Some interaction between students took place although this was minimal and not explicitly part of any teaching strategy. Students were not always fully engaged with the subject content and levels of concentration varied, often dictated by low level disruptive behaviour from other students. Students did show a level of respect both to the teachers and classroom rules. However, it was not as consistent as in dance classes where they demonstrated a much higher level of focus and engagement with the subject content.			



## 4.6 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews then followed these observations to allow the researcher to dig a little deeper and confirm patterns of behaviour between their studio and classroom lessons. The majority of students stated that in dance, they learnt mostly from the teacher, with a varied response towards classroom-based lessons. However, this was not as well-defined from the observations and the initial questionnaire (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 Main sources of learning in studio and classroom-based environments

<b>Main source of learning in studio and classroom-based environments</b>		
	Studio -based	Classroom-based
Teacher	9	4
Peers	2	5
Resources	1	3

Some main themes to emerged from the interviews: students like to have order and discipline; they prefer animated, entertaining teachers to keep them engaged; their understanding comes from being able to link existing knowledge with new; and that a well-organised, purposeful learning space does have a significant impact on their learning. This places the teacher at the centre of preferred learning in all learning environments.

### 4.6.1 Social interaction

Other data to emerge was that nearly all students developed a greater understanding of a topic if they were given one to one tuition either by the teacher or another student linking this to the social constructivist theories of Vygotsky and

Lave and Wenger. When asked how students can learn from each other, the following statements were offered in various forms (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 How students learn from each other

<b>Learning source</b>	<b>Number of students</b>
Copying dance moves	6
Observing whole class	8
Watching how others are corrected in class	8
Sharing ideas	4
Easier to understand, friends have same way of thinking	4
Peer marking in English	2
Reading other people's work	2
Homework help	3
Do not learn from peers in classrooms	4

This table suggests that the majority of peer learning is generated in dance classes. However, on analysis, it became clear that there were more planned opportunities for collaborative learning in classroom-based environments than there were in studio-based environments, particularly maths and history. The data in Table 4.12 shows students' perceptions of effective learning comes from observing their peers and learning from others' corrections. This links both to Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD, Lave and Wenger's (1991) LPP, and Bruner's (1966) constructivist theories.

Homework was not seen as an effective tool for learning, with only three students recognising its value. Comments against the effectiveness of homework included

the following: not always being linked to work done in class, easy to copy and not understand, lacks any meaningfulness, and doesn't feel like learning. Evidence showed, through student comments, a sense of detachment between classwork and homework creating an uneasiness and lack of interest. This highlights the importance of emotional security, student motivation, and meaningful learning (Perry, 2013; Hirsh, 2010; Evans, 2010). Evidence from this data also suggested that minimal learning took place in homework tasks even if the class lesson had been effective (Bonk and Cunningham, 1998).

#### 4.6.2 Effective teaching

Table 4.11 Students' perceptions of a good teacher.

<b>Interview data reflecting students' perceptions of a good teacher</b>			
<b>Main themes</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Helpful	Encouraging	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Keeps things calm	Discipline	(3)	RQ1
Supportive	Encouraging	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Believes in you	Encouraging	(2)	RQ1
Engaging, not boring	Teaching skills - communication	(3)(4)	RQ2
Different tones of voice	Teaching skills - communication	(2)	RQ1
Animated	Teaching skills - communication	(2)	RQ1
Keeps everyone involved	Discipline	(3)(4)	RQ2
Works with you, not at you	Encouraging	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Understands you	Encouraging	(2)	RQ1
Varies teaching approaches	Teaching skills - tactics	(3)(4)	RQ2
Not going too quickly	Teaching skills - tactics	(2)	RQ1
Finding ways to make it interesting	Teaching skills - tactics	(3)(4)	RQ2

Data from all methods placed the teacher, particularly in dance classes, as the central figure for learning. Communication and interaction were seen as essential elements to learning with particular emphasis on teacher-encouragement and staff having a good knowledge of the individual student. (Table 4.11).

### 4.6.3 Effective ways of learning

Table 4.12 Students' perceptions on most effective ways to learn

<b>Data reflecting students' perceptions on most effective ways to learn</b>				
<b>Main themes</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Teacher being engaging	9	Teaching skills - communication	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Teacher being interesting	7	Teaching skills - communication	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Teacher being encouraging	10	Teaching skills - communication	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Interact with teacher	5	Teaching skills - communication	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Interact with other students	7	Teaching strategies - communication	(3)(4)	RQ2
Being asked questions	2	Teaching skills - communication	(3)(4)	RQ2
Being set specific tasks	8	Teaching skills - structure	(3)(4)	RQ2
Needs to have a practical application	11	Teaching skills - structure	(3)(4)	RQ2
Clear instructions	10	Teaching skills - communication	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Clear explanations in easy steps	7	Teaching skills - communication	(2)(3)	RQ1/2
Need to relate it to my own life	9	Meaningful curriculum	(6)	RQ3
Repetition	8	Teaching skills - structure	(3)(4)	RQ2
Being drilled	6	Teaching skills - structure	(4)	RQ2

I learn very quickly in dance	2	Learning styles	(3)	RQ2
Being directed towards answers	8	Teaching skills - communication	(2)	RQ1
Having a clear structure to lesson	9	Teaching skills - structure	(4)	RQ2
Being given different options to work something out	3	Teaching skills - structure	(3)(4)	RQ2
Specific 1-2-1 instruction	7	Teaching skills - communication	(3)(4)	RQ2

Table 4.12 draws out data that again links effective learning to teacher communication and interaction. The above table identifies three key areas for effective learning: Teaching styles, meaningful curriculum, and intervention strategies.

#### 4.6.4 Student activity at beginning of lessons

Table 4.13 Student activity at beginning of lessons

<b>Student activity at beginning of lessons</b>				
<b>Subject</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Dance	Shoes, then warm-up	8	(5)	RQ3
	Self warm-up, then class warm-up	4		
Drama	Folders out	4	(3)(4)	RQ2
	Warm-ups	5		
	Wander in and wait for teacher	1		
	Lively – some students dancing because of dance floor	2		
English	Choose seats, books out Talking – off task	8	(3)	RQ2

		4		
Science	Choose seats, books out, talking – off task Always talking – off task	8 4	(3)	RQ2
Art	Gather round main table – instructions given	12	(2)	RQ1
History	Sit down, books out Talk with teacher about previous work	8 4	(2)	RQ1

Table 4.13 shows evidence of student engagement and their focus at the beginning of lessons. There is a clear distinction between studio and classroom activity with a greater focus and seemingly better preparation towards dance classes.

#### 4.6.5 Preferred aspects of dance classes

Table 4.14 Preferred aspects of dance classes.

<b>Aspects of dance classes that students prefer</b>				
<b>Main themes</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>Categories</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Space in dance studio	7	Physical environment	(1)	RQ1
Mirrors in dance studio	10	Physical environment	(1) (5)	RQ1 RQ3
Different uniform	4	Etiquette/Rules	(5)	RQ3
Dance, nicer environment	8	Learning environment	(1)	RQ1
Dance feels better – what I want to do in future	9	Future aspirations	(5)(6)	RQ3
Dance stricter – no talking.	9	Etiquette/Rules	(5)	RQ3
Dance less stressed, more relaxed	4	Learning environment	(5)	RQ3

Dance – more inspiring		Learning environment	(5)(6)	RQ3
Dance more fun	7	Learning environment	(3)	RQ2
Dance more engaging	5	Learning environment	(3)	RQ2
Dance more professional	9	Future aspirations	(5)(6)	RQ3
Non-dance – more freedom to talk	6	Rules	(2)	RQ1
Non-dance – work together more	7	Learning environment	(3)(4)	RQ2

Much of the gathered data regarding dance students' perceptions of dance classes linked closely to symbolic and cultural aspects that reinforced a personal and deeply embedded 'dance culture' coupled with an intense desire to become a professional performer (Table 4.14)

#### 4.6.6 The physical environment

Table 4.15 Impact of the physical environment.

<b>Students' perceptions on the impact that the physical environment can have on their learning</b>			
<b>Main themes</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
Room should be dedicated to that subject	5	(1)	RQ1
Would prefer to do all lessons in a dance studio	2	(1) (5)	RQ1 RQ3
Surroundings in dance help get you into the right mind-set	9	(5)	RQ3
Doesn't make any difference	3	(1)	RQ1
Busy rooms make me feel anxious	7	(1) (5)	RQ1 RQ3
Open studio is more relaxed	8	(1)	RQ1

It can inspire you if the teacher has made an effort	3	(1) (5)	RQ1 RQ3
Wall displays that are never changed can have a negative impact	4	(1) (5)	RQ1 RQ3

Data reflecting dance students' perceptions of the physical environment identified two key issues; students prefer learning spaces that link directly to that subject, and cluttered spaces have a negative impact on their approaches to learning and state of wellbeing (Table 4.15).

#### 4.6.7 Most interesting aspects of lessons

**Table 4.16 Most interesting aspects of lessons**

Subject	Main themes	No. of students	Emergent Themes	Research Questions
Dance	Being able to do something you want to do;	7	(6)	RQ3
	Able to see progress quickly and know straight away that you are improving;	6	(3)(4)	RQ2
	Being able to suddenly do something;	5	(3)(4)	RQ2
	Dance teachers;	9	(2)(5)	RQ1/RQ3
	Expressing feelings;	9	(3)	RQ2
	Work etiquette (ballet);	10	(5)	RQ3
	Learn lots of new things;	6	(3)(4)	RQ2
	Fun side;	4	(3)(4)	RQ2
	Physically hard which is good.	7	(3)	RQ2
Drama	Being creative;	3	(3)	RQ2
	Devised work;	4	(3)(4)	RQ2
	Becoming a different person;	2	(3)	RQ2
	Musical theatre classes	3	(4)	RQ2



History	Subject content; Relating it to current news; Good discussions.	3	(3)(4)	RQ2
		2	(6)	RQ3
		3	(4)	RQ2
Maths	Relates to everyday things.	2	(6)	RQ3
English	Learn lots	3	(3)(4)	RQ2
Art	Creative; Lots of space in room; Feeling free.	5	(3)(4)	RQ2
		4	(1)	RQ1
		4	(1)	RQ1

The majority of data from Table 4.16 identifies that dance students' levels of interest rely heavily on meaningful activity that relates to their future aspirations to become professional performers. Transferable skills were also rated highly and again identified as significant elements towards effective learning and development.

#### 4.7 Photographs

Photographs were taken of the research domain which included a variety of classrooms and dance and drama studios. Furniture layout differed greatly depending on the style of teaching and the nature of the subject. Obvious differences lay between the vocational and academic spaces, although the most important aspect was how these spaces were deployed by teachers. The majority of the classroom-based subjects used a linear desk pattern, potentially limiting collaborative learning, although maths did show excellent examples of social learning within this linear pattern (see Photo 4.5).



Photo 4.5 Maths Room

Teaching spaces were categorised in the following way: 1. ICT room, 2. Dance studio, 3. Library, 4. Classroom – formal layout with desks in rows, 5. Classroom – informal layout (flexible spaces), 6. Classroom with large tables (e.g. art room), 7. Drama studio, 8. Science labs (See Appendix 1).



Photo 4.6 ICT room



Photo 4.7 RS room

As can be seen from the two photographs above 4.6 and 4.7, desk formation does not suggest that collaborative learning is a regular feature of lessons. Analysis of observations in these two areas regarding teaching and learning has

been cross-referenced with photographic data and information from student interviews.

Both the drama and dance studios lacked furniture other than a piano and technical equipment (see Photographs 4.8 and 4.9). The majority of dance studios were bright and airy with high ceilings and mirrored walls.



Photo 4.8 Drama studio

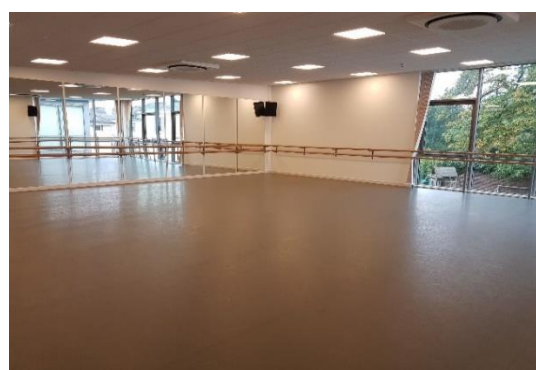


Photo 4.9 Dance studio

The sense of space, the wall mirrors, and the technical equipment, present a level of expectation that students likened to entering a theatre (see photographs 1.1 to 1.4 – external views of classrooms and studios).

#### **4.8 Summary of findings**

Data from the questionnaires identified key elements of learning that were important to dancers: teacher-led activity in dance, collaborative strategies in classrooms, linking and building on previous knowledge, being inspired with relevant ‘real-world’ meaningful subject content, and using practical work to

develop theory and understanding. Emerging data also evidenced the desire in dancers to constantly improve. However, this desire was much less in other subjects. Dance students worked more efficiently with teachers who were encouraging and engaging, linking their learning to performance related activity.

The focus groups allowed for a much freer dialogue, as comments from students were supported and backed up by their peers within each group. As with the questionnaires, meaningful learning, physical space and feelings of freedom, club culture, the teacher with professional experience, and their future aspirations were all identified as being important elements to their learning process. The non-dance group focussed more on interactions between the teacher and student, and agreed that inspiration came from the teacher and not the subject content. The negative impact of a cluttered classroom was expressed along with the desire for more collaborative activity as part of the learning process.

The student voice produced similar data particularly in approaches to teaching. Teaching strategies which included encouragement, challenging the students, varying the activities, knowledge of individual students, and giving age-appropriate instruction all featured highly in the student presentations.

Lesson observations identified different approaches to the start of studio and classroom-based lessons, mainly due to differences in dance culture and expectations from teachers. Although discipline was generally good in both environments, students were observed as being more engaged and inspired in

the dance studios. This linked to data from the questionnaires and interviews, where future aspirations and meaningful learning was seen as an essential part of their development. Again, symbolic and cultural aspects of the dance world were clearly evident including, studio etiquette, use of resources, situated learning and a profound respect for the dance teachers. These elements were far less explicit or non-existent in classroom-based subjects, showing a difference in behaviours dependent upon the learning environment.

Interviews were an extremely useful tool in being able to confirm certain aspects of behavioural and learning patterns. Again, data identified symbolic and cultural features as being important to the dancer and their learning, with teacher interaction (encouraging and engaging) having a positive impact on their development. Data also identified dedicated learning spaces, and the management of those spaces as having a big impact on their learning. From this data, six major themes emerged that were then linked to the three main research questions.

#### **4.9 Emergent Themes**

Emergent themes from the collating and cross referencing of data were addressed in relation to research questions, although inevitable overlap is acknowledged. (see appendix 7). A discussion of the interplay with underpinning concepts and theories follows.

Six emergent themes linked to the three main areas of inquiry:

**Research question one – Influences on learning**

Theme 1. The physical learning environment

Theme 2 – Application to teaching

**Research question two – How students learn**

Theme 3 – Student perceptions of learning

Theme 4 – Cycle of learning

**Research question three – Impact of students' future aspirations**

Theme 5 – Symbols and cultures

Theme 6 – Meaningful learning

## **Chapter 5: THEMATIC ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter is structured around six emergent themes that relate to the three main research questions as clarified at the end of chapter four. It focuses on key areas of evidence that identified relevant phenomena in both studio and classroom-based environments. Essential to this inquiry was to investigate students' perceptions of learning. In particular, it compared teaching and learning practices within dance studios and classrooms, developed an awareness and understanding of students' behaviours in lessons, and acknowledged the notion of what students perceive as a 'meaningful curriculum'. The analysis is interwoven with references to concepts and theories used to underpin this study. The synthesis of data and theory provides a platform to support the original outcomes and critical reasoning particular to the case study school (See Appendix 7). Underlined references refer to this thesis in making connections with the literature review in chapter two.

### **5.2 The physical learning environment (Theme 1)**

As can be seen in Appendix 7 (RQ1), the physical learning environment linked closely to the participants' perceptions of learning. Connections were made to the 'concrete experience' or direct feeling of an activity (Kolb and Kolb's (2017) Experiential Learning -see Ch. 2, p.48) as the physical environment was seen as an essential element of the learning process. There are powerful connections

here to Dewey's (1897, p. 7) propositions of learning (see ch.2, p. 50) where there is a strong emphasis on the relevance of the subject content to the learner. Therefore, it could be argued that learning is about supporting and developing the specific needs of the learner. However, this could narrow a learner's development by potentially avoiding new non-dance-related knowledge. There is an argument here to ensure that learners should always be fully aware of the relevance and significance of new knowledge. This would allow them to make better informed judgements on that knowledge and understand its significance and potential application. A strong theme that came through the focus groups and interviews, was that participants invariably failed to see the relevance of some subjects, making it difficult to make any meaningful connections with that subject. In contrast, participants felt a greater attachment to the subject content when the physical surrounding offered a deeper connection or direct support, as in the case of the dance studio. This concept is supported by Greeno (1998) Brown and Duguid (1996) and Bucholz and Sheffler (2009) who argue that classroom design and lesson organisation can have a powerful impact on learning outcomes (see ch.2, p. 83). Strong associations could also be made with Lave and Wenger's (2017) situated learning which leans heavily towards the social aspect of the learning environment. Bocharie (2002) and Catalano (2015) reinforce this argument stating that the essential aspect of this social perspective is that it links subject theory with authentic activity (see ch. 2 p.78) This was identified through observations, noting that participants were more on-task with subject theory, when situated in a purposeful or related environment: the dance studio or science labs being prime examples. Participants felt they were able to make more



meaningful connections to theory if situated in surroundings that supported and aided their learning. Briginshaw's (2001) holistic view of seeing space as a social construct drew these important elements together, with space and social activity being part of a 'whole'. Organisation of learning spaces also surfaced in feedback from the 12 participants, with the majority stating that they found it difficult to work and concentrate in cluttered classrooms. Many also commented on the linear-pattern of desks in the majority of academic classrooms, stating that they would prefer different classroom designs in order to have more regular communication with other students. This pointed towards a need for more effective and explicit collaborative learning strategies. In the dance focus group an interesting comment was made, and agreed by all others, that it often felt strange taking written exams in studio 10 (dance studio). When entering studio 10 they were always expecting to dance in dancewear. Doing written school exams in school uniform in this studio had been difficult for certain students. This suggests a certain level of conditioning takes place in a dance student's mind, giving them an immediate attachment between the learning space and learning activity.

"I always feel really strange sitting at a desk in the middle of a dance studio and doing a written exam. My body tells me I should be dancing and I can't get it out of my head at first" (Student D – interview)

This suggests the potential influence that the physical space of the dance studio can have on influencing learning. The students spoke of being transported into the 'cultural world of dance' by the explicit symbols of the dance studio: ballet barres, mirrors, empty floor space (similar to theatrical stage), piano in corner, and strong presence of the teacher who is also dressed in dance attire. All of

these add excitement and energy and link directly to the cultural world of dance. This connection and relevance gave a more meaningful atmosphere and connected environment that reflected Dewey's (1897, p. 7) argument that 'education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living (see ch.2, p. 50). Dance education is exactly what Dewey described in that students were learning what was needed for their careers in performance. This was in contrast to the majority of other subjects that were preparing students for the next stage of their development rather than relating the subject to a particular career.

Student interviews supported this notion of the importance that dance students attach to the sense of space. This included the wall mirrors and their significant use in class, and referring to a more holistic view of the dance studio by describing it as having a "nicer atmosphere". Relating this to Foucault's (1977) perspective on discipline as 'requiring enclosure', students may well or even subconsciously see the traditional classroom as a Foucauldian holding pen and therefore the dance studio as a space of freedom (see Table 5.1)

Table 5.1 Symbolic perceptions of dance culture

<b>Main themes</b>	<b>No. of students</b>	<b>Categories/Themes</b>
Space in dance studio	7	Physical environment
Mirrors in dance studio	10	Physical environment
Different uniform	4	Etiquette/Rules
Dance, nicer environment	8	Learning environment
Dance feels better – what I want to do in future	9	Future aspirations/ meaningful learning

Dance stricter – no talking.	9	Etiquette/Rules
Dance less stressed, more relaxed	4	Learning environment/independent learning from confidence
Dance – more inspiring		Learning environment/ meaningful learning
Dance more fun	7	Learning environment/ meaningful learning
Dance more engaging	5	Learning environment/ meaningful learning
Dance more professional	9	Future aspirations/ meaningful learning
Non-dance – more freedom to talk	6	Etiquette/Rules
Non-dance – work together more	5	Collaborative learning/social constructivism
Non-dance – work more in groups	7	Social constructivism

Table 5.1 demonstrates the emphasis and importance dancers placed on the physical environment, dance culture, and the link to their future aspirations. Much of the data referred to the emotional bond they had with dance, using such words as: inspiring, professional, discipline, and engaging. These statements were supported with similar data from the questionnaire, student voice, and focus groups where students expressed a closer and embedded connection with this subject.

### **5.3 Application to teaching (Theme 2)**

Synthesis of data (see appendix 2, RQ1) identified that students have clear personal perceptions of what constitutes effective teaching and therefore, effective learning. In most cases, the teacher was seen as the main source of all

learning. The questionnaire, focus group, and student voice, all highlighted the significance of the levels of enthusiasm, a teacher demonstrated towards their own subject. Students described 'good' teachers as being "animated", "engaging", "showing an interest in their students", and most importantly, demonstrating a "passion" for their subject. Participants claimed that these were triggers which inspired and generated an enthusiasm for a subject.

Students also referred to how knowledge was delivered in classrooms, suggesting that new knowledge became more interesting when teachers gave meaningful connections: either building on previous knowledge or providing explanations for future application. This fits with the argument of Estaban-Guitart and Moll (2014) and Catalano (2015) who discuss the importance of knowledge relating to the 'real world' of the learner (see ch.2, p. 41). This also connects with Vygotsky (1978) and Lave and Wenger's (2017) theories, who argue that learning should be initially seen as an external process, with clear links to activity, context, and culture. This approach in how knowledge is presented and constructed can clearly be linked to much of the data provided by the 12 participants through interviews, focus groups, and student voice. It could be argued that collaborative processes emerge from traditional forms of teaching as demonstrated in dance classes. Due to the explicit nature of dance and performance, students do not just rely on the teacher, but appreciate the importance of learning from observing their peers.

"In dance classes we always follow the teachers who show us what we have to do. If I'm not sure what to do I will copy my friends"

(Student B – interview)

This is not an organised form of collaborative practice but a product of the explicit nature of dance. This linked closely to constructivist theories, particularly Vygotsky's ZPD (1978) highlighting 'the distance between individual performance and assisted performance'. The student had been given information from the teacher and then developed it to a higher level with the support of a more able or experienced student. Lave and Wenger's (2017) LPP also supports this form of development where the student in question takes the role of *Status Subordinate* eventually leading to *Learning Practitioner* with the more advanced student acting as *Aspiring expert* (see ch.2, p. 76). However, this was not always explicit as there were few examples of direct help and collaborative practice between students in dance classes. The data showed in all methods, that dance students see the dance teacher as being the main source of learning: "The dance teacher is always in charge and tells us what to do" (Student F – interview) However, all participants acknowledged the importance of learning from each other through observing and reflecting on each other's feedback from the teacher.

The data also showed that many students recognised the importance and positive effect of receiving help from other students and this was evidenced in classroom-based subjects more than dance.

"In maths we are sometimes allowed to help each other. Getting help from other pupils helps me to understand things more easily"  
(Student G – interview)

This linked closely to theories of Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD and social constructivist theories (Ch.2, p. 63), Lave and Wenger's (1991) LPP (Ch.2, p. 72), Bruner's (2003) social aspects to learning, and Watkins' (2007) co-construction models (Ch.2, p. 60). These theorists all argue the strengths of social interaction and this supported a large quantity of data from observations, questionnaires, and student interviews. In many instances, students discussed or demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative learning. Here learning is seen as a social activity that is then developed through further mediation and reflection. Negative effects of learning were identified from data that suggested breaks in the learning process such as evening homework, and delayed feedback, interrupted their level of connection and understanding of the theory. Evidence suggested that dance students responded well to instant feedback which allowed for a deeper and more informed reflection. This potentially diminishes 'mislearning' (Illeris, 2017 – see ch.2, p. 32). It also allows for a deeper internalisation of understanding (Bailey and Pickard, 2009 – see ch.5, p.199), and allows students to move to a higher level of learning with continued guidance (Bockarie, 2002; Wertstch, 2000, and Little and Quinlan, 1998 – see Ch.2 pp. 68-72).

This small example of student perceptions was part of a much bigger common theme that emphasised the importance of collaborative learning practices. Being fully engaged and having the close connection of one to one support was viewed favourably by almost all dance students. However, these student reflections were directed towards classroom-based environments rather than studio-based, with all 12 selected participants commenting they would prefer greater interaction with

their peers in classroom-based subjects. Shabani's (2016) argument that 'higher forms of mental functioning' comes from social interaction, supports these students' perceptions. It also suggests that although dance students may view dance classes as being an environment of independent learning, generated from a single teacher, higher levels of learning actually emerge through the cultural and symbolic essence that brings students together in what could be seen as a close-knit community of collaborative practice. This is supported by Greeno, 2015 (see ch.2, pp. 77-78); Shabani, 2016 (see ch.2, p.66); Lave and Wenger, 2017 (see ch.2, p.75), where collaboration can evolve in many forms and 'social' can refer to observations, experiences, culture, and symbols, as well as language-based interaction.

By its very nature, dance is more animated than most other lessons and participants felt they responded better to teaching that included demonstrations and what they perceived as 'meaningful applications'. The student interviews and student voice presented strong opinions on how practical work supported and developed levels of understanding. This included such statements as:

“When we do work, then an activity, then work again, it helps us to stay focused” (Student L – student voice)

This student clearly separated written work from practical activity, which contradicted other data that suggested practical work assisted in improving understanding of the subject content. This is supported by Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle (see ch.2, pp. 48-51) relating theory to practice and

being able to reflect and make sense of the subject material is a crucial element towards understanding. This is reflected in another student's comment who actually linked theory with practice:

“It's much easier to understand something if you can have a go at doing it”  
(Student D – student voice)

In classroom-based environments, some students saw practical work as a way of relieving the boredom of written work, stating:

“If we have a 1.5-hour lesson and just do textbook work, it can get really boring and it feels like your brain is going to explode. So, it's nice to do practical work” (Student C – student voice)

This variety of activity in lessons is typical of what dancers are used to in their dance classes. They often begin with barre exercises, then centre work, then learning step combinations or routines. Student C then indicated the significance of how practical applications supported and developed learning:

“If you do your work from a textbook for a long time, it doesn't sink in as well – when you are trying to learn something, you want to be doing it physically” (Student C – student voice)

This is supported by student D who comments:

“I like it when we do different practical work that supports our written work”  
(Student D – student voice)

Although these comments suggested that having a practical application to what is being taught gave more meaning and therefore assisted understanding, what



they were essentially describing was constructivist patterns of learning, where different activities were built on previous knowledge to develop higher levels of understanding.

The table below identifies key similarities and differences between lessons given in studio-based and classroom-based environments (see Table. 5.2).

Table 5.2 Observations of knowledge construction

	<b>STUDIO</b>	<b>CLASSROOM</b>
1. How was knowledge being constructed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher demonstrations (O)</li> <li>• Delivery of teaching delivered at steady pace (O) (Q) (I) (SV)</li> <li>• Frequent examples of theory supporting practical work (O) (I)</li> <li>• Students practice movements (O)</li> <li>• Students observe other students – not explicit (O)</li> <li>• Exemplar work from student demonstrated to class (O)</li> <li>• Examples of how assessment had informed planning (O)</li> <li>• Immediate feedback from teacher (O)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher explanations (O)</li> <li>• Delivery of teaching delivered at varied pace depending on teacher (O) (I) (SV)</li> <li>• Students working independently (O)</li> <li>• Students working collaboratively (O)</li> <li>• Class discussions (O)</li> <li>• Use of textbooks and ICT (O) (SV) (I)</li> <li>• Homework set (O) (SV)</li> <li>• Delayed feedback from teacher given in books/project work (O) (SV)</li> </ul>
2. What social interactions were taking place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher-led activity (O) (I)</li> <li>• Explanations and demonstrations from teacher (O)</li> <li>• Teachers varying tone of voice to inspire movement (O) (I)</li> <li>• Minimal talking from students (O)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking off-task at beginning of lessons (O)</li> <li>• Talking off-task during lesson (O)</li> <li>• Teacher-led activity (O)</li> <li>• Teacher/student interaction (O)</li> <li>• Student/student interaction (O)</li> <li>• Class discussions</li> </ul>

3. How was knowledge linked to the culture of a particular lesson?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance artistry (styles and performance skills) (O) (I)</li> <li>• Industry references and links (O)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occasional links to 'real world' of subject (O)</li> </ul>
4. What symbolic evidence was there to show that students were working within a specific culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dancewear specific to type of dance (O)</li> <li>• Open space representing performance area (O)</li> <li>• Ballet barres used as a significant part of lesson (O)</li> <li>• Dance etiquette followed by all students (O)</li> <li>• Teacher as expert practitioner (O) (I)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uniform representing school but not specific to subjects (O)</li> <li>• Wall displays connected to subject (O)</li> </ul>
Source of information: O = observation. I = interview. SV = student voice. Q = questionnaire.		

Emerging themes that came from these observations were essentially related to how information was being delivered. These included teaching styles, management of class, and structure of lesson. The data from observations showed a clear difference in how information was given to students between the two learning environments. Studio-based classes were guided by teacher demonstrations and classroom subjects by teacher explanations. This potentially showed a greater connection with the subject by the dance teacher, who by demonstrating, became part of the situated culture. Regarding the pace of lesson, dance students claimed they needed a regular steady pace as the most effective way to absorb detail. The delivery became part of the choreography of the dance class. Regarding the classroom, the data showed that students preferred a variety of pace and approaches to learning. They became easily bored with repetition and too much teacher-led activity (popular in dance classes).

Collaborative practices were identified as being popular, although students commented that this activity was not frequent enough. Observations, supported by interviews and student voice highlighted that dancers prefer instant feedback in order to improve and that written feedback was often so late as to be ineffective.

Collective activity in dance classes was identified by participants as having a positive effect on learning, with the teacher being in control throughout the lesson and little evidence of explicit individual learning. However, observations clearly identified students noting corrections for other students and practising individually to develop their technique. This linked to the socio-cultural theories of Bruner (2003 – see ch.2, p. 54) and Vygotsky (1978 – see ch.2, p.69) and Lave and Wenger (2017 – see ch.2, p.72) Data from classroom observations gave a more varied scenario with a greater degree of teacher/student interaction and peer learning. Not all peer learning was a strategic policy and, in many cases, students helped their neighbour or gladly received advice. However, in all classroom lessons, students demonstrated a lower level of commitment and enthusiasm, working with a different set of behaviours from that of the dance studio. This reflected allegiance to the powerful 'dance culture' rather than a negative reaction to a specific subject. In dance classes student displayed a set of behaviours that had potentially been embedded in them from a very early age. Interviews and questionnaires also supported the notion that a student's favourite subject came principally from the teacher rather than the subject itself. Dance students often talked about the dance teacher being engaging, enthusiastic, and encouraging.

These descriptions were only offered to a small number of classroom teachers who were identified as providing varied approaches, having a lively manner, and taking time to get to know each student. However, it could be argued that giving opportunity for dance students to discuss and reflect more in a social climate would allow students to think more critically, providing a more effective sense-making thought process (Powell and Kalina, 2009 – see ch.2, p. 35)

It could be argued that this strong sense of situated learning in dance classes (Lave and Wenger, 1991 – see ch.2, p.72), allowed students to be fully immersed in 'dance world' culture. Evidence showed in observations and interviews that this notion of 'culture' with links to the 'real world' was lacking in almost all classroom environments. This provided two contrasting arenas for students: the dance studio which offers a purposeful setting allowing students to 'be a dancer', and the classroom, which lacked an explicit and specific identity, creating a more generic provision. This strong sense of culture within the dance studio presented itself in the form of spacious settings (theatre stage), idiosyncratic resources (professional tools of the job), and dance wear (costumes). Dance students were therefore transformed into a cultural world, which offered inspiration, meaningful support, and provided the necessary tools for what students regarded as their intended career. Linking this to Illeris's (2017) argument, which identifies the essential element that the learner must know what to do with all information given, highlights the important concept of establishing connections between theory and application (see ch.2, p.32).

### **5.4 Students' perceptions of learning (Theme 3)**

When asked to define the word 'learning', participants gave a diverse range of definitions. These included words that related to cognition: building of knowledge", "understanding of knowledge", and "gaining experiences and new skills". More practical, tangible or abstract descriptions were as follows: "the teacher", "teaching", "discipline", "fun activities", and "believing in themselves". Other words used to describe learning included the following: "improving", "growing", "developing", "listening", "interesting", "helpful", "retention", "respect", "exploring", "satisfaction", "challenging", "new experiences", "environment", "focus", "practice", "achievement", "liking learning space", "interesting", and "life skills".

This diverse list suggested that many of these words apply to their own personal learning experiences and what it was that inspired them or engaged them in learning activity. Evidence here suggested that dance students had developed strong well-established processes and approaches to learning. This was supported by Pickard's (2015) deep inner feelings that dancers experience as part of their identity, linking to Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus'. Trayner & Trayner (2015) strengthened this argument by suggesting that our identities are shaped by past experience and reinforced by things that we see as relevant to our futures. Few participants referred to the concept of understanding and developing new skills. Data from the questionnaires, student voice, and lesson observations (see Appendix 7) all demonstrated the important role that students recognise in

their education. The quotes below provided a deeper meaning to this, suggesting that the teacher-student relationship was crucial for effective learning to take place. This reflected on the teacher-led dance classes and was supported by socio-cultural theories where all elements of the learning environment are seen as essential parts to successful learning outcomes (Vygotsky, 1978 – [see ch.2, 2.6.3](#); Bonk & Cunningham, 1998 – [see ch.2, p.62](#); Bockarie, 2002 – [see ch.2, pp. 40 & 72](#); and Catalano, 2015 – [see ch.2, p.81](#)). In teacher-led classes students labelled the teacher as the *expert*, referring to themselves as *status subordinates* and *learning practitioners*. Data from both the questionnaires and interviews showed that the majority of learning in dance classes is enactive in that they were developing skills and knowledge through action-based activities. Learning in classrooms was essentially symbolic with language-based activity being more prevalent. However, this did not sit well with students' perceptions on how they learn best. The diamond ranking exercise, interviews and questionnaires all highlighted their preference for teachers who engaged and interacted fully with students. Praise was also given to those teachers who encouraged learning collaboration with other students. This linked to the social constructivist theories of Bruner (2003 – [see ch.2, p. 57](#)), Vygotsky (1978 – [see ch.2, pp. 63 & 69](#)), Shabani (2016 – [see ch.2, p.66](#)), and Leach and Scott (2003 – [see ch.2, p.69](#)), by offering a meaningful curriculum with clear links to the students' specific needs and overall development. Data clearly showed the importance of students needing to make these connections between their own world and the world of education.

“What I like about school is that teachers understand us”

“Feel like I can talk to the teachers – in lessons and outside of lessons”

“Sometimes the teacher is teaching us but not really involved in the lesson which makes us work less”

“If teachers interact with students it normally helps me”

Verbatim comments from the ‘Student Voice’

Another significant comment from the ‘student voice’, suggested the level of importance students attached to their learning: “I enjoy lessons where we do actual work instead of what teachers think are fun activities, because although you might be learning, it doesn’t feel as productive” (student F). This directed learning activity towards a developmental and inspirational model rather than having to be fun. Therefore, dance students seek fulfilment rather than simply having a pleasurable experience. This again sits well with the dance world where all aspects of their dance classes have a close meaningful connection with what they are wanting to achieve in their future careers. From a teacher’s perspective it directs them towards planning curricula that students can associate with and link to their world of dance (see Table ch.4, 4.16).

The data from observations, questionnaires, student voice, and interviews (see Appendix 7) all showed the importance that dance students attach to the teacher-student relationship. The terms *engaging*, *animated*, and *encouraging* came out of all methods, and were described as being one of the most significant elements by the students of ensuring good progress within any subject. All 12 participants during interview discussed the importance of a teacher who shows *passion* towards their subject and felt that this was certainly the case in almost all of their

dance classes. Dewey (1897) reflected on the importance of staff being willing to share their general knowledge and experience of the world, thereby creating a closer connection with students (see ch.2, p. 36). This explicit enthusiasm by the teacher was less so in other classroom subjects although History and Maths were identified as having teachers with a positive approach. These subjects also rated highly when students were asked for their three favourite and most meaningful subjects. A sense of calmness and control was seen as a positive element to learning and understanding, as it allowed the students to think clearly and internalise the information at a measured pace. This was evident in the majority of dance classes observed. It was not surprising to note that the most popular classroom-based teachers were the ones who were most animated or who demonstrated a level of enthusiasm for their subject and an ability to inspire. This linked closely to Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD (see ch.2, p. 69) where students were describing a process of development, generated from the 'expert teacher'. This also presented an argument suggesting that the popularity of a subject comes from the teaching style and personality of the teacher rather than the subject content.

The 12 participants also acknowledged the positive effect and importance of the immediate feedback they received in dance classes and felt they would improve their levels of understanding in other subjects if they received similar methods of support from classroom teachers. It was felt that homework, in most cases, did not support their needs and they preferred to have more interaction in class both between the teacher and their peers. It was acknowledged that in some



classroom-based subjects, teachers do discuss their feedback in the following lesson, which can be helpful if it is used to further the student's understanding. Feedback in dance classes was always seen as a positive and effective tool in the learning process, mainly due to its immediacy. The data (see Appendix 7) also suggested that students attached greater significance to feedback in dance classes and much less importance in other subjects. This linked to their passion to succeed as dancers and, therefore, thrived on corrections and advice in the subject that was most important to their future careers.

In referring to evidence that dance students attach great importance to practical work, many theorists have argued that it is not so much the nature and content of the knowledge (dancers like to dance, for example) but the fact that they are experiencing authentic activity (Catalano, 2015 –, first-hand experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2017), and active engagement in tasks (Bailey and Pickard, 2009) through a process of embodied learning (see ch.2, p. 31).

It was evidenced in all observations of dance classes that technical, artistic, and contextual theory was integrated into all practical work, allowing students to fully appreciate the information and teaching being given. This gave students a closer connection to the subject content and a more meaningful experience. Students also acknowledged that similar processes took place in classroom-based lessons but they were less frequent and tended to be add-ons at the end of a project. Throughout all data gathering methods this was a common theme highlighting the

important relationship between theory and practice in developing effective and productive learning and understanding.

Dancers in this study, as evidenced from observations, interviews and questionnaires (see Appendix 7) demonstrated the significance of the learning environment as having a significant impact on their learning. Words used to describe an effective learning space included the following: “helpful”, “purposeful”, “openness”, “uncluttered”, “well-designed”, “subject-related”, “spacious”, and “inspirational”. It was clear that in most cases they were describing their dance studios, but when questioned further in interviews, it was clear that certain aspects of the physical learning environment were seen as important elements to support learning in all subjects (Strange & Banning, 2015; Blanchard, 2014; Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Evans, 2010; McGregor, 2004). The two areas that particularly stood out as relevant in all learning environments were subject-related connections to future careers, and space, or lack of it (many described cluttered rooms as a source of anxiety). This was evidenced in the questionnaires and interviews (see Appendix 7) that identified the dance studio and art rooms as being their favourite learning environment. This linked to the emotional climate theory of Hirsh (2010), and the link between climate and student motivation (Evans, 2010). The above preferred spaces are designed to support the specific subject and also reflect the ‘real world’. A number of students also acknowledged the lack of inspiration they felt when entering certain classrooms that, in their mind, were badly organised, lacked space, and had little or no connection with that subject. Strange and Banning (2015 – [see ch.2, p.85](#)) reflect on this notion

that a learning environment can have a negative impact on learning if it is not set up and organised for its community of learners. This reinforces many of the comments given by participants when they discuss the importance of a 'sense of belonging'. This 'club culture' potentially offers students a sense of empowerment and confidence through the reassurance of belonging to a specific group (Lave and Wenger, 2017 – see ch.2, p. 72).

A significant number of participants talked about understanding coming from repetition of a specific activity. This may well refer to more practical skills as opposed to understanding concepts, although five of the twelve participants did make similar comments that suggested effective learning in all subjects came from constantly going over the work. This suggested 'learning by rote' as opposed to developing an understanding through association with other knowledge and skills. This again is another area needing further investigation.

Using the model as seen in Table 2.1, both transmission and constructivist methods have been identified in studio-based observations of dance classes. However, classroom-based observations showed a clear bias towards the transmission model suggesting that class-based teachers take a greater role in forging a student's development rather than instigating pupil-centred independent, reflective practices. This links to the social-constructivist philosophies of Vygotsky (1978 – see ch.2, p.60) highlighting the significance of social interaction as part of the learning process. There were exceptions to this

pattern, with some excellent examples of Lave and Wenger's (1999) LPP within Maths classes and good use of collaborative learning where students shared knowledge and understanding to develop their own sense-making. However, although these observations identified good practice and excellent student engagement, they were few and far between.

For learning to be effective, students need to be able to make connections either to previous knowledge or their future aspirations (Bruner, 2003). By directly involving students in the learning process, not as passive learners but fully engaged in activity, then the student will most likely take greater ownership of their development (Vygotsky, 1978; Bossche et al., 2006). This deep sense of learning by being fully immersed in the learning process is also supported by Piaget (1986). Data from lesson observations clearly showed an increase in student-engagement when they were directly involved with the development of their knowledge and understanding. This usually took the form of collaborative practices where students were working alongside each other and building knowledge through a shared perspective. This was also linked to the following descriptive words: "interesting", "exciting", "challenging", and "amazing". It could be argued that these words came from a confidence generated by a shared responsibility to their learning. However, the end product is still a successful one, in that, by approaching their learning with a raised confidence, they clearly became more engaged in the activity and therefore invested more into that particular piece of work. This linked to a small number of classroom-based observations that showed clear similarities to how dance students work in dance

classes. This collective responsibility of 'being in it together' created a common ground that allowed a sharing of good practice and collaborative sense-making, producing effectively-engaged students with a stronger sense of ownership towards their learning.

Occasionally, opportunities were given to stop and observe good performance from various class members. Regular praise to individuals was given throughout most classes with useful formative feedback which all students were able to hear. Having discussed this structure of lesson to the maths department, they were asked by the researcher to explore the notion of greater collaboration between students, including, offering a higher level of freedom to move around the class. The intention here was to move some of the attention away from the teacher and direct learning towards the students themselves. In one maths observation, a very interesting sequence lasting just six minutes took place. The classroom was in its normal layout for this subject (linear pattern of desks) and began with the teacher introducing the mathematical tasks for that lesson. Students began working on their own (Sole Responsible Agent – Lave and Wenger), then two students (Status subordinates) moved without any teacher prompt to a pupil who they thought could help them (Aspiring Expert). Once this 'expert' had explained the theory and process the two students then discussed and worked together (Collaborative learning practitioners), making sense of what they had been told and attaching this to their previous knowledge. Two other students observed this whole sequence (Status Subordinates) reinforcing their own knowledge and then quietly (with seemingly increased assurance) worked independently (Sole

Responsible Agents). The aspiring expert then explained to the teacher what they had explained to the two initial students. This reinforced and extended the 'expert's' own understanding by allowing them to express this knowledge to the teacher (see ch.2, p. 72). It seemed from this interaction that all parties gained something, with clear examples of knowledge development, confirmation and reassurance of mathematical processes, and opportunity to analyse these processes through the social environment. It was interesting to note that the majority of this lesson was student-driven with the teacher still having an overall control of the lesson acting as facilitator rather than teacher. This collaborative structure was then discussed with the dance teacher from the original observation who then set up a new teaching and learning model to encourage greater collaboration between dance students. Here, students were encouraged to observe examples of good practice throughout the lesson and work with 'experts' (away from the teacher) to develop their techniques and artistry. Although, only one class was observed, it was encouraging to see enthusiastic student participation in using this method. Although the notion of 'expert' student was not mentioned, the students themselves seemed to know who to go to for assistance and this seemed both a comfortable and enriching experience for all concerned. This teacher has continued to use increased levels of student collaboration in class and continues to receive good feedback and encouraging results from students. Interviews from the 12 participants revealed that they had found the increased collaborative learning in both maths and dance, a useful experience. The two students who had initially struggled with their maths felt that the process became easier to understand once they had been given help from another peer

(the 'aspiring expert'). In exploring this further, it was noted that they experienced a more meaningful engagement with the topic and felt more attached to the actual process of learning and understanding.

### **5.5 The Cycle of Learning (Theme 4)**

From synthesising data, patterns emerged showing how dancers were learning in both the dance studio and classrooms. Although this varied depending on the nature and style of lesson and also the type of class e.g. rehearsal, technique, written etc. a general pattern emerged. Students articulated the importance of all of these elements, describing each one as a stepping stone (or similar) to sense-making. (See Fig. 5.1). Many examples of these elements were seen across all subject areas. Significantly, the biggest impact was in how they were being managed and effectively linked together as a learning process.

### Cycle of Learning (Dancers' Perceptions of Effective Learning)

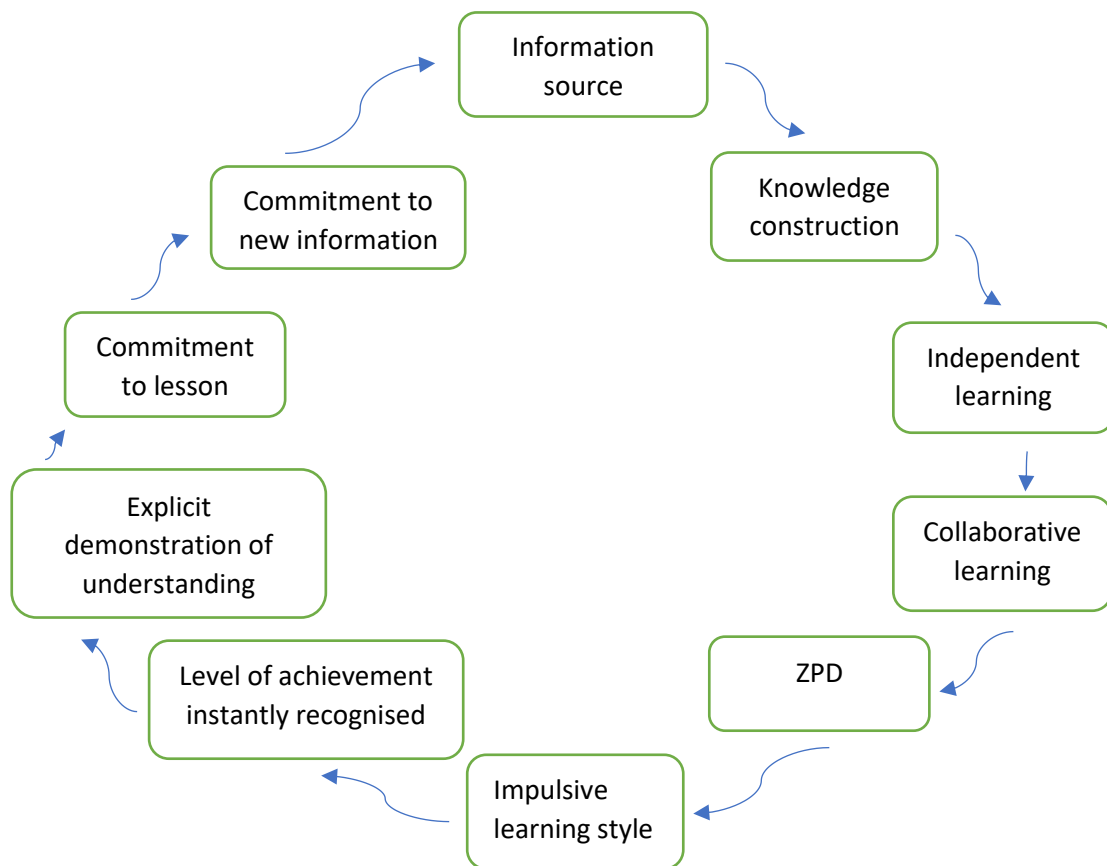


Fig. 5.1 Cycle of learning

The above themes emerged from the various methods of data (see Appendix 2) that drew out potential key factors to effective learning. In the majority of cases, the teacher was seen as the main **source of information** although the majority of classroom-based subjects showed teacher interaction at around fifty percent of the lesson. This was significantly higher in dance classes, in some cases reaching eighty percent of the lesson. **Knowledge construction** proved to be a key area in how students were building their knowledge and developing an understanding. Dance students generally expressed the need for repetition, fast pace, practical



application, observation, and immediate formative feedback. This was not always the case in other subjects where practical application, observation, and immediacy of feedback was often lacking. Some did comment on the fact that they found written feedback in these subjects very useful, but by the very nature of the work this was always given back during the following lesson and therefore became less effective. **Independent learning** was seen as a conscious rather than subconscious activity, as dancers identified the importance of their own space in a studio and how they developed their techniques from personal reflection after observing the teacher. Some of the dance participants commented on learning from watching others in class but these were all references to explicit phenomena. What was evidenced in lesson observations but not commented on by the students was the culture and symbolic representations that supported the learning and particularly the discipline and artistry of dance. What could be viewed as an exciting and powerful ambience and atmosphere within a dance studio, seemed quite normal and accepted by dance students as “this is how it is, and this is what we do”. However, it is this culture that separates the dance studio from other learning environments. Dance students are placed into what is essentially a professional space as in situated learning. Everything in that space has a clear purpose and intended to create ‘the professional dancer’. Other subject areas did not have these explicit symbols including not having the potential advantage of an explicit link to industry-related careers. **Collaborative learning** was referred to more often in interviews and observations and linked mostly to classroom-based subjects. Many of these comments referred to the effectiveness of peer support as their friends often explained things in a more

age-appropriate way. They also valued the opportunity to discuss problems and find solutions together and also appreciated that it was often one student who led this process (as the 'expert'). They demonstrated a clear awareness of how each of them fitted into the hierarchy of learning, without any knowledge of Lave and Wenger's *Apprenticeship Model*. This showed a large contrast in how students interacted with each other, between the dance studio and classroom environments. This could potentially become an area to investigate further, demonstrating how elements of good practice regarding both independent and collaborative learning, could be shared across all subject areas. Linked closely to this method of social learning is **ZPD** where explicit examples were evidenced regularly in classroom-based subjects. However, only two examples showed clear development of learning and understanding and this was supported by student statements suggesting that they would like to be pushed more in classroom-based subjects. Therefore, from the student comments and lesson observations, it could be surmised that more effective use of ZPD could be deployed. A slightly different picture emerged in dance classes which were generally teacher-led. Here demonstrations of required standards were explicit through the practical nature of the lesson. The teacher in the majority of dance classes led the activity and gave immediate feedback through corrections or further demonstrations. Students responded quickly to instruction and were able to appreciate improvements to their own technical ability. This explicit and open form of teaching allowed for a more effective process of ZPD were students were being stretched beyond their personal expectations. On assessing approaches to learning, data from lesson observations showed that dance students

demonstrated an impulsive style towards their learning in dance classes and a more reflective style in other subject areas. When asked in interview about their preferred approach to learning all participants described practices that leaned more closely to impulsive styles. In dance classes, students showed minimal apprehension with errors, demonstrating a higher level of risk-taking leading to 'extensional transformation' (Kolb, 2015). However, in classroom-based subjects the same students showed a more reflective approach, taking less risk and avoiding errors leading to 'intentional transformation' (Kolb, 2015). This suggests a strong argument for encouraging a more impulsive style of learning, allowing students to take more risks without fear, facilitating a potentially much higher level of knowledge and understanding. **Level of achievement instantly recognised** and **explicit demonstration of understanding** referred directly to the practical nature of the dance class. It was observed that assessing levels of achievement in non-practical work often came from marking text in books (post lesson) or through written tests and follow-up work in the next timetabled session. This delay in feedback was recognised by dance students who also commented on the instant feedback they received in dance lessons. They offered that this generated a more effective and meaningful cognitive process, allowing them to forge a greater link between existing and new knowledge. In both scenarios, students went through the same process, although the immediacy of the dance class was seen as more beneficial by those students. This raises a challenge for staff as to how provision can be made to create a more immediate process of feedback in classroom-based subjects. **Commitment to lesson** and **commitment to new information** was identified through observations and

interviews. The data revealed that students were more inspired when they felt a level of confidence in their learning ability. This was the key element here as students spoke about their learning and understanding, rather than the subject content. This focus on learning processes gave clear indications that these dance students were not only committed to their dance but also wanted to be successful in other areas. They were expressing a mindset where the goal was to achieve perfection or at least their potential. This study was able to identify that these students were not making conscious decisions to work hard in dance and less in other subjects, as data across all methods showed a willingness and desire to perform well in all subjects. However, their work ethic and approach to lessons was seen to be affected by external factors. These are principally as a result of their past experiences in dance, being emerged in 'dance culture', responding in differently to teaching strategies, and the relevance and meaningfulness of the impact dance tuition will potentially have on their future careers.

Audio recordings were taken of levels of activity before the start of each observed lesson. This recorded level of sound, with the researcher, where possible, noting if the activity related to the subject about to be studied, or other non-related topics. Student interviews supported this data with the majority of students reporting that off-task talking at the beginning of classroom-based lessons is commonplace and the completely opposite to what happens in studio-based lessons. The exception here was art, although the physical space of the art room is seen by dance students in a similar light to the dance studio, due to its open and feeling of space (see table 4.15)

This clearly identifies contrasting activity at the beginning of lessons. In interview, students expressed their opinions on how important the first ten minutes of any lesson is, in order to “get them focused in the right way”. Comments such as “some students are always dancing around the classroom” and “I wander in and stand around until the teacher gives instructions” indicates significant contrasts in their behaviour and learning in certain subjects. By participating in off-task activity and in contrast to their dance classes, it could be argued that they are moving away from the concept of *habitus* (Pickard, 2015), *Crystallising Experiences* (Bailey and Pickard, 2009); McGregor’s (2004) notion of inhabiting space for a specific purpose, and resisting what Wenger (1999, p.5) refers to as ‘a social theory of learning’. This involves a sense of community, identity, subject-related practices and personal connection that leads to creating a meaningful experience. By removing themselves from the ‘learning environment’ of that subject, they are detaching from that particular community and social world. These are the same students that enter a dance studio in silence, fitting dance shoes and preparing for class with self-warm-ups. This suggests that these dance students do view their education and training as separate entities and that classroom-based subjects do not fit neatly into their ‘world of dance’.

It could be argued that studio etiquette has a lot to do with this level of focus and discipline, but also the fact that the dance studio has a strong connection with performance related activity. This provides a more meaningful backdrop and learning environment. This sets a potential challenge for all classroom-based staff to create a learning environment that inspires and establishes an appropriate mood and ambience that facilitates meaningful connections to each subject area.

## 5.6 Symbols and cultures (Theme 5)

Symbolic representation that relates to and supports each subject was evident to some degree in all learning environments. In nearly all classroom-based spaces wall displays were the most obvious form of establishing the subject's identity. However, the majority of participants attached little importance to wall displays and almost all of them stated that it did not assist their learning experiences. One exception to this was maths where a large variety of activity material was evident on the wall including maths songs and puzzles that were regularly changed. A significant number of participants mentioned the fact that wall displays in the majority of classrooms were very rarely changed and often contained out of date material. Although displays were viewed as not helping the learning process, many students did state that they preferred something to be on the walls. In contrast to the classrooms, dance studios were viewed favourably with their open spaces, high ceilings, and mirrors. The data from interviews, focus groups, and observations, identified clear links made by students between the physical symbolic elements of the dance studio and the professional world of performance. Therefore, it could be surmised that dance students attach great importance to the physical and practical aspects of the learning environment. This argument is further supported by Kolb's (2015) experiential learning cycle where direct experience is part of a much bigger process, giving students a sense-making framework.

Truth is not manifest in experience; it must be inferred by a process of learning that questions preconceptions of direct experience, tempers the vividness and emotion of experience with critical reflection and extracts the correct lessons from the consequence of action (Kolb, 2015, p. xxi)

This reflects many statements made by students in interviews and the focus group (see Appendix 7) where they discussed the benefits of linking practical work to theory and the physical environment. This reinforced their understanding by combining these different elements which embraced all aspects of the learning environment moving from the external, social domain to an internal reflective process.

In the pilot questionnaire, 16 students described the studio etiquette and rules as being essential elements of their learning. Similar data emerged from the lesson observations (see Appendix 7 RQ3) and in interviews, where students described the importance of routine and a strong focus throughout each lesson. The data from three methods showed that students welcomed the strict regime of the dance studio, with almost all students remarking that they found it less stressful than the classroom environment. This also linked to the 'dancer identity' where students described a feeling of transformation as they entered the studio space. This suggests they become what they perceive to be 'a dancer' and play out that role throughout the lesson. In support of this, participants described the emotional feelings of preparing for a dance class, often magnified by the dance wear, hair preparation, independent warm-ups, and occupying 'their space'. All of these symbolic elements potentially contribute to the 'dancer identity' and immerse the students into a powerful cultural environment. In all methods of data collection, participants made strong connections between the physical elements of the dance studio and the professional world of performance.

## 5.7 Meaningful learning (Theme 6)

The data collated from questionnaires, observations and interviews (see Appendix 7 RQ3) had a strong emphasis towards the dance students' future careers. This reflected on the deep sense of being "I am a dancer" (Pickard, 2015), and identity forged through experience from an early age (Trayner & Trayner, 2015). The impressions of being a dancer, remained from a young age into adulthood (Engel, 2015). However, Esteban-Guitart & Moll, (2014) argue that behavioural traits emerge from lived experiences and not cultural practices. It could be argued that the explicit culture of the dance world forges this powerful identity of the dancer.

"I know every dance class is training me to become a professional dancer"

"Everything we do in dance makes me realise how much I want to do it professionally"

"I love all of the dance teachers and especially \_\_\_\_\_ who used to be a principal dancer at the Royal Ballet"

"Lots of past students are now performing in the West End and in big dance \_\_\_\_\_ companies which makes me feel that I can also do that"

(Student interviews)

These examples of extremely positive and career-associated comments show a close connection between dance classes and the 'real world' of the professional performer. This suggests that each dance class has added meaning and a strong purpose as it relates to their future lives and careers. The 12 dance participants made no strong connection between their classroom-based subjects and their



future careers. This potentially presents an interesting challenge for classroom-based teachers to develop more meaningful strategies that relate to real-world of the dance student. Furthermore, it could be argued that there is also a need on a national scale, for a robust investigation into what the national curriculum offers, with the aim of developing a more real-life and meaningful experience. In the focus group and student voice (see Appendix 7), students did make close associations between subject content and links to what they perceived as being relevant to their own personal development. Students expressed a clear desire to become professional dancers with much emphasis being placed on the practical aspect of dancing. This suggested that students were separating dance activity with other forms of knowledge, and therefore were not equipped to make meaningful connections between theory, knowledge, skills, and application. Having a more reflective approach to dance knowledge and skills, may inspire students to make greater connections between dance and other subjects. This supports Hanna's (1999) argument (see ch.2, p.33) that there is a lot more to dance than just physicality and emotion. This then calls for a more effective collaboration of curriculum planning, that takes into account all areas of a dance student's education, and identifies key areas of skill-based and theoretical learning that can be transferred and used effectively to support all areas of their learning.

## 5.8 Summary of analysis

1. Much of the evidence gathered suggests only a small percentage of teaching and learning is devoted to collaborative practices. Although data showed evidence of collaboration in academic subjects, it was not always on task and therefore, at times, ineffective.
2. Participants' definitions of learning were wide-ranging although they were able to articulate what they felt was best practice for their preferred learning styles. It was clear from their dance classes, that they viewed the teacher as the main source of learning but also acknowledged the social element of the dance studio as a positive aspect of learning.
3. All twelve participants stated that they preferred more open spaces to the linear desk patterns of most academic classrooms. Emerging data across a number of methods showed that cluttered spaces often created raised anxiety and that having your own space in the dance studio was empowering.
4. Most participants felt that wall displays, and décor did not improve their learning experience. However, the symbolic aspects of the dance studio were sources of inspiration and allowed the student to easily transform into 'a dancer' on entering the studio. This also reflected on the important aspect of the 'dancer identity' giving students a role to play within a cultural environment, organised with strict and clear rules and well-established studio etiquette that mirrored the professional world of a performer.
5. The gathered data from observations and interviews, suggested that there is a much tighter structure to the beginning of dance classes than

academic lessons and therefore students were immediately engaged and focused with the task. This links to the 'club culture' of the dance world and links to the point four, having strong associations with the professional world.

6. The majority of participants preferred teachers who were more animated and had the 'ability to inspire'. This reflected mainly on the nature of dance, where movement is naturally a key element to the lesson. However, there were also strong opinions from the 12 participants, who discussed the importance and enjoyment of having teachers who had been professional performers. From the evidence, particularly in interviews and then witnessed in observations, students clearly had great respect for their dance teachers and the subject they were teaching. This contrasted with their classroom-based subjects where students were unable to make any meaningful connections between the teacher, or subject, with the professional world of performance. This came across as a powerful measure, when students were making judgements on the relevance of their education and training.
7. Many participants cited the importance of repetition to develop their understanding and skills. This was identified through interviews and witnessed in observations, demonstrating that dance students develop fine detail in their technique and artistry through the concept of repetition. Dance students saw this as an essential and effective process of learning. However, the same students did not offer any similar connection to

knowledge construction and understanding, with some stating that repetition in classroom-based subjects often leads to boredom.

8. Most participants described the importance of having an emotional connection or meaningful experience to achieve high levels of attainment within a subject. This related to their cultural world of dance where 'purposeful' or 'meaningful' curriculum was given greater significance if it linked directly to their future ambitions.
9. Teachers with past professional experience were highly respected. This again linked to the 'dancer identity' with participants having great respect for someone who had already achieved and experienced something that matched the student's own personal ambition.
10. Many students described the professional atmosphere of the dance studio. Students were able to associate the physical environment of the dance studio with that of the professional world of a performer. This included the physical features, symbolic representations of dance, and the studio etiquette. These all provided clear boundaries and a strong cultural identity.
11. Practical applications to learning was given high priority by students. Observations, student interviews, and the focus groups, all provided data that suggested the important element of practical work that reinforces knowledge and understanding and allows learning to move from an external process to internal.
12. Individual support from teachers was identified as an effective way of learning and understanding. This linked to Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD where

students expressed the effectiveness of having individual help from a knowledgeable person, in most cases, the teacher. However, observations and student interviews, did show evidence that students are happy to learn from each other and would prefer for this to happen more frequently in classroom-based subjects.

13. Evidence showed that dance students appreciated studio etiquette and linked this to the professional world. This also reflected on data that suggested cluttered spaces are a source of anxiety. The dance studio was seen by all participants as an area of creativity, technique and artistry. Data from the focus groups presented strong feelings of ownership regarding these studio spaces. This linked to the dominant 'club culture' amongst dance students, some who expressed, in various ways, a sense of pride in the 'dance world' they inhabit.
14. Evidence also provided a strong evidence of a 'dance culture' or 'club culture' within the school. Interviews and student voice suggested this empowered dance students. There were strong statements made regarding this, with dance students explicitly suggesting clear divisions between themselves and non-dance students and how this manifests itself with different sets of behaviours depending on the learning environment.
15. Comments from dance students valued collaborative practices and would like to see more of this particularly in classroom-based subjects. All participants recognised the value of learning from each other and that the dance studio provided them with a platform in which to observe and reflect on everyone's ability and performance. Both focus groups and the student

interviews made suggestions that more collaborative practices were needed in classroom-based subjects as it was found to be very effective on the few occasions this had happened.

## **Chapter 6: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction and implications of the study**

This study explored students' perceptions of learning, with a focus on educational practices within the two contrasting environments of the dance studio and the classroom. This qualitative research considered the views, opinions, and perceptions of learning of twelve year-nine vocational dance students. Under the umbrella of an interpretative case study, the researcher was able to draw from a rich vein of data drawn from these two environments. Eliciting evidence through the use of a number of research methods, the researcher was able to triangulate a variety of perspectives and situations. This created a solid base from which to fully investigate the ontological and epistemological perspectives of those participants.

Findings from this interpretative inquiry concluded that many dance students develop a strong 'dancer identity' from a young age, with deeply ingrained processes of learning, and strong emotional connections to their future aspirations.

All twelve participants described, in various ways, having a powerful passion and strong ambition to become a professional performer. In most cases, students entering at eleven years old into year seven, had already come through rigorous dance training, many dancing from the age of three. Feelings of artistry,

technique, expression, and performance can be deeply entrenched in a dancer's body and mindset (Sheets-Johnstone, 2015). Indeed, this is what sets dancers apart from many other school subjects, in that they have a strong connection between mind and body. Aspects of all three of Pickard's (2015, pp. 46-54) descriptions of mind-body dualism, (the naturalistic 'Cartesian Dualism' concept, the Social Constructionist model, and the Phenomenological viewpoint) linked to these young dancers. However, from interpretations of how the participant dance students operated and managed themselves within the two learning environments, it became clear that the culture of the 'dance world' that they have experienced for most of their lives had the biggest impact on how they functioned within school. Pickard's (2015, p. 1) opening sentence 'I have become a dancer through a process of construction that began in early childhood' rang true with all of the original 24 dance students. This was continually reflected through data from the 12 selected participants who, on numerous occasions, used such sentiments as "I am a dancer, that's what I do", "the studio is our space, that's where we feel most comfortable", "I just want to dance as a career". These examples demonstrate a strong identity, and a singular focussed ambition.

Much of the gathered data from all areas of this study had symbolic connections, including: the studio space, ballet barres, dance wear, studio rules and etiquette, dance terminology, the physicality of dance, and the technicality that is placed onto the body. All of these aspects combine to be part of what could be called the 'world of dance' or 'dance culture'. Therefore, it could be surmised that dancers are not born as dancers, nor are they 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1977) being



wholly constructed through the social world, but that layered experiences create their 'dancer identity' through being immersed in this 'dance culture'. The evidence shows that dancers' perceptions are influenced by their experiences within their specialist world, emphasising the 'significance of culturally embedded, subjective experience' (Pickard, 2015, p. 52). Examples of this was evidenced in lesson observations, interviews, and the student voice, where participants exhibited different behaviours and attitudes depending on the learning environment and specific subject. Most notably, dance students demonstrated an air of confidence when in the dance studio, almost as if they were playing a part expected of them due to their training and experience. Independent actions, self-initiative, deep focus, and a noticeable lack of disruptive communication with their peers, showed significant signs of them being in control and fully engaged. This contrasted with classroom-based subjects, where the participants, although explicitly showing signs of confidence, were also more reliant on peer support and, at times, were easily distracted from the task. Through interviews and the student voice, participants expressed concern about often being treated as if they were much younger in some of the classroom-based subjects. This was also evidenced during the lesson observations and showed a distinct contrast between the professional etiquette within the dance studio and the varying rules and ways of working within the classroom. Indeed, a number of students expressed the desire to be pushed harder in their classroom-based subjects with some stating this as a reason for their poorer work ethic in certain lessons. From the lesson observations, dancers could be described as brave learners who are prepared to take risks and respond quickly to correction. That does not mean

they are hardened people who will happily take criticism. On the contrary, the 12 participants described themselves as being extremely sensitive, and it is this sensitivity that drove them forwards to perfection. Evidence showed they saw certain areas of their education as failing, often reflected in a behavioural change or lack of focus. This impacted heavily on their overall attitude to work and influenced their own perceptions of what was needed to be a successful performer. It could be argued that it must be the responsibility of teachers and all educationalists to look seriously at what is being offered to specialist dance students and to review its purpose, usefulness, and relevance in today's world. It should also be an important consideration to examine how schools deliver knowledge and to develop an understanding of what students find meaningful. A dancer's embodied learning style comes from many years of specialist training. This can be linked to their statements of wanting teachers to be "more animated", "more engaging", "more connected" and for lessons to be "faster-paced", "more meaningful", and generally "more fun". This can then be associated with their comments on learning spaces, in referring to wanting classrooms to be "less-cluttered", "have more freedom to move about", and "have more regular use of resources". This also linked to the nature of lessons, highlighting "more practical work" (linking theory to practice) and "more combining of subjects" (including transferability of skills; clearly evident across all dance disciplines). Suggestions for cross-curricular activities and theory into practice should be part of any school's development planning. However, it may come down to a question of available time when instigating such things. This study presents an argument that a radical rethink is needed about how education is delivered, particularly to

vocational dance students. This includes the type and nature of subject material and how we develop learning as a skill rather than an ability to simply remember facts. This new curriculum could potentially offer a higher level of practical and life-related skills, with a greater emphasis on transferability across all subjects.

## **6.2 Research question 1: Influences on learning**

With reference to research question one, there were explicit differences in how the same dance students worked in both studio and classroom-based learning environments. Clear distinctions lay in their approach to new information, working either impulsively and with confidence, or reflectively without wanting to take risks. This reflective approach, which potentially can be extremely effective, was welcomed by the majority of dance students, although most agreed that risk-taking in dance classes can generate higher levels of attainment, by pushing the boundaries of their abilities. There was a clear desire for faster processes of both delivery of information and feedback in classroom-based subjects. This reflected on their learning experiences within the dance studios, where the majority agreed that work rate and achievement was much greater in dance. It was noted that dance students were more responsive to instruction in dance classes, demonstrating a quicker and more energised approach to their learning within a studio space. Data also showed that students' perceptions of how much a teacher is interested in their own subject influenced their approach and investment in that particular subject. This included the care and attention given to the physical aspects of each subject's learning environment.

Learning spaces in many schools have continued to adopt traditional formats, particularly in classroom-based lessons. This highlights a weakness in the educational system, which has relied for too long on well-established procedures without taking into account modern day technology and students' perceptions of the real world. Dance students, in particular, demonstrated a far more positive approach to their lessons when working in spaces that were appropriate to the instruction being given. From observations, interviews, and questionnaire data, it could be surmised that dance students develop more emotional and physical attachment to the spaces they inhabit than do other students. It is part of their 'habitus' (Pickard, 2015) that gives them their identity, their way of working, and their learning processes for developing understanding. They clearly showed signs of frustration or lack of interest in some classroom-based subjects, most often as a result of failure to understand the given task or an inability to connect with the topic. This surfaced in interviews and student voice, with participants commenting that they found a great deal of subject material totally irrelevant to their personal development and future careers. It was noted in observations that dance classes move at a fairly lively pace, although each exercise is repeated many times and, in almost all cases, linked to past work. There were also regular links of the subject content with the performing arts industry, thus raising the profile and relevance of that work. Both of these teaching strategies allowed students to reflect and forge meaningful links to their future aspirations, something that was rarely mentioned in other subject areas. Exceptions only occurred when students were able to create links between a particular subject and dance, such as science

and anatomy. This, again, reflected the *habitus* of the student and how they viewed their world.

It was also evidenced that the demeanour of dance students as they entered the dance studio, seemed to transform into a specific role, that of 'a dancer'. The research participants expressed that this transformation was an important part of their preparation for class, linked to the professional world and a dancer's identity. From the moment they entered the studio they demonstrated an impeccable focus and responded positively to the strict regime of the professional learning environment. They seemed comfortable and relaxed, and demonstrated a 'knowing' and 'understanding' of the strict boundaries of discipline and professionalism. It could be argued that for these students, this is their 'real world', a culture filled with symbolic representation that fulfils their desires to become professional performers. As a result of immersing themselves in this world of dance and embracing every aspect of it, other learning environments, and particularly other methods and approaches to learning, could potentially be seen as alien and far removed from their deep entrenched passion for dance study and performance.

Data gathered from the various research methods used in this study confirmed that dance students preferred to be in the dance studio rather than a classroom. There were two main reasons for the preference of the dance studio: the sense of space and, in particular, being able to own a section of that space, and the

cultural ambience of the environment with its close representations of their career ambitions. A number of students commented on the cluttered spaces of the classroom and how restricting this felt, claiming it also created a heightened level of anxiety. Considering elements of power protocol, it suggests they were describing a feeling of being oppressed and controlled. Many also commented on the generic feel of most classrooms, saying that they usually gave no focus, sense of connection, or direct relationship to that particular subject. Whilst this may not influence the learning that takes place in that space, it was certainly affecting how the dance students approached those environments. This was evidenced from the focus groups, student voice, and observations of student engagement and interaction, including the audio recordings taken at the beginning of lessons. These recordings showed distinct differences in how students mentally prepared for their lessons with 'on' or 'off-task' activity.

Meaningfulness, or similar expressions, continually emerged from the data, relating this not only to subject content, but also to the effect that a purposeful environment could have on their attitude to learning. Some dancers talked about being transformed into their dancer identity as soon as they entered the studio and in doing so described the powerful effect the physical space can have. The opposite was described for many other learning spaces, commenting that wall displays and décor were in most cases uninspiring and had no impact on their learning or motivation. This suggests a radical rethink of how we present learning environments in schools. It could be argued that a minimalist, non-subject-

specific design with a greater technological feel, could be more inspiring, giving the impression of a purposeful 'learning space' rather than 'subject space'.

### **6.3 Research question 2: How students learn**

Evidence from the gathered data showed that students needed to see a personal relevance to what was being taught. Although the 12 participants emphasised the importance of knowledge that related to their dance studies, other data highlighted life skills and transferable knowledge as also being important elements of their education. Being self-aware of their abilities and achievements was seen as a vital part of their development, something that was constantly being evaluated and assessed in dance classes. Linked to this was the need for immediate feedback to fuel their desire for improvement. Again, this was explicit in dance classes, with many suggesting that feedback in other subjects was less effective due to the time delay, particularly with written work. Data also showed that students were inspired, and therefore more engaged with their work, if the teacher showed an enthusiasm or passion for their subject. Again, this was in stark contrast to how they perceived teacher input and delivery in classroom-based subjects. Comments from the student interviews and focus groups highlighted the importance and level of interest a teacher showed to their students. Students wanted to be reassured that their teachers were keen for them to make good progress. This particularly centred on whether they personally felt that the teacher was interested in their own individual progress.

Students also raised the important notion of making connections between new and existing knowledge, stating that understanding and sense-making comes from the ability to place the information into context. This again was confirmed as a common element of dance tuition, where knowledge and skills are layered and continually developed through making these important links and associations. The data identified that students felt that, in many cases, classroom-based subjects failed to make these connections, therefore lessening the impact of any new knowledge. Students also felt the need for a greater emphasis to be placed on transferable skills, rather than facts, in classroom-based subjects. There was also strong evidence to show the importance that students attached to practical work, and how they felt it reinforced their theoretical understanding. This, again, was a common element of dance tuition and although some subjects, such as science and art, regularly used this pedagogical strategy, it was clear that other classroom-based subjects were lacking in this approach. The 12 participants felt this failed to meet their preferred way of developing skills and knowledge and wanted staff to be more creative in their teaching approaches. This also linked to 'real world' issues, with data showing that the majority of classroom-based subjects failed to make connections with real life phenomena.

Another feature of learning that emerged from the data was the importance of peer observation and collaborative practices. The 12 participants reflected on the importance of watching other students and learning from their achievements and the feedback they received from the teacher. This was a common occurrence in all dance classes, with students acknowledging how important this was to their own development. The data also showed that more explicit forms of collaborative



practice took place in classrooms, although this was not as frequent as some students would have preferred. Students acknowledged that they could learn a lot from each other, and that working in small groups had proved to be extremely productive. Evidence suggested that students' perceptions of this was that their like-minded peers often explained things in simpler and more effective ways than the teacher. A number of students also expressed the importance of clear and structured instructions, a typical teaching strategy within a dance class, but not always evident in the classroom.

#### **6.4 Research question 3: Impact of students' future aspirations**

The dance students presented themselves as being so entrenched in their 'dance world' that everything seemed to be measured by their 'dancer identity' and future aspirations. All 12 participants showed an explicit desire to become a professional dancer and demonstrated a level of confidence in the belief that this would definitely happen. It could be argued that very few 14-year-old students across the country would have that same level of confidence and certainty about their future careers.

Although only a small number of students used the term 'meaningful', words such as "purposeful", "related", and "connected", occurred on numerous occasions throughout questionnaires, observations, the student voice, and interviews. These terms generally related to skills and techniques, and although the majority were linked to dance, it was noted that students saw effective

processes of learning as meaningful activity no matter what the subject. This included learning from observing, applying theory to practice, and different forms of interaction between themselves and the teacher or their peers. Meaningfulness is an area that needs further investigation with a potential rethink of what, why, and how we present knowledge to the student population. It was clearly evident that when dance students perceived a lack of meaningfulness in a particular lesson, their work ethic and level of motivation dropped dramatically.

Students' comments that related to 'being a dancer' confirmed the concept of a powerful identity that was all-embracing. The dancers mostly had a confident air about themselves, often manifested by good posture, bright personality, and boundless energy. Although these traits are often explicitly seen, in reality many dancers are quite fragile in their quest for perfection, but have a deep inner strength developed from their passionate desire for success. It is this desire that drives their feelings in many aspects of their lives, particularly their future ambitions. Data from interviews and lesson observations showed clear evidence of behavioural patterns that were being driven or inspired by links to their future careers.

The data highlighted the significance of symbolic representation in the world of dance. This included the open space of the dance studio (seen by some students as a theatrical stage), the ballet barres and dance floor (as used in the professional world of dance), the dance wear (seen as essential clothing that

mirrors professional costumes), and the dance terminology (used by dancers throughout the world). These common traits all echo the professional world of dance, and it could be argued that this is representative of the students' 'real world', as many will have grown up within this particular culture.

Evidence from this study also highlighted the importance of belonging. Students explicitly discussed their sense of 'honour' at being labelled 'a dancer'. This created a 'club culture' within the school and, although students from other courses mixed well together, dance students felt a strong sense of privilege that they had been chosen as specialist dancers from all areas of the United Kingdom and abroad. This sense of belonging to a specific group gave them an air of confidence and ownership of their course. This included them talking about dance studio spaces as belonging to them because of their specific purpose for dance training. Evidence of this 'dance culture' was also seen within the studios, where the students worked together as a company, abiding by studio etiquette and following behaviours that reflected those of a professional dance company. This was directly linked to the respect they showed to their dance teachers, many of whom had experienced a professional career in dance and performance. Here, students seemed empowered by receiving instruction and feedback from people they admired so much. In class observations, dance teachers made frequent connections with the professional industry, reinforcing the students' trust in their teachers and allowing students to make meaningful connections to what was being taught.

## **6.5 Contributions to the field of dance and pedagogy**

This study has exposed explicit descriptions of how dance students make sense of, and perceive, their learning. It has highlighted the need for a more bespoke approach to teaching these specialist students, who are essentially immersed in a culture of dance phenomena, with strong connections to the professional world of performance. The study identified key elements to their perceptions of learning, most notably, what they see as relevant or meaningful content and how knowledge and understanding is constructed through what could be termed, a social plane. These notions of social constructivism are key elements of their knowledge building, and the evidence identified a lack of collaborative practices within their classroom-based subjects. Indeed, there were clear divisions between how knowledge and understanding was presented, causing levels of dissatisfaction amongst certain dance students. This study has shown a need for educationalists to review how knowledge and skills are offered to these specialist dance students, providing strategies that meet their specific needs. An essential element of this is to acknowledge the importance of a balanced and broad education, but at the same time to review how subject content is delivered and to facilitate a process of transferable skills across all subjects.

This study also identified areas of teaching where significant change is needed. This included the importance of how the physical learning environment is designed and managed, and the need for teachers to consider, in greater detail, the benefits of collaborative and social forms of learning for these specialist

dance students. This could come from a sharing of good practice and giving all classroom-based teachers opportunity to observe how students work within a studio environment. This study did not aim to specifically inform how classroom-based lessons should be conducted; its intention was to initiate informed change through providing a full picture of what was happening in both learning environments.

## **6.6 A critical review**

This study generated a vast amount of data, resulting in restricted time issues with the analysis. Limiting the amount and variety of data may have given the study a tighter focus and improved the efficiency of how the analysis was managed. Working within the field of this research allowed the researcher to be fully immersed in the process, providing a constructed framework of rich detail gained from the 12 participants and the physical aspects of the research domain. Suggested improvements to the sample might include an increase in the number of students who were observed and to develop the case study into a multiple case study. This would then allow an investigation and comparison with other schools running similar courses for dancers on MDS scholarships. The student voice and focus groups produced a rich source of information and, if undertaking further study, these are two areas that would be magnified with a greater focus, as they allowed students to speak more freely and with confidence. Most importantly, students were able to build on each other's offerings, generating deeper reflection and more detailed descriptions.

It was also essential to link the findings with past research and seminal texts, in particular, those which related to social constructivism and collaborative practices in education. Investigating this area of student learning allowed the researcher to question and evaluate their own teaching methodologies and view students' perceptions of learning as an important facet of pedagogical practice. Social-constructivist philosophy was of particular interest, with Vygotsky, Bruner, Lave and Wenger, and Kolb providing essential theoretical support. This study's aim was not to create generalisations about educating dance students, but to develop an understanding of dance culture and the 'world' that dance students populate. The intention is that this understanding will generate further discussion amongst all staff, including other similar establishments, thus enabling informed planning and whole-school development regarding cross-curricular initiatives and pedagogical practices.

## **6.7 Future research**

This study offers a theoretical perspective that supports dance students' learning in all areas of their education. Particular emphasis was placed on the following aspects: creating an awareness for developing new teaching strategies related to how physical spaces are managed, curriculum planning that considers students' perceptions of learning, a focus on transferable skills across all subjects, and pedagogical strategies to develop varied and informed collaborative learning.

There is a strong argument to build planning sessions into the teaching week, giving opportunity for staff to develop closer links with other subject areas. This particularly refers to exploring how subject-specific knowledge can enhance or support other areas of the curriculum.

Data from this study could potentially be used to support national reviews of educational practices in schools which receive MDS funding for vocational dance students. It provides information to inform pedagogical strategies that could potentially be used across all areas of the curriculum. This study has also raised a number of concerns relating to how students perceive teaching practices within classroom-based subjects. Of particular note is how students' expectations of developing knowledge and understanding in classroom-based subjects is managed and supported. It is the specialism of dance and the culture which surrounds that subject which has been identified in this study as being a crucial element in developing effective and inspirational teaching strategies for these students. Although it would be impractical to simply transfer the established teaching practices within dance studios, there are key elements that should be considered. These include developing subject-related links to the 'real world', creating a theoretical framework that helps students appreciate key skills that can be transferred to other subjects and life skills, and building teaching strategies that facilitate social aspects of learning.

Most of the students involved in this study, if not all, will enjoy a professional dance career, some moving into teaching, choreography or, further down the line, directing, as their bodies can no longer take the physical pressures of dance. Vocational students work long hours, including Saturday mornings, and are still expected to undertake the full national curriculum. Does this fulfil their needs, does it provide the skills needed for their future lives (not just in dance), and does it develop an inspiring framework to encourage a life-long learning ambition? This research suggests that the current national curriculum does not fully provide and inspire these wonderfully passionate dance students and that a radical rethink is needed in developing a bespoke education that will sit comfortably alongside their dance studies. This study has shown clear patterns of how specialist dance students approach their learning and development. Indeed, what has emerged as significant is their passion for learning. However, contrasting styles of teaching between studio and classroom-based subjects and an ineffective and perceived irrelevant curriculum often leaves them uninspired. Evidence has shown that the learning in the dance studio came from a number of sources that were inextricably linked: the teacher, peer observations, independent learning, 'club culture' phenomenon, past histories and future aspirations.

In addressing both the academic needs and vocational training required for highly talented dance students, common pedagogical ground is often overlooked. With the aim of supporting all areas of their education and training, it is essential to address this element of the students' education. This includes looking for commonalities and the pedagogical strategies employed, particularly with regard



to the use of how knowledge is constructed, use of the physical space, and how students are managed within those environments. A successful outcome from this study would be to bring a closer unity between the academic and vocational departments within the school. In particular, this entails sharing good practice, more effective whole school planning, more effective use of physical learning spaces, and a greater awareness of dance students' perceptions and their pedagogical and emotional needs as learners.

This area of research into dance students' perspectives of their learning is a neglected but important area that could impact on many students' educational experiences, and not just in performing arts. It has drawn out interesting concepts of how dance students view their training, and highlighted the clear divisions between studio and classroom-based lessons. It is evident that dance students live and act within a 'dance culture', although this seems to evaporate when away from their preferred environment of the dance studio. These behaviours, linked to the professional world of dance, give students a strong identity and set of rules that feel comfortable and natural. This then affects their approaches to other learning environments and in some cases prevents them from using their confident and determined approach to any great effect. It feels as if they are living in two worlds, moving between the two with ease and an acceptance that their behaviours will change depending on the environment. The situated learning environment of the dance studio is shown to be a powerful force and an essential element of a dancer's vocational training in striving to be the best.

It is intended that the main findings of this study, together with further research on dance students' perceptions of learning, will generate articles for publication in education and dance research journals. The main findings from this study will also be shared in collaboration with other MDS funded vocational schools to provide a platform for curriculum planning and staff CPD on a national scale. It is also intended to publish articles from this study through national organisations, such as the Council for Dance and Musical Theatre (CDMT). Further projects include the publishing of an information booklet for students and parents on the benefits of vocational training. This study has inspired further projects connected to the world of performance, including research into the Victorian theatres of Liverpool and nineteenth century vaudeville acts from the north west of England.

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**Appendix 1**

**Student Pilot Questionnaire – Learning Research Project**

**Dance/Drama/Music student..... Year.....**

Dear student I am currently undertaking some exploratory research based around students' understanding and perception of 'learning' in both academic and vocational subjects and would like to discover what the word 'learning' means to you.

I do not require your name, and the gathered information will only be used for my own purposes in completing a research essay towards my doctorate degree.

I would be very grateful if you would complete all the following questions but do not worry if there are certain questions you do not wish to answer.

None of the gathered data will be published or used for other purposes other than providing information for my essay.

Mr K Williams.

**1. Name your three favourite lessons from the following list:**

- English
- Dance
- Geography
- Maths
- Chemistry
- Religious studies
- Music
- Modern Foreign Languages
- History
- Biology
- ICT
- Physics
- Drama
- PE
- Food & Nutrition
- Art

<b>1<sup>st</sup> favourite</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> favourite</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> favourite</b>
---------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------

2. What do you find most interesting or enjoyable about your three favourite subjects?

1 <sup>st</sup> Favourite	2 <sup>nd</sup> Favourite	3 <sup>rd</sup> Favourite
<b>Subject -</b>	<b>Subject -</b>	<b>Subject -</b>
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

3. From the following list, which are your most favourite learning spaces?

- a) Computer Room**                      **b) Dance Studio**                      **c) Library**  
**d) Classroom – formal layout with desks in rows**  
**e) Classroom with large tables (e.g. art room)**                      **f) Drama Studio**  
**g) Science Labs**    **h) Classroom – informal layout (e.g. music rm choir)**

1 <sup>st</sup> favourite	2 <sup>nd</sup> favourite	3 <sup>rd</sup> favourite

4. Name three subjects that you think will be important to you in the future:

1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>

5. Name something that you find difficult in each of your favourite lessons:

1 <sup>st</sup> favourite	2 <sup>nd</sup> favourite	3 <sup>rd</sup> favourite
---------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------

6. Which of the following models/lists best represents your way of learning?

e.g.

**Teacher** = Information/guidance/demonstrations from your teacher.

**Peers** = Information/guidance/demonstrations from pupils in your class.

**Resources** = Information/guidance/demonstrations from books/computers/other classroom resources.

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Teacher 90%	Teacher 75%	Teacher 50%	Teacher 50%
Peers 5%	Resources 20%	Peers 30%	Resources 40%
Resources 5%	Peers 5%	Resources 20%	Peers 10%

1<sup>st</sup> favourite subject: ..... Model

2<sup>nd</sup> favourite subject: ..... Model

3<sup>rd</sup> favourite subject: ..... Model

6. Give three words (or phrases) that best describe or define the word 'learning' to you?

1.....  
.....

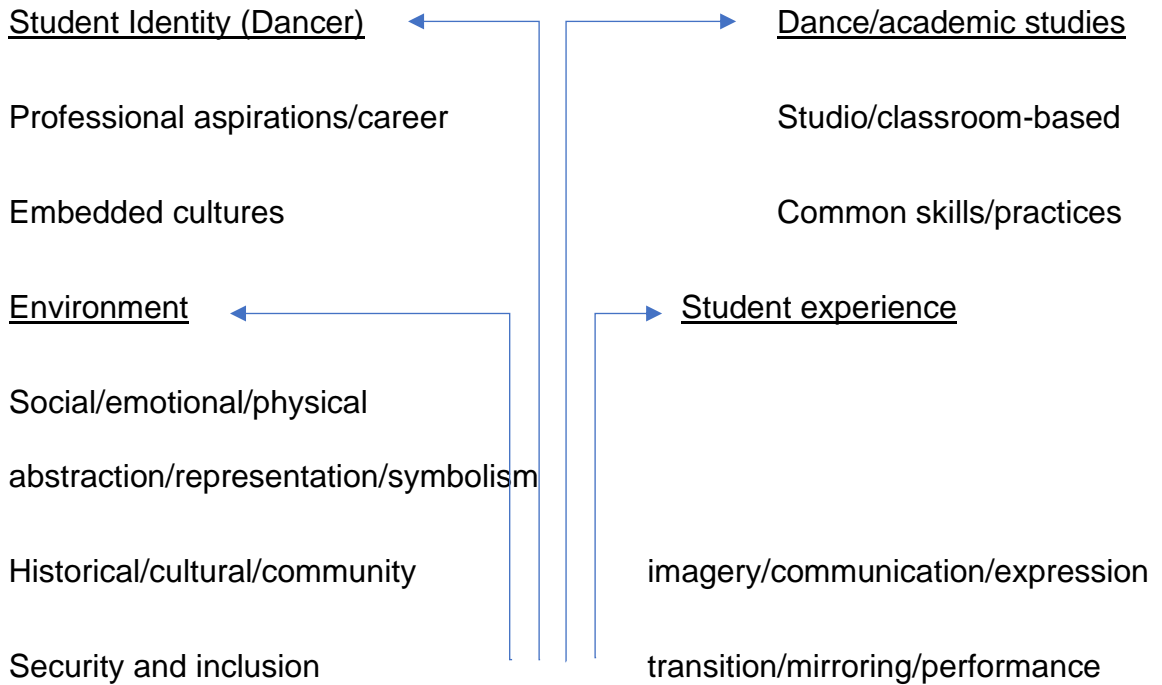
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3.....  
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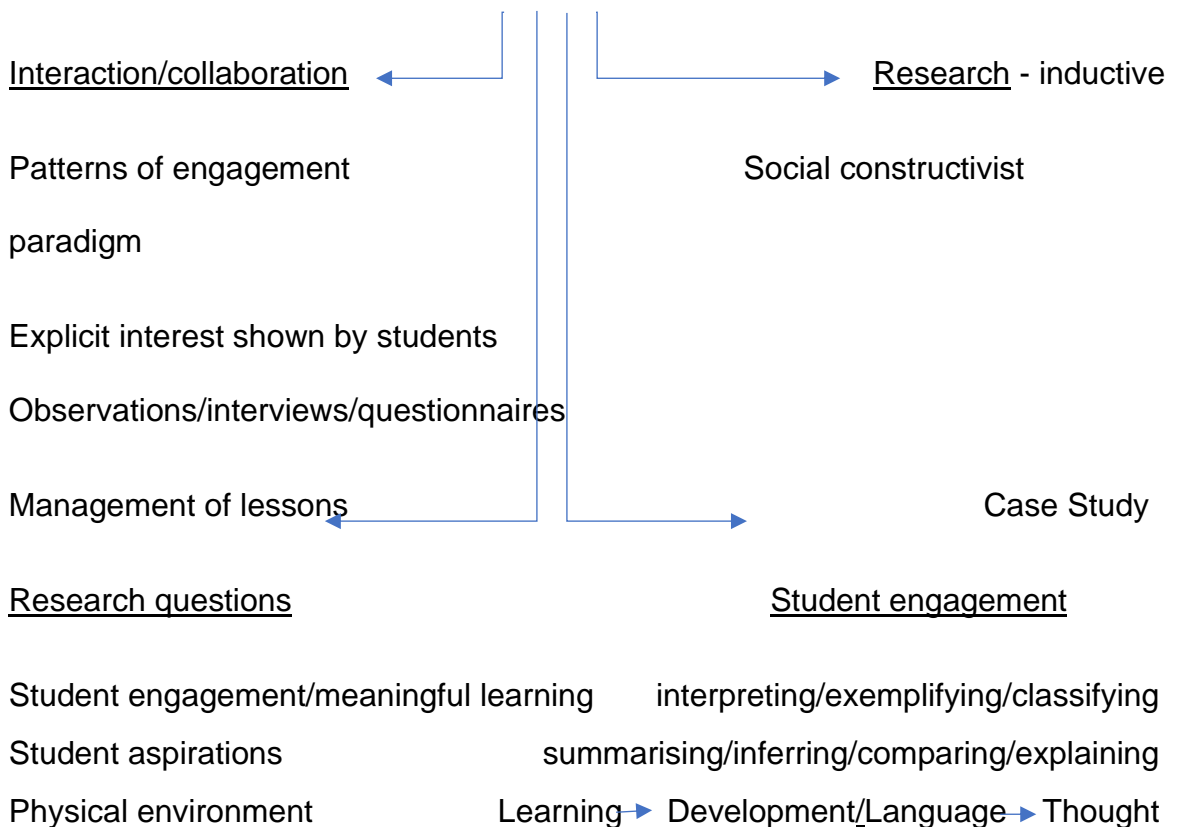
Many thanks for your time and input: Kevin Williams

## Appendix 2

Thematic map developed from emerging themes through literature search.

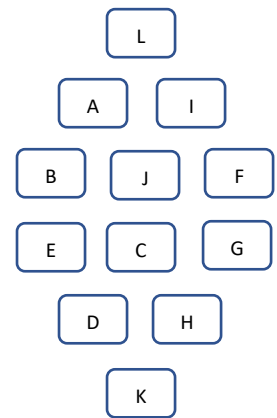
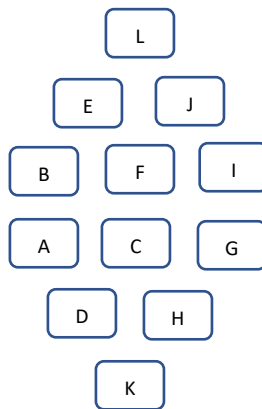
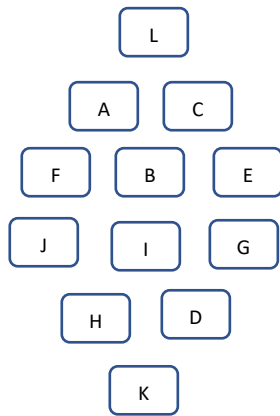
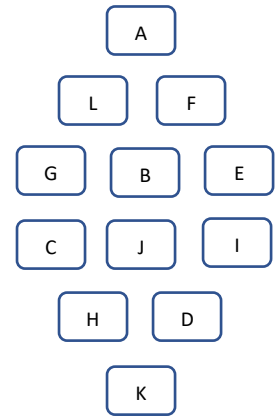
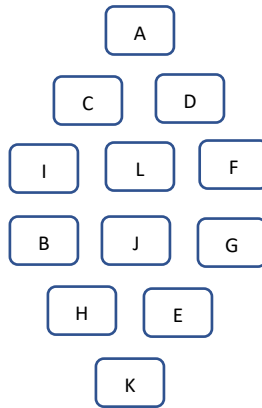
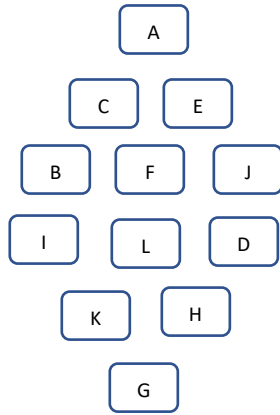
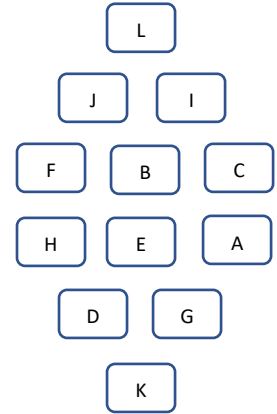
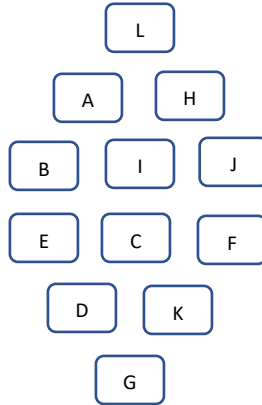
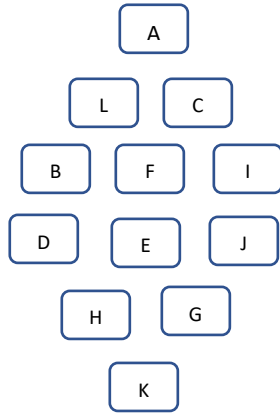


## Sociocultural lens



### Appendix 3

Data showing nine dance students' perceptions on what is most helpful to their learning needs, using a diamond ranking: Studio-based environments.

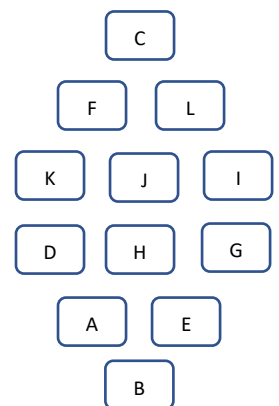
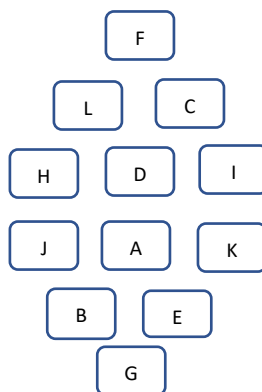
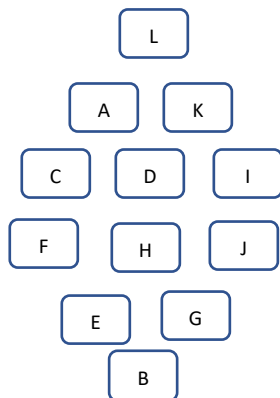
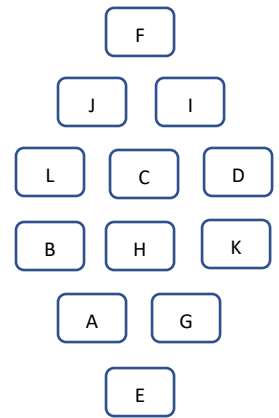
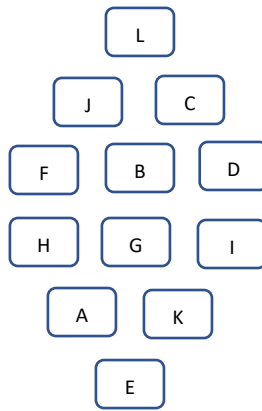
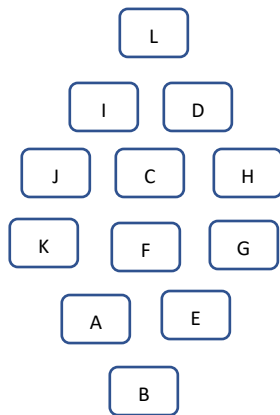
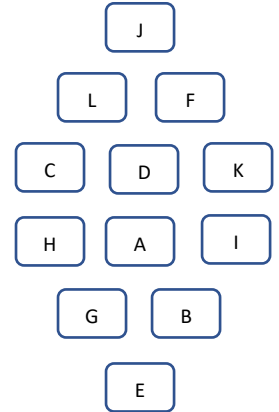
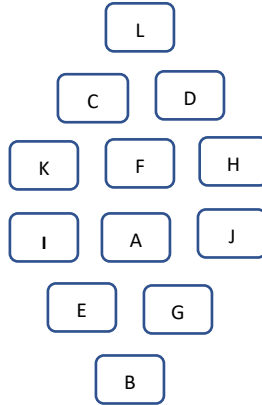
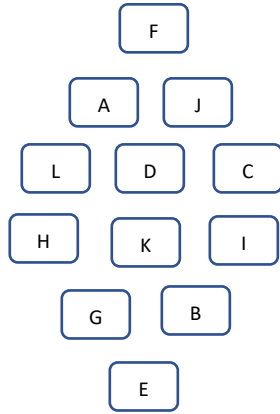


<b>Diamond Ranking - Studio-based environments: Students' perceptions on what is most helpful to their learning needs.</b>										
	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8	Student 9	Total
<b>A</b>	5	4	2	5	5	5	4	2	4	36
<b>B</b>	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	26
<b>C</b>	4	2	3	4	4	2	4	2	2	27
<b>D</b>	2	1	1	2	4	1	1	1	1	14
<b>E</b>	2	2	2	4	1	3	3	4	2	23
<b>F</b>	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	27
<b>G</b>	1	0	1	0	2	3	2	2	2	13
<b>H</b>	1	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
<b>I</b>	3	3	4	2	3	2	2	3	4	26
<b>J</b>	2	3	4	3	2	2	2	4	3	25
<b>K</b>	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
<b>L</b>	4	5	5	2	3	4	5	5	5	38

Collective scores for each element of the learning environment showed evidence that teacher (encouraging), teacher (engaging), learning from peers, meaningful curriculum, physical space, and practical work are seen as key elements in studio-based learning environments. These themes correlate with data from other methods particularly in how students continuously discuss the importance of the teacher, the physical space, the importance of theory to practice, and most importantly, relating learning to their futures.

### Appendix 3.1

Data showing nine dance students' perceptions on what is most helpful to their learning needs, using a diamond ranking: Classroom-based environments





<b>Diamond Ranking - Classroom-based environments: Students' perceptions on what is most helpful to their learning needs.</b>										
	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8	Student 9	Total
<b>A</b>	4	2	2	1	1	1	4	2	1	18
<b>B</b>	1	0	1	0	3	2	0	1	0	8
<b>C</b>	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	5	32
<b>D</b>	3	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	28
<b>E</b>	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	5
<b>F</b>	5	3	4	2	3	5	2	5	4	33
<b>G</b>	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	0	2	11
<b>H</b>	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	21
<b>I</b>	2	2	2	4	2	4	3	3	3	25
<b>J</b>	4	2	5	3	4	4	2	2	3	29
<b>K</b>	2	3	3	2	1	2	4	2	3	22
<b>L</b>	3	5	4	5	5	3	5	4	4	38

Most popular elements in classroom-based subjects are: teacher (encouraging), meaningful curriculum, learning from peers, clear instructions, and group work. These themes focus on the importance of social aspects to learning identifying their peers as key elements to development. Although meaningful curriculum emerged again, it was more a statement of hope than praise for what is happening in class lessons, as identified in the questionnaires and student interviews.

## Appendix 4

### What do you find enjoyable about your three favourite subjects?

- A – Dance: Know lots (3)      Studio space (1)      Professional atmosphere(8)  
 History: Professional (3)      Interesting (4)      Intense (6)  
 Music: Imagination (5)      Free (5)      Open (5)
- B - Dance: Good teachers (8)      Small classes (3)      It's fun (not academic) (5)  
 History: Interesting (4)      Good teachers (5)      Learn a lot (6)  
 Music: Singing in class (practical work) (5)      Relaxed atmosphere (5)      Working in groups (5)
- C - Dance: Nice teachers (3)      Opportunities (6)      New skills (9)  
 Art: Freedom (5)      Enjoyable (4)      Lots of choices (4)  
 Maths: Interesting (4)      Fun (4)      Worksheets (5)
- D - Dance: Feeling free (7)      Good teachers (8)      New skills (9)  
 Music: Interesting (5)      Joyful (5)      Variety of things to do (3)  
 Drama: Passionate (3)      Fun (5)      Nice teacher (5)
- E - Dance: I can be lively (5)      It's fun (5)      Teacher makes it relevant (9)  
 Drama: I get to entertain (9)      Have fun (5)      Interpret things in own way(6)  
 Art: Be creative (4)      Learn skills eg sewing (9)      Do what you want (5)
- F - Dance: Expression (4)      Learning new steps (8)      Creating dances (styles)(9)  
 Art: Creativity (7)      Drawing (4)      Mixing colours (projects) (4)  
 Music: Performing (7)      Styles of music (5)      singing new songs (4)
- G - Dance: Free, happy feeling (7)      Lots of challenges (3)      Different to normal (8)  
 PE: Different choices (6)      Not writing/sitting (5)      Competitive (fun) (4)  
 Art: Creative (4)      Relaxing (5)      Challenging (3)
- H - Maths: Enjoy maths (3)      Enjoy lessons (5)      Challenging (3)  
 Dance: It's what I want to do (7)      Feeling free (7)      Enjoyable (6)  
 Art: Relaxing (5)      Helps me to concentrate (5)
- I - Dance: Expression (8)      Performing (9)      Difficulty (6)  
 Drama: Performing (9)      Exploring (5)      Expression (4)

- Music: Composing (7) Listening to music (7) Terminology (8)
- J - Dance: Movement (9) Working hard (7) Freedom (being myself) (5)  
 Food & Nut: New foods (9) New tastes (9) Terminology (8)  
 Art: Expressing myself (7) Mixing colours (4) Freedom (5)
- K - Dance: Feeling free (5) Makes me happy (7) Expressing my emotions (learning new things) (4)  
 Drama: Builds confidence (7) Experimental (4) Learn new things (6)  
 Music: Relaxes me (5) It's creative (7) Learning new things (6)
- L - Dance: Learning new things (9) Improving (7) Performing (expressing myself /challenging) (9)  
 History: Interesting (4) learning new facts (6) Good teachers (writing) (3)  
 Art: Being creative (4) expressing myself (5) challenging (5)
- M - Dance: The space (1) Feeling free (1) Improving (learning new things/ expressing myself) (5)  
 Drama: Explore new characters (4) The space (1) Acting in general (expressing different emotions) (5)  
 Music: Listening to diff genres (5) Composing (4) Singing (Learning new instruments/Improving) (5)
- N - Dance: Feeling free (1) Dancing full out (7) Expressing myself (going beyond your ability) (5)  
 Drama: Being different person (5) Using accents (6) Being over the top(5)  
 Art: Being creative (4) Being different (5)
- O - Dance: Expression (5) Freedom (1) Discipline (8) Achieving (9) Adrenalin (7)  
 Maths: Challenge (5) Achievement (6) Difficult (5)  
 Geography: Learning about diff areas (4) Field work (4) Case studies (5)
- P - Dance: Love ballet (8) Good teachers (3) Love improving (7) love self-assessing (5) and love performing (9)  
 Art: Love drawing (5) Love concentrating (5) Learning techniques (interpreting others' works) (4)  
 History: I learn a lot (4) Interesting (4) Good teachers (3)
- Q - Dance: Learning new things (9) Feeling free (1) Expression (4)

- Drama: Being a character (5) Being focussed (5)
- Music: Creating new music (4) Expressing feeling (5)
- R - Dance: Freedom (1) Thrilling results (7) Work at own pace (listening to music and fitness) (5)
- Science: It's cool (4) Good to know how things work (9) Variety of topics(3)
- RS: I like religion (4) I like spiritualism (4) Understanding other beliefs/faiths (9)
- S - Dance: It's what I love (9) It's satisfying (7) Makes me feel good about myself (9)
- Art: Relaxing (5) Break from tiring dance (5) Good atmosphere (Good teacher/I'm good at art) (3)
- Drama: Enjoy playing characters (5) I'm good at it (4)
- T - Dance: Fantastic (7) New skills (9) Fun (5) Technique (8) Jumps & turns(8)
- History: Facts (9) Fun (4) Assessments (5) Homework (5) Discussions(5)
- Food & Nutrition: Making new things (5) Tasty (4) Fun (4) Learning from others (6)
- U - Art: Creative (5) Fun (5) I can make it my own (5)
- History: Enjoyable (6) Fun (5)
- Dance: Freedom (1) Fun (5)
- V - Art: Creativity (5) Drawing (5)
- Music: Playing drums (9) Computer software (composing) (5)
- Dance: Being creative (5) learning how your body works (9)
- W - Dance: Learning new steps (9) Improving (6) Expressing my emotions (5)
- Maths: Being challenged (5) Learning new things (6)
- RS: Learning about different religions (9)
- X - Music: Playing instruments (4) Singing (4) The classroom (1) Writing songs (5)
- Drama: Devising pieces (5) Learning pieces (4) Watching pieces (5) Shows (9) Learning about pieces (9)
- Dance: Jumps (9) Dance moves (8) The studio space (1)

## Appendix 5 - Most challenging aspects of favourite lessons

- A – Dance (effort) History (Competitive) Music (Organisation)
- B – Dance (learning new steps) History (Learning lines) Music Singing in front of people
- C – Dance (students being judgemental) Art (?) Maths (learning new things)
- D – Dance (students being judgemental) Music (Theory) Drama (accents)
- E – Dance (Tiredness) Drama (Written work) Art (Anxious about finished work)
- F – Dance (Using core strength) Art (Drawing) Music (Theory)
- G – Dance (Picking things up quickly) PE (Physically hard) Art (Explaining own work)
- H – Maths (Concentration) Dance (remembering steps) Art (Drawing)
- I – Dance (Flexibility & strength) Drama (confidence) Music (Performing)
- J – Dance (Wanting to be better) Food & Nut (Keeping up) Art (Not perfect)
- K – Dance (Technique – turned out) Drama (accents) Music (Theory)
- L – Dance (Anxious about new techniques) History (Writing about something I am not interested in) Art (Doing pieces out of my comfort zone)
- M – Dance (Learning new moves) Drama (Performing characters/solo) Music (Theory)
- N – Dance (Anxious – not good enough) Drama (Not mumbling – diction) Art (Drawing)
- O – Dance (Not getting something right) Maths (Not getting something right)  
Geography (Not getting something right)
- P – Dance (Flexibility) Art (Realism) History (Remembering facts)
- Q – Dance (Picking things up) Drama (Learning new words) Music (Having good ideas)
- R – Dance (Staying quiet) Science (Writing long paragraphs) RS Memorising things)
- S - Dance (Pressure of expected standards) – Art (Having new ideas) Drama (Remembering lines)
- T – Dance (Assessments) History (Remembering things) Food & Nut (Remembering how to do things)
- U - Art (Time consuming) History (A lot to take in) Dance (Always being focussed)
- V – Art (Writing) Music (Theory) Dance (Nothing)
- W – Dance (Challenging steps) Maths (Working with calculators) RS (Why each religion is treated differently)
- X – Music (Nothing) Drama (Nothing) Dance (Splits and some other techniques)
- Y – Dance (Everything) Art (Everything) Chemistry (Everything)

## Appendix 6

Lesson observation – Teacher interview form: Ballet Y9	
Observed feature of lesson	Supporting notes from teacher
<p>Do you always ensure students observe each other's corrections?</p> <p>Do you consciously create a professional setting?</p> <p>Do you ever use peer assessment with this class?</p> <p>What is the most important part of the lesson?</p>	<p>Not always – it depends who the students is and what is being corrected.</p> <p>Yes, it's important for them to understand the importance of company etiquette.</p> <p>Occasionally – I use it more with slightly older students, although we do watch performances and evaluate them.</p> <p>It's all important, although if you have a bad start then the atmosphere is lost. That is why they all have a routine to get into the correct frame of mind.</p>

Lesson observation – Teacher interview form: Maths Y9	
Observed feature of lesson	Supporting notes from teacher
<p>How did you develop these forms of collaborative practice?</p> <p>The student who was offering the most help – why did you ask her to explain what advice she has been giving?</p> <p>Is this common practice in your lessons?</p> <p>Have you followed a particular educational theory?</p>	<p>By giving them the freedom to move around and ask for help from their peers. They get to know very quickly who to ask. I wanted her to work out the process in more detail and by going through this, then hopefully it will raise her level of understanding.</p> <p>By the time they reach y9 they develop a greater sense of appropriate levels of interaction. I do give them freedom in most lessons but not for the entire time.</p> <p>No, I have found that they naturally go to whoever is able to help them. I just have to make sure the correct interaction is taking place and they are not just being given the answers.</p>

Lesson observation – Teacher interview form: Modern dance	
Observed feature of lesson	Supporting notes from teacher
<p>They were slightly livelier at the start of lesson than they were for ballet – are you okay with this?</p> <p>How important is studio etiquette?</p> <p>Your lesson was mainly teacher-led – Is this how you normally work?</p> <p>You mentioned links to professional theatre world. Is that something you do often?</p> <p>Does that help with discipline?</p>	<p>They still have a set routine and they will be in a different mind-set – building up energy for class. They are still focussed and preparing themselves for class.</p> <p>It's extremely important – we are training them to become professional dancers and they need to be used to professional standards.</p> <p>Yes – I demonstrate a lot to my students so they can see the artistry and precise technique.</p> <p>Every lesson. They like to hear about the world of dance and also appreciate my past career.</p> <p>It allows them to appreciate the professional world and understand more through my anecdotes and advice. I think they enjoy going into that world where they become 'the professional dancer' for a time. I think it works well in ballet; not so much in other dance classes because of the past traditions and culture that they invest in from a young age.</p>

Lesson observation – Teacher interview form: Tap	
Observed feature of lesson	Supporting notes from teacher
<p>I noticed you did a lot of group work – was there a reason for this?</p>	<p>Yes, when you have 15 tappers it can become very noisy and hard to differentiate between them. Working in small groups allows them to observe each other and hear their rhythms. They respond well to corrections and generally observe each other without any silliness. The four girls on the right side are my four strongest dancers and the whole class tend to team up with dancers of a similar standard. I allow students to stand where they wish and find this a good tactic when asking them to do things together.</p>

**APPENDIX 7: Synthesis of data referring to RQ1 Influences on Learning – The Physical Learning Environment (Theme 1)**

METHOD	EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS/ THEORETICAL LINKS	EMERGING THEME	RESEARCH QUESTION	THESIS Pg. No.
Questionnaire	Students equate 'interesting', 'practical' and 'appropriate' – with inspiring	Dance studio space recognised as an essential part of dance culture/appropriate learning environment. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</a> . <a href="#">Kolb – Experiential Learning</a>	The physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1	121
Questionnaire	Students expressed importance of symbolic nature of dance studio – empty space, barres, mirrors, own learning space  Classrooms – negative aspect = cluttered spaces create anxiety amongst students. Desks in rows do not allow any contact with other students	Dance culture/ world seen as extremely important – gives immediate focus and motivation through lesson Evidence shows that students would prefer more opportunities for collaboration in classrooms. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</a>	The physical learning environment  Teaching models/ Application to teaching	RQ1 Theme 1	121
Questionnaire	Favourite learning environment – culture/symbolic/situated professional environment	Strong links made between studio environment and the professional world – sub-conscious references made to situated learning. <a href="#">Situated Learning</a> . <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a> .	Physical learning environment/ Meaningful leaning/ Symbols and culture	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 5 Theme 6	121 138
Focus Group	“They’re fun” “I like being in a studio”	Relating fun activities to the dance studio	Physical learning environment/ Meaningful leaning/	RQ1 Theme 1 Theme 2	149
Focus Group	“It’s our space”	Ownership of space. Club mentality. Dance culture. <a href="#">Experiential Learning</a> . <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a> .	Physical learning space/ Symbols and culture	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 5	149
Focus Group	“I like the calmness in the lessons”	Reference to atmosphere of dance studio – linked to studio etiquette.	Physical learning environment/ learning styles	RQ1 Theme 1 Theme 2	149
Focus Group	“I like the space and freedom (dance studio) ...it makes you feel special	Impact of physical space on state of mind – links to inspiration and motivation.	Physical learning environment/ learning styles	RQ1 Theme 1	150



Focus Group	“some classrooms are really cluttered and it just makes you feel stressed” “I like open spaces and calmness”	Clutter = stress. Importance of carefully managed learning spaces - significant	Physical learning environment/ learning styles	RQ1 Theme 1	150 153
Focus Group	“I like the barres and the mirrors... it makes you want to dance”	Symbolic resources – inspiring (direct link to professional world of dance). <i>Situated Learning</i>	Physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 5	151
Lesson Observations – time sampling	Students fully engaged: Dance studio = very high %. Classroom = low %	Students’ behaviours differ vastly in the two contrasting environments – situated learning/ culture/ studio etiquette/ subject content are all significant. <i>Social Constructivism</i>	Student focus/ meaningful learning/ physical environment	RQ1 Theme 1 Theme 3 RQ3 Theme 6	161
Lesson Observations – time sampling	Iconic (image-based) Learning activity based around physical aspect/ elements of lesson	Physical learning space of dance studio – populated by physicality of dance – situated learning. <i>Bruner – 4 modes of learning</i>	Physical learning environment/ Symbols and cultures	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 5	161
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Studio – high level of discipline/ students fully engaged / good awareness of studio etiquette/ situated professional setting	Established patterns of behaviour/ working – close links to professional industry. Well-managed teaching space making good use of symbolic and cultural links to industry. <i>Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning.</i>	Meaningful learning/ Symbols and Cultures/ Student focus/ Physical environment/ Student perceptions on learning	RQ1 Theme 1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3 RQ3 Theme 5&6	163
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Physical features of dance studio provide a professional setting	Inspiration of setting. Dance Culture. <i>Situated Learning. Social Constructivism.</i>	Physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1	164
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Students did not refer to wall posters and other physical features/ elements of the classroom	No reference relating to a specific culture within classrooms - significant	Physical learning environment. Symbols and cultures	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 5	165
Diamond Ranking	B – Physical Space: Dance Studio ranked 5th highest out of 12 in priority of key elements of effective learning	Related to symbols and culture. Professional space creates motivation. <i>Situated Learning.</i>	The physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1	146

Diamond Ranking	Classrooms ranked 11 <sup>th</sup> out of 12 in priority of key elements of effective learning	Students expressed uninspiring effects that cluttered spaces can have on their learning. <b>Social Constructivism</b>	The physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1	147
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Students most aware of when entering learning space: Dance studio: Space, barres, mirrors Classroom: Noise, chairs, students	Dance studio relates to specific elements of class and tuition. Classroom relates to external factors not specifically related to subject. <b>Situated Learning</b>	The physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1	167
Semi-structured Student Interviews	8 out of 12 students expressed importance of observing each other in dance	Significant acknowledgement of learning from each other – notably lacking in classrooms. <b>Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger – Social Constructivism</b>	Physical learning environment/ perceptions on learning/ cycle of learning	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ2 Theme 3	167
Semi-structured Student Interviews	7 out of 12 students mentioned significance of space in dance studios. 10 out of 12 students mentioned significance of mirrors in dance studios	Space (particularly ownership of that space) was seen as significant to their learning and attitude to work. Mirrors gave the feel of more space and also connectivity with the practical work – easy to observe self and others. <b>Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger – Social Constructivism</b>	Physical learning space	RQ1 Theme 1	171
Semi-structured Student Interviews	“Surroundings in dance help you get into the right mind-set” mentioned by 8 out of 12 dance students “Open studio is more relaxed” “Busy rooms make me feel anxious”	Students’ behaviours differ vastly in the two contrasting environments – situated learning/ culture/ studio etiquette/ subject content are all significant. <b>Situated Learning</b>	Student focus/ physical environment	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 5	172
Semi-structured Student Interviews	“Wall displays that are never changed can have a negative impact” “It can inspire you if the teacher has made an effort”	Close links between the teacher and the learning space and how students make judgements regarding teacher impact on learning. <b>Vygotsky (ZPD)</b>	Student focus/ physical environment	RQ1 Theme 1 Theme 2	172

Semi-structured Student Interviews	Dance Culture: Space in dance studio; mirrors; “nicer environment”	References made by students emphasise the importance and relevance of physical features.	Physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1	181
Photographs	Clear evidence of contrasts between studios and classrooms	Open space of studio allows for more peer observations and collaboration. <a href="#">Vygotsky, Lave and Wenger – Social Constructivism</a>	Physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ2 Theme 4	175

**APPENDIX 7: Synthesis of data referring to RQ1 Influences on Learning – Application to Teaching (Theme 2)**

METHOD	EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS/ THEORETICAL LINKS	EMERGING THEME	RESEARCH QUESTION	THESIS Pg. No.
Questionnaire	Responsibility of learning comes mainly from the teacher	17 out of 24 students identified key elements to effective learning: Discipline, fun teachers, help from teachers, being challenged, understanding the teacher, explaining things thoroughly. <a href="#">Vygotsky ZPD.</a>	Teacher-led preference in supporting learning.	RQ1 Theme 2	136
Questionnaire	Previous knowledge was identified as being important to assist knowledge and understanding.	14 students identified key elements to assist their learning: understanding subject content and context of knowledge, using previous knowledge, understanding personal levels of attainment. <a href="#">Social Constructivism.</a>	Knowledge and understanding is built upon existing knowledge i.e. social constructivist philosophy.	RQ1 Theme 2	136
Questionnaire	Building new skills on top of existing skills.	12 students highlighted the importance of developing new skills and using existing skills to support this development. <a href="#">Social Constructivism.</a>	Linking existing knowledge with new i.e. social constructivist philosophy	RQ1 Theme 2	137
Questionnaire	Sense of achievement can be inspiring	21 students noted the importance of achieving (mainly related to dance). This was seen as an important element to their learning as it provided motivation to work harder. <a href="#">Vygotsky ZPD</a>	Encouragement and praise produce confidence. Signifies importance of trust and respect for the teacher	RQ1 Theme 2	137

Questionnaire	Repetition was seen as an important element of their learning.	16 students mentioned the importance of repetition as a way of developing a deep understanding of task (mainly in reference to dance) Some students thought this approach would also be useful in their academic lessons. Bruner's enactive learning. Social constructivism	Repetition – muscle memory. Layering of knowledge and skills: Constructivist philosophy.	RQ1 Theme 2	137
Questionnaire	Students enjoy being challenged	22 students expressed the importance of being challenged regarding how much progress they made. This was noted across all subjects with many comments suggesting that greater improvement in their academic classes would occur if they were 'stretched more'. Nearly all students mentioned being challenged and stretched in dance classes, particularly classical-based classes. 4 students noted that being challenged in some academic classes was seen as a negative to their learning (lack of confidence). Vygotsky ZPD.	Students suggesting that they are not reaching their full potential in some areas of their education. Links to Vygotsky's ZPD	RQ1 Theme 2	137
Questionnaire	Learning from others.	All 24 students noted the importance of learning from each other. This was mostly directed to dance classes in being able to observe each other during the class. Social Constructivism. Bruner's Iconic Learning.	Students identified that their knowledge and understanding is supported by observing other students. This includes elements of self-evaluation, reviewing others' work, building new, on top of existing knowledge and skills. Collaborative practices. Social – constructivist philosophy. Vygotsky's ZPD.	RQ1 Theme 2	137 140

Questionnaire	Relating theory to practice.	11 students discussed the importance of theory as a foundation to good performance. This came from the pedagogical and assessment process where knowledge is seen as an essential element of understanding artistry and technique. <a href="#">Constructivism</a> . <a href="#">Bruner's Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic Learning</a>	Students' recognition of importance of knowledge and understanding to facilitate high levels of performance. This suggests good performance comes from layers of knowledge, understanding, technique, and artistry.	RQ1 Theme 2	137
Focus Group	In reference to dance classes "They're fun"	This statement was well received and all six students seemed to acknowledge the important factor of 'fun' in the learning process. This suggests the significance of how delivery of knowledge can influence a student's motivation and potentially their level of understanding. Responsibility, therefore lies with the teacher. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a>	Students linking motivation with learning/ investment in lesson.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	149
Focus Group	Students discussed the calmness in dance classes and the control the dance teacher has over the class.	Students identified discipline as a key factor in the learning process. The word calm was used to describe the studio learning environment suggesting that distractions in other spaces can impact learning in a negative way. Teacher seen as main source of learning. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a>	Discipline and calmness seen as important elements in the learning process.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	149
Focus Group	Students prefer to be kept busy	Students acknowledged the importance of keeping on task. Having plenty to do was seen as an important element of learning. This included using a variety of tasks to develop their skills and understanding (dance classes).	Variety of approaches and keeping busy were seen as important elements of their learning.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	149 152

		Non-dance students also agreed that they preferred to keep busy and students generally became disruptive when not having enough to do. <a href="#">Bruner's Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic Learning</a> .			
Focus Group	Students' perceptions of how much a teacher is interested in their own subject influenced their approach and investment in that particular subject.	<p>Students' motivations came directly from the teacher. Words such as "energy", "animated", and "enthusiastic" were used to describe some teachers (mainly dance). This suggested that students' input into lessons actually mirrored that of the teacher.</p> <p>Non-dance students expressed similar views "some teachers make it interesting and others don't" – "if it's interesting we work harder". These students also discussed the passion that some teachers show for their subject which makes it more interesting. The word "boring" was used against some teachers and this was linked to a lack of interest in that particular subject.</p> <p>Non-dance students commented on the importance of teacher interaction for individuals within the lesson to support their own understanding.</p> <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a>	Students being inspired by the teacher in how they deliver their subject. Inspiring teachers. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a>	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	149 152
Focus Group	Students' perceptions of the usefulness of subject content was a source of positive or negative feelings towards that subject.	Meaningful curriculum; Students engagement in a subject was dependent on whether they could see any purpose in what was being taught. This links to the dancers' identity and future aspirations. Failure from some students to see	Meaningful subject content was seen as an important element of their overall development.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ3 Theme 6	150

		relevance of knowledge if not related to their dance studies or future careers. Emphasis on linking existing knowledge with new knowledge. <a href="#">Constructivist theories.</a>			
Focus Group	Students did make some connections between classroom-based subjects and their dance studies.	Science was seen as an important source of information regarding how their bodies work. Links were also made to art classes focussing on words such as “creative” and “style”. <a href="#">Constructivist theories.</a>	Important points were made about transferability and linking knowledge between subjects. It was suggested that this gave greater meaning to the subject content. Constructivist philosophy.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ3 Theme 6	150
Focus Group	Feedback was highlighted as being important to their learning including listening to feedback given to other students.	Instant feedback in dance classes was seen as important. Feedback in majority of classroom-based lessons was often given a week later in the form of written comments in their exercise books. Students expressed that this was less effective. Dancers were describing the social aspect of the dance studio. <a href="#">Social Constructivism.</a>	Feedback to build on knowledge and skills was seen as important element of learning. Constructivist theories.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	150
Focus Group	Learning from others.	Students commented that they preferred working in small groups. This was referring to classroom-based subjects and reflected the openness of the dance studio where each individual’s progress is a shared experience. Students agreed that problems can be solved more effectively when working together. Non-dancers expressed similar feelings regarding working in groups.	Collaborative practices was identified as being an effective way of developing knowledge and understanding.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	150 151

		They all agreed that they would prefer more group work activity in their lessons. <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a> .			
Focus Group	Lack of practical work in classrooms was seen as a negative element to learning.	Students described the importance of applying theory to practice in helping them improve their understanding. Non-dance students agreed that practical work can help reinforce their understanding of theory. <a href="#">Bruner's Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic learning</a> . <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning</a> . <a href="#">Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning</a> . <a href="#">Constructivist theories</a> .	Theory to practice. Practical applications to learning.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 4	150
Student Voice	Teachers who show an interest in students was seen as important.	SVA/SVD/SVF/SVK talked about "mutual respect" "normal conversations". Teacher-student relationship important. Student identified trust as being important giving them the confidence to push their potential. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a>		RQ1 Theme 2	154
Student Voice	Practical work identified as being important to support theory.	SVB/SVC/SVD highlighted importance of varying learning activity in class to keep up levels of interest. Experience of physical work helps cement understanding. <a href="#">Bruner's Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic Learning</a> . <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning</a> .	Variety of activity in class seen as important element to learning.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 4	154
Student Voice	Knowledge and understanding happens more easily when the teachers make the topic more interesting.	SVE/SVH/SVJ/SVL – The teacher can influence how effective the learning is by keeping students engaged and interested. Inspiration to students. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a> . <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning</a> .	Providing a variety of approaches was seen as an important element of learning.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	155



Student Voice	Doing “actual” work rather than “fun activities” was seen as important to learning	SVF/SVH – Referring to being stretched in class with challenging material. Progress is less when activities are presented as fun tasks.	Students need to be challenged/ stretched to generate improvement in knowledge and understanding.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	155
Lesson Observations - time sampling	Teacher-led instruction throughout dance classes.	Students responded well to the teacher’s direction and were fully engaged throughout the majority of dance lessons. There were numerous examples throughout all dance classes of individual attention to students and teacher-demonstrations on technique and artistry. <a href="#">Vygotsky’s ZPD</a> .	Understanding and/or levels of confidence showed progress through following instruction from teacher (class and individual attention)	RQ1 Theme 2	161
Lesson Observations - time sampling	Sources of learning in dance classes came principally from action and image-based activity.	Students were familiar with listening to instruction, observing a demonstration from the teacher, and then having a go at the practical task. <a href="#">Kolb’s Experiential Learning</a> . <a href="#">Bruner’s Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic Learning</a>	Teacher-led instruction kept students fully engaged throughout majority of dance classes. The same students were less engaged in the majority of classroom-based subjects where teacher activity was varied.	RQ1 Theme 2	161
Lesson Observations – marginal participant	Positive body language from students throughout dance classes	Students were fully engaged throughout the majority of dance classes and performing tasks with a high level of confidence. Students responded well to feedback from the teacher and showed a level of determination to achieve the given task. There was	Shared learning experience. Observing each other. Positive response of feedback from teacher.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 6	163

		an explicit social aspect to learning with students observing each other and taking note of feedback given to other students by the teacher. <a href="#">Vygotky's ZPD. Social Constructivism.</a>			
Lesson Observations – marginal participant	Teacher demonstrations were an important element of the learning process	Students observed the teacher demonstrations and responded immediately with performing the given task. Feedback was given by the teacher both to whole class and individuals. Students also reflected on their performance by observing other students in the class. There were fewer examples of all individuals receiving support from the teacher in classroom-based subjects. Feedback often came in the form of written comments from homework given. <a href="#">Vygotky's ZPD. Social Constructivism.</a>	Shared learning experience. Observing each other. Positive response of feedback from teacher.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 6	163 164
Lesson Observations – marginal participant	Classroom environment showed range of learning sources, including teacher-led, independent learning, and collaborative practices between peers.	Range of approaches in delivering information to students. Initially teacher-led, then students working independently or in small groups. Teacher at times becomes facilitator allowing students to develop knowledge collaboratively (mainly maths and history classes). <a href="#">Vygotky, ZPD; Lave and Wenger, Communities of Practice; Social Constructivism.</a>		RQ1 Theme 2	164
Lesson Observations - marginal participant	Professional atmosphere in dance studio.	Similar situation to how a professional dance company operates. Dance teachers make constant reference to the professional performance world.	High levels of respect shown for the dance teachers – professional background.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3 RQ3	164 165

		Majority of dance teachers have been professional performers – source of admiration and inspiration for students. No links were made to the ‘real world’ within any of the classroom-based lessons. <a href="#">Vygotsky’s ZPD.</a>	Students responded well to the teacher’s instruction.	Theme 5	
Lesson Observation - marginal participant	In dance classes, students welcomed repetition as part of the learning process.	Muscle memory was seen as an essential part of dance technique and artistry. Students were fully engaged in this aspect of learning. The slower pace of instruction was also welcomed, giving them time to absorb all necessary detail. This was a criticism of some classroom-based subjects, where they felt rushed at times resulting in not fully understanding the work. <a href="#">Constructivist theories. Bruner’s Enactive and Iconic Learning.</a>	Repetition of tasks seen as important. Slow pace of instruction allowed students to fully absorb all details of the task.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 4	164
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Students learn from copying dance moves both from the teacher and their peers in class.	The social and visual aspect of the dance class were seen as an important element of the learning process. This included being aware of corrections given to other students. <a href="#">Bruner’s Enactive and Iconic Learning. Constructivist theories. Bruner’s Enactive and Iconic Learning. Vygotsky’s ZPD.</a>	Social aspect of learning seen as important to their learning. Building knowledge and skills from a variety of sources – the teacher, feedback, observing each other.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	167 170
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Six students mentioned that little or no learning comes from working with other students in classroom-based lessons.	Highlights contrast in learning between the studio and classroom environments.	Classrooms mainly teacher-led or independent work (except maths/ history)	RQ1 Theme 2	167

Semi-structured Student Interviews	Participants used such words as “engaging” (9 students), “interesting” (7), and “encouraging” (10), as important elements of a good teacher.	Strong focus on the teacher as being central to the learning process. This was seen both positively and negatively with students stating that they found it hard to respond to a teacher who did not show an interest in them or their subject. This reflects back to the dance classes where teachers are generally more animated and involved in the learning process through regular demonstrating and feeding back. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD.</a>		RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Interaction with other students was seen as an important element to learning.	Students discussed the importance of learning from each other. This was offered in a positive way with some students saying they learnt much from observing and discussing things with more able students. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger's LPP and apprenticeship model.</a> <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a>	Students learning from each other – social aspects to learning.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Practical applications to work was seen as an important element of learning.	Eleven students discussed the importance of theory into practice and confirmed this was normal practice within the majority of dance classes. They also expressed a desire for this to become more common practice in classroom-based subjects as it helps to reinforce their understanding. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning.</a> <a href="#">Bruner's Enactive Learning.</a>	Theory into practice: reinforces understanding of a task. Practical applications to learning seen as important.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	169

Semi-structured Student Interviews	Varying teaching approaches and not moving on too quickly were seen as important elements of the teaching process.	Students felt they responded more positively to teachers who made their subject interesting by presenting work in different ways. They also acknowledged the importance of pacing the lesson well in order to effectively understand the information given. Here, the responsibility was clearly directed towards the teacher. <a href="#">Constructivist theories. Bruner's Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic Learning. Kolb's Experiential Learning.</a>	How subject content is presented to students.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Having a clear structure to the lesson was seen as an important element of learning.	9 out of the 12 participants expressed the need for a structured lesson. This mirrors the majority of dance classes. However, they suggested that classroom-based lessons generally have less structure and predictability.	Structure to lessons evident in dance classes.	RQ1 Theme 2	170
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Individual tuition seen as important - reinforcing their understanding.	7 students commented on the importance of individual attention from the teacher to clarify or reinforce their understanding of the subject content given. These students also made the link between attaching existing knowledge to new – this is an important element of dance tuition but is not as explicit in classroom-based subjects. <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning. Social Constructivism. Vygotsky's ZPD.</a>	Emphasis on reinforcing knowledge and understanding through individual attention from the teacher – prevalent in dance classes.	RQ1 Theme 2 RQ2 Theme 3	170
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Students discussed the importance of 'routine' at the beginning of dance classes.	Checking footwear, costume and self-warm-ups were seen as a good mental preparation for dance classes. Students did not seem to	Mental preparation for classes. Students were fully engaged with learning	RQ1 Theme 2	171

		consider this lack of preparation in other subjects as being particularly important.	environment and culture of studio as soon as they entered the learning space. This did not happen in the majority of classroom-based subjects.		
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<b>Appendix 7: Synthesis of data referring to RQ2 How Students Learn – Students’ Perceptions of Learning (Theme 3)</b>					
<b>METHOD</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>	<b>ANALYSIS/ THEORETICAL LINKS</b>	<b>EMERGING THEME</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>THESIS Pg. No.</b>
Questionnaire	20 out of 24 students mentioned confidence as an important element to effective learning	Students relating emotional elements to level of learning and understanding.	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	120
Questionnaire	14 out of 24 students referred to the importance of life-skills embedded in a lesson -	Significance of skill-based learning activity – practical elements linked to their future careers. <b>Kolb – Experiential Learning</b>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	121
Questionnaire	Self-awareness of current standard/ ability seen as an important element to their learning	Self-reflection is a constant process in dance and can then be easily compared with other students in class – more challenging in classroom environment. <b>Kolb – Experiential Learning</b>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	136
Questionnaire	Developing new skills onto the things you can already do. Self-awareness of improvements. Connecting new to existing information/knowledge	Constructing knowledge using previous knowledge and understanding. Sense-making by connecting knowledge/ skills. <b>Constructivist theory.</b>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	137

Questionnaire	Students expressed the significance of having the motivation and inspiration to achieve high standards is crucial to learning	Pressure of expected standards in dance, peer judgements, and competitive atmosphere leads to higher work ethic (Apprehension) Kolb – significance of apprehension	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	142
Focus Group	Anxious feelings and lack of confidence has negative impact on learning	This refers directly to classroom-based subjects, as anxiety and lack of confidence can trigger a greater determination to succeed in dance classes (not always the case) Kolb – significance of apprehension	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	149
Focus Group	“You make lots of connections with technique and making something look good [artistry] so it all joins together and makes sense”	Knowledge construction – connecting new with previous knowledge. Social constructivist theory. Kolb – Experiential Learning	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	150
Focus Group	“When we learn something new in dance it is usually to make something we already know better”	Knowledge construction – connecting new with previous knowledge. Vygotsky/ Lave and Wenger – Social Constructivism. Kolb Experiential Learning	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	150
Focus Group	“We know how well we are doing by feedback from the teacher and comparing ourselves with each other. In other subjects we don’t really know how we are doing and you can become really anxious”	Importance of self-reflection and understanding personal levels of achievement towards effective learning. Vygotsky (ZPD). Lave and Wenger (LPP)	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	150
Focus Group	Age appropriate support – peer support seen as an important element to effective learning	Interaction/ collaboration identified as key elements towards effective learning. Social Constructivism. Vygotsky (ZPD). Lave and Wenger (LPP).	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	150
Focus Group	I learn best when we do practical work	Reference to ‘theory to practice’ Kolb – Experiential Learning	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	151
Student Voice	“Sometimes in a lesson a teacher may speak as if we were younger students and this doesn’t get the best out of us	Age-appropriate instruction - significant	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	154

Student Voice	Variety of activities is seen as important to encourage interest	Students expressed variety of lesson content encourages greater focus and effective learning Bruner – four modes of learning	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	154
Student Voice	Staff -student relationship important element of learning  “If teachers interact with students it normally helps me”	Students identified relaxed, encouraging approach as important to effective learning. This shows high level of trust and respect students have to staff (particularly dance staff) Vygotsky (ZPD)	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	154
Student Voice	“I enjoy lessons where we do actual work instead of what teachers think are the fun activities” “I like it when teachers give me a challenge because I feel I can make good progress”	Expression of desire to be pushed/ challenged (wanting to achieve) Kolb – Experiential Learning	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	155
Student Voice	Too much homework can have a negative impact on learning  “it helps when teachers set relatable homework to the topic we have been doing in class”	Students often find that prep time is very restricted due to long days at school and felt that improved communication between staff would ensure that not too much is given at the same time Purpose of homework – needs to be explicit regarding its purpose	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	156
Lesson Observations – time sampling	Students more focussed with enactive (action-based) teaching and learning approach	Reference to ‘theory to practice’ Kolb – Experiential Learning	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	124
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Studio – high level of discipline/ students fully engaged / good awareness of studio etiquette/ situated professional setting	Established patterns of behaviour/ working – close links to professional industry. Well-managed teaching space making good use of symbolic and cultural links to industry. Lave and Wenger – situated learning	Meaningful learning/ Symbols and Cultures/ Student focus/ Physical environment/ Student perceptions on learning	RQ1/2/3	163



Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Independent learning in classroom – students not always fully focussed	Students expressed a desire for more collaborative practices in classrooms (peer and 1-2-1 teacher support) <a href="#">Social Constructivist theory</a>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	164
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Students identified that they do not always work to the best of their ability – affects their level of learning	Students were generally engaged in classroom subjects but there was an overall feeling that they were just doing enough to get by as opposed to the dance classes where there was a strong desire to be pushed further	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	165
Semi-structured Student Interviews	8 out of 12 students expressed importance of observing each other in dance	Significant acknowledgement of learning from each other – notably lacking in classrooms	Physical learning environment/ perceptions on learning/ cycle of learning	RQ1/2	167
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Main source of learning: Studio: Mainly teacher Classroom: Equal peers, teacher, resources	This does not take into account the peer observing and learning from other students' corrections. Teacher-led strategy – powerful learning tool in studios. <a href="#">Vygotsky (ZPD)</a> . <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	166
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Discipline and encouragement identified as key elements to learning	Dance students benefit from close attention from teacher – particularly relating to the respect they have for dance staff and their past professional experience. <a href="#">Vygotsky (ZPD)</a>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	168
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Being set specific tasks/ clear instructions/ practical application to theory are all identified as key elements to learning	This fits with standard structure of classical dance classes – measured pace, clear instructions with demonstrations. <a href="#">Kolb Experiential Learning</a>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Most interesting aspects of lessons – “learn lots of new things” “fun” (Dance)	Students identified keeping busy with a variety of activities as key elements to effective learning	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	173

Photographs	Students expressed preference for open space of studio and having a sense of ownership of their own space within that studio	Peer observations, collaborative practices, professional environment, all lead to effective learning. <b>Social Constructivism</b>	Student perceptions on learning	RQ2	175
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<b>Appendix 7: Synthesis of data referring to RQ2 How Students Learn – Cycle of Learning (Theme 4)</b>					
<b>METHOD</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>	<b>ANALYSIS/ THEORETICAL LINKS</b>	<b>EMERGING THEME</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>THESIS Pg. No.</b>
Questionnaire	Responsibility of learning comes mainly from the teacher	Students noted that the biggest impact on their learning was the teacher: Being challenging, supportive, explaining things slowly. <b>Vygotsky's ZPD.</b>	Teaching strategies play a major role in how students engage with subject content.	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	136
Questionnaire	Studio/classroom discipline was noted as a major factor in the learning process.	Students acknowledged the importance of maintaining a focus and engagement to the subject content throughout the lesson. This was noted as being a significant element of dance classes and less prevalent in classroom-based lessons. Students mentioned the professional atmosphere of the dance-studio class.	Discipline and focus seen as essential elements of learning.	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	136
Questionnaire	Understanding context of knowledge	Students expressed the need to connect new knowledge with what they already know. This included appreciating the purpose of the subject content and how it impacts on their own personal development. Common element of dance teaching including transferable knowledge between each genre of dance. <b>Constructivist theories.</b>	Making sense of new knowledge: Links to existing knowledge, transferable knowledge, purpose of knowledge.	RQ2 Theme 4	136 137
Questionnaire	Self-belief was noted as an essential part of the learning process.	This allowed students to be fully aware of their potential; to accept challenges as a positive aspect of learning; and to be inspired to learn new skills and knowledge.	Positive attitude to learn stemming from personal confidence.	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	137

Questionnaire	Learning from others seen as an important element of learning.	Social aspects of learning was seen as an effective supporting tool in the learning process i.e. subject content delivered from the teacher is then reinforced with collaborative activity amongst the students: discussions, observing, help from more able. <a href="#">Vygotky's ZPD</a> . <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential learning</a> . <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a> .	Collaborative learning. Various stages of the learning process.	RQ2 Theme 4	137
Questionnaire	How practical work can support knowledge and understanding.	Students highlighted the importance of applying knowledge learnt in a practical form. They commented that practical work helps to reinforce understanding and also make sense of theoretical work. This was common practice in dance classes but less prevalent in classroom-based subjects. <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning</a> .	Making sense of new knowledge and reinforcing theory through practical applications.	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	137 141
Focus Group	Discipline is seen as an important element to learning.	Students described the calm atmosphere of the dance studio as an inspiring learning environment. Students were able to focus and be fully engaged with the lesson. They also mentioned the professional feel it has and makes them feel special. This was linked with the social aspect of learning, where everyone in the studio is wanting to achieve the same goals. <a href="#">Collaborative practices</a> . <a href="#">Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning</a> .	Club culture mentality and links to the professional world.	RQ2 Theme 4	149
Focus Group	The importance of being challenged described as an important element of the learning process.	Students demonstrated a keen desire to reach their goal of becoming a professional performer. Being challenged/ stretched was noted as being an essential part of building knowledge and skills. <a href="#">Vygotky's ZPD</a> .	Students achieving their full potential through encouragement and expert tuition.	RQ2 Theme 4	149

Focus Group	The importance of relating new knowledge to existing knowledge. Students' perceptions of what they termed as 'relevance of knowledge' was also seen to be important.	Students discussed the process of building knowledge. Important associations were made with previous knowledge and skills and included other subjects that related to dance such as anatomy and physiology. <a href="#">Constructivist theories.</a> <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning.</a>	Linking new knowledge with existing knowledge. Dance-related topics seen as more relevant.	RQ2 Theme 4	150
Lesson Observations – time sampling	Students in maths classes worked in mixed ability groups where learning was identified in various forms: Asking each other questions, explaining solutions, solving tasks collaboratively, describing process of the answer to the teacher. There were similar examples of this in dance classes although transfer of information as mainly through observing each other followed by practical application.	Mixed ability groups were seen to encourage productive discussions in problem solving and all students were seen to benefit. The 'aspiring expert' student seemingly gained much from reinforcing their own knowledge through their explanations to students and finally discussing the whole process with their teacher. All other students were fully engaged with the task throughout the whole session and later discussed the benefit of working together at their own pace. <a href="#">Vygotsky ZPD;</a> <a href="#">Social Constructivism.</a>	Students expressed the significance of peer support in their own learning process. Having the opportunity to discuss work helped with their understanding of each task. Therefore, they did not feel isolated.	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	160? 161?
Student Voice	Students felt that some teachers presented work as if they were teaching much younger children.	SVA/SVL - Dance students see themselves as young people, training to become professional dancers. Their view of dance training may be seen as a portal to their future aspirations with other subjects taking a minor role within their world. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger's Situated Learning.</a>	Students' aspirations potentially dictating their perceptions of learning.	RQ2 Theme 4	154
Student Voice	Importance of keeping long lessons interesting with multiple activities.	SVB/SVC/SVE/SVH/SVK - Students described a typical dance class: warm-ups, barre work, centre work, corner work, new technique or	Variety of approaches to learning and tasks were seen as	RQ2 Theme 4	154

		routine, combinations of steps. They claimed that lessons lasting 90 minutes seemed to go very quickly. It was also noted that classroom-based subjects would be much improved if there was a similar structure to dance classes with clear sections and variety of tasks. <b>Social Constructivism.</b>	important elements of the learning cycle.		
Student Voice	Applying practical work to theory is seen as an important strategy of learning.	SVD - Students confirmed the importance of reinforcing their understanding through practical applications of theory. This was for all subjects and expressed a desire for it to be used more in classroom-based subjects. <b>Kolb's experiential Learning.</b>	Theory into practice. Lacking in classroom-based subjects.	RQ2 Theme 4	155
Student Voice	Importance of being encouraged and challenged	SVH – Students expressed a desire to be challenged along with being encouraged. This brought a sense of satisfaction and gave them confidence to work harder. <b>Vygotsky's ZPD</b>	Encouragement and challenge to inspire good work ethic from students.	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	156
Student Voice	Pace of lesson and having time to process information was seen as important to learning process.	SVJ/SVK - Management of time throughout lesson seen as important. Time given for reflection and evaluation were raised as important elements of learning. <b>Kolb's Experiential learning.</b>	Personal reflection and a steady pace to lessons were identified as important element of learning process.	RQ2 Theme 4	156
Lesson Observation - Time sampling	Dance classes were essentially teacher-led throughout. Classroom-based subjects generally began with the teacher and then	Students were fully engaged throughout their dance classes developing knowledge and skills through enactive and iconic learning.	Teaching strategies: Teacher-led, independent work,	RQ2 Theme 4	161

	students worked independently and occasionally with others.	Classroom-based subjects used mainly symbolic learning strategies and it was noted that students were less engaged with the subject material. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a> . <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning</a> .	collaborative practices.		
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Students being stretched by teacher with appropriate challenges for their levels of ability and experience.	Students responded well to being challenged and remained focussed and engaged throughout the majority of dance classes. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a>	Encouraging students to reach their full potential.	RQ2 Theme 4	163
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Students observing each other and copying artistic and technical moves.	Students seemed comfortable with being observed by their peers as an accepted part of the learning environment. This same level of collaboration and confidence was not seen as much in classroom-based subjects. <a href="#">Collaborative practices</a> . <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a> . <a href="#">Kolb's Experiential Learning</a> .	Learning from observing the teacher and their peers.	RQ2 Theme 4	163
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Learning from observing.	Clear process of learning: Theory given by teacher including: any contextual information; teacher demonstrates dance moves or techniques; students respond with practical work; students develop new skills or knowledge through observing other students. <a href="#">Vygotsky's ZPD</a> .	Process of learning led by teacher, then moving to the responsibility of the student.	RQ2 Theme 4	163
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Importance of observing and learning from other students' corrections in class	Students were keen to describe the social aspect of learning within a dance class. The explicit nature of dance allowed for this sharing of good work to occur repeatedly	Benefits of collaborative practices.	RQ2 Theme 4	167

		throughout each lesson. It was noted that this was not the case in many classroom-based lessons. Collaborative practices. Social Constructivism. Kolb's Experiential Learning. Vygotsky's ZPD.			
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Varied teaching strategies throughout each lesson was seen as a positive element of the learning process.	Multiple approaches and clear structure to the lesson was seen as beneficial to learning and helped keep students on-task. Kolb's Experiential learning.	Structure and variety of teaching strategies were identified by students as being essential elements of the learning process.	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Importance of being set clear specific tasks	Students claimed that they can become easily confused when new knowledge or skills are not clearly presented. This then has a knock-on effect when further knowledge or skills are presented. Constructivist theories.	Making sense of new information by linking it to previous knowledge.	RQ2 Theme 4	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Importance of practical applications to all work being set.	Students described the essential element of reinforcing their understanding through practical applications of theory. This was for all subjects and expressed a desire for it to be used more in classroom-based subjects. Kolb's experiential Learning.	Theory into practice. Lacking in classroom-based subjects.	RQ2 Theme 4	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Repetition of information was identified as being an important element of learning.	Students were used to reinforcing their dance knowledge and skills through constant repetition of movements or techniques. However, they also acknowledged that this can become "boring" when applied to classroom-based subjects. Kolb's Experiential learning	Reinforcement of knowledge and techniques through repetition.	RQ2 Theme 4	170

Photographs	Students claimed that they were able to work much harder in bright open spaces.	Reference was made to “cluttered classrooms” as being a source of anxiety. They were able to focus more when the physical surroundings were ordered and appropriate for that specific lesson. All dance studios met this requisite.	Physical surroundings: how this can impact on the learning process.	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ2 Theme 4	175
<b>Appendix 7: Synthesis of data referring to RQ3 How Students Learn – Symbols and Cultures (Theme 5)</b>					
<b>METHOD</b>	<b>EVIDENCE</b>	<b>ANALYSIS/ THEORETICAL LINKS</b>	<b>EMERGING THEME</b>	<b>RESEARCH QUESTION</b>	<b>THESIS Pg. No.</b>
Questionnaire	16 (out of 24) dance students listed studio etiquette and discipline as being an important aspect of learning	Students welcomed the clear boundaries as set by the school rules and studio etiquette. These rules were presented to them as being an essential part of the professional world of dance. This raised expectations of discipline and behaviour and provided a learning environment that could be closely associated with the professional industry. <i>Lave and Wenger: Situated Learning.</i>	Culture of dance world/ studio space – seen as important to their learning	RQ3 Theme 5	136
Questionnaire	11 dance students mentioned the significance of observing and learning from each other	This highlights the open nature of learning within the dance studio: All students are able to observe each other. This is identified by students as being a key element of their learning. <i>Vygotsky ZPD; Lave and Wenger, Communities of practice; Bruner, Iconic-based learning.</i>	Culture of the dance studio and visual nature of dance seen as important elements to their learning	RQ3 Theme 5	137
Questionnaire	20 dance students described the competitive nature of the dance studio and that challenge was a necessary part of the dance studio environment	Students expressed the relevance towards the competitive nature of dance; many saying that this had been part of their dance training from a very early age. <i>Kolb, Experiential Learning Cycle; Lave and Wenger, Communities of Practice.</i>	Competitive nature of the professional world of performance. This is accepted as being part of dance culture	RQ3 Theme 5 Theme 6	141



Questionnaire	All students mentioned the expectations of their teachers: adding pressure to what was expected of them in class	This highlighted the goal that the majority of dance students had: achieving professional performer status. The majority of students expressed that they have had this aim since a very young age. This confirmed the significance of their future aspirations towards dance training. Kolb, Experiential Learning; Lave and Wenger, Situated Learning; Vygotsky, ZPD.	Culture of professional world of dance: Competitive, high standards of expertise, high levels of consistency.	RQ3 Theme 5 Theme 6	141
Questionnaire	22 students expressed the significance of symbolic elements of the dance studio: ballet barres, mirrors, piano and pianist, dance floor, and dancewear	Students immersed in an environment that mirrors the professional dance world. Students recognised all physical elements of the dance studio as essential parts of their training. This was not the case when discussing classroom-based subjects. Bruner, Iconic Learning; Kolb, Experiential Learning.	Culture of dance world – elements linked to professional world.	RQ3 Theme 1 Theme 5 Theme 6	148 151
Focus Group	“Club culture” mentioned in various ways from all six students, with suggestions of a clear divide between dance and non-dance students.	Strong associations were expressed towards being a ‘dancer’. Students aware of the significance of their awarded place at school and discussed the perceived expectations from parents, teachers and from themselves. Kolb, Experiential Learning; Socio-cultural practices.	Club culture of dance students (relating to their expectations of becoming a professional dancer)	RQ3 Theme 5	149
Focus Group	Comments from all six students expressing ownership of the dance studios. Bold comments such as: “It’s our space”, “We’re here to dance, so the studios are for us”	Dance students were keen to express the significance of the dance studios, showing a strong attachment to these learning environments. A high level of respect was shown regarding the importance of the physical resources	Club culture – world of dance. Strong associations with physical resources of dance studios.	RQ3 Theme 1 Theme 5 Theme 6	149

		to their learning and development. This was not expressed in their discussions about classroom-based subjects. Bruner, Iconic Learning; Lave and Wenger, Situated Learning.			
Student Voice	Importance of like-minded peers – “we all want to become professional performers”	Students expressed a level of peer support and common interests and aspirations regarding their dance training. There were no examples of students discussing classroom-based subjects in the same way. This provided a supportive environment that dance students recognised as being important to their motivation and wellbeing.	Club culture – common aims for future careers. A team spirit was clearly evident through having these common interests and aspirations.	RQ3 Theme 5	154
Lesson Observations – time sampling	Beginning of dance classes – all students focussed on preparing for lesson (adjustment of footwear/dancewear, individual warm-ups, individual discussions of injury/issues with teacher)	Students were focussed and fully engaged in the established routines of the dance classes. There was a calmness to the studio in almost every observation, and students demonstrated a good understanding of what was required of them regarding preparation and individual warm-ups. Bruner, Iconic and Enactive Learning. Lave and Wenger, Communities of Practice; Socio-cultural activity.	Culture of dance studio linked to professional world. Each class mirrored that of a professional dance company class.	RQ3 Theme 2 Theme 5 Theme 6	159
Lesson Observations – time sampling	These same students demonstrated off-task activities at beginning in classroom-based subjects (casual conversations/ distracting behaviour/ break-time activities brought into classroom.	Students demonstrated a contrasting focus and lack of engagement in the majority of classroom-based subjects. This was not essentially poor behaviour, although it did show a lack of engagement and	Change in culture between studio and classrooms.	RQ3 Theme 2 Theme 5 Theme 6	159

		preparation towards their classroom-based subjects. Bruner, Iconic and Enactive Learning. Lave and Wenger, Communities of Practice; Socio-cultural activity.			
Lesson Observation - time sampling	WAV files show high level of sound and activity at beginning of classroom subjects. Dance WAV files show a consistent low level of sound and activity.	This supported the direct observations from the researcher regarding differences in how dance students approach their studio and classroom-based lessons. Bruner, Iconic and Enactive Learning. Lave and Wenger, Communities of Practice; Socio-cultural activity.	Differing start to lessons between studio and classroom spaces	RQ3 Theme 2 Theme 5 Theme 6	159
Lesson Observation - time sampling	There were explicit forms of how students were forging their understanding and skill development in dance classes. Dance teachers varied their approaches using, <b>language</b> (dance terminology/ expressive words to inspire artistry), <b>image</b> (teacher and peer demonstrations/ individual feedback was also observed by all students), and <b>action</b> (practical application seen as essential to improving and developing technique and artistry). Combining these approaches, reinforced the students' knowledge and understanding through repetition.	Bruner's Enactive, Iconic, and Symbolic learning processes were identified throughout all dance classes, often used together to reinforce the learning and understanding of the students. There was much less evidence of this in classroom-based subjects with the emphasis on language rather than image or action. Vygotsky ZPD; Social Constructivism; Bruner, Enactive, Iconic, Symbolic forms of learning.	Links to professional dancer's philosophy (Darcy Bussell's muscle memory technique through repetition). Links to the professional world of dance.	RQ3 Theme 2 Theme 4 Theme 5	160
Lesson Observation - time sampling	Teacher-led activity – prevalent in all dance classes observed. Evidenced through demonstration and instruction: Teacher to student. Followed by practice and peer observation.	Students responded well in all dance classes to what seemed to be a well-established structure to the lesson: Verbal instruction, description from the teacher, followed by demonstration from the teacher, then practical application from the students which included feedback	Culture of professional world – status of choreographer/ director.	RQ3 Theme 2 Theme 4 Theme 5	161

		from the teacher and peer observation. <a href="#">Vygotsky, ZPD</a> ; <a href="#">Lave and Wenger, Communities of Practice</a> ; <a href="#">Social Constructivism</a> .			
Lesson Observation - marginal participant	Students demonstrated a high level of respect for dance teachers – studio etiquette, strict discipline, consistent focus throughout lesson.	Students guided throughout lesson by the teacher ('expert'). Professional performing experience was acknowledged as being significant in student interviews and focus groups. <a href="#">Vygotsky, ZPD</a> .	Culture of professional world – status of choreographer/director. Similar to professional company class	RQ3 Theme 5	163 164
Lesson Observation - marginal participant	Enactive and Iconic-based learning	Enactive – students engaged in physical activity with development and understanding coming from teacher-instruction and application of information through practise. Iconic – Students gained information from watching teacher-demonstrations and observing each other. Symbolic – Use of dance terminology and expressive words to inspire correct posture and movement – close link to teacher and subject content throughout lesson. <a href="#">Bruner: Iconic, Enactive, Symbolic forms of learning</a> .	Culture of professional dance company – dance captain or choreographer leading the session/rehearsal	RQ2 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 5	163 164
Lesson Observation - marginal participant	Constant instruction and guidance from teacher: Students were pushed hard to stretch their levels of attainment	Teacher-led instruction which mirrored the professional world of the dance company. <a href="#">Vygotsky, ZPD</a>	Reflecting the strict professionalism of the world of dance	RQ3 Theme 5	163
Lesson Observation - marginal participant	Teacher made regular links to the industry – personal knowledge and experience	Students showed high levels of respect for dance teachers. Clear change of attitude towards some classroom-based teachers.	Club culture of dance students	RQ3	164
Lesson Observation - marginal participant	Dancewear – all students were immaculately dressed for their dance classes. Classroom-based subjects – all students wore school	All followed a strict code of practice which included hair in a bun, correct footwear for that particular class,	Professional world etiquette. Health and safety issues.	RQ3 Theme 5	164

	uniform other than protective clothing for some science classes.	and correct uniform for the specific genre of dance. Strong symbolic representation of dancewear – situated learning. <a href="#">Socio-cultural practices</a> .			
Lesson Observation - marginal participant	Cluttered spaces in many of the classrooms with no direct links to 'the real world' with the exception of science labs.	Movement around classrooms was extremely limited both for the teacher and the students. Lessons were mainly teacher-led followed by individual work and occasionally small group activity. <a href="#">Vygotzky ZPD</a> .	Most classroom spaces lacked a specific identity other than symbolic indications on wall displays.	RQ3 Theme 5	165
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Majority of dance classes are teacher-led	Reflects professional company protocols – sessions led by dance captain/ choreographer. <a href="#">Vygotzky ZPD</a>	Dance world culture – industry links.	RQ3 Theme 5	166
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Learning from observing is a major element of dance classes: copying dance moves, observing peers, observing others students' corrections, and sharing ideas.	Reflects the visual nature of dance world. Strong bond between students: having common interests and aspirations. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger LPP</a> . <a href="#">Vygotzky ZPD</a>	Collaborative learning – social constructivism. 'Club culture' of dance world.	RQ2 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 5	167
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Teacher being actively involved in lesson and showing a high level of interest, seen as very important: All students noted this for the majority of dance classes and seven mentioned it occurs only in maths, history, and English.	When describing dance teachers, students used words such as, engaging, supportive, expressive tones in voice, being animated, understanding, having high expectations, and making it interesting. All students also commented that except for a small number of classroom-based subjects, teachers did not show the same enthusiasm/ passion for their subject. <a href="#">Vygotzky ZPD</a>	Students attached much significance to the teaching approaches citing this as a source of inspiration. Links to the professional dance company of having a choreographer/ dance captain inspiring and ensuring high standards are achieved.	RQ2 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 5	169 173

Semi-structured Student Interviews	Nine students expressed the importance of subject content having relevance or links to their future lives (skill and knowledge-based). Links to future aspirations.	Students were able to describe the relevance of content in dance lessons and how their knowledge is developed. This was less clear when describing classroom-based subjects. Bruner: Enactive, Iconic, Symbolic.	Future aspirations: Industry links. Culture of dance world and relevance of subject content in dance classes.	RQ3 Theme 5	169
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Eight students described the importance of routine at the beginning of dance classes: shoes, self-warm-up, class warm-up.	This allowed students to enter a 'professional-world' environment, mirroring a professional company class. Socio-cultural perspectives.	Collaborative practice. Company feel to class/ learning collectively	RQ3 Theme 5	170
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Noticeable less structure to start of majority of classroom-based subjects. More informal with off-task conversations or waiting for instructions from the teacher.	Less ownership of space and subject in all lessons other than dance. Dance students showed a greater sense of purpose at beginning of dance classes than in other subjects. Socio-cultural perspectives.	Overall, students demonstrated a lack of interest, ownership, and/or engagement in classroom areas.	RQ3 Theme 5	171
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Students identified the physical features of the dance studio as being important to their learning: Mirrors, space, dancewear.	Links to the dance world culture. Dance students have become familiar with these symbolic links to professional world, in majority of cases, from a very young age. Bruner: Iconic	Symbolic links to professional world of dance	RQ3 Theme 5	171
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Although students described the dance studio as having a less stressful and more relaxed atmosphere than the majority of classrooms, they also welcomed the strictness and etiquette of the dance studio environment.	Symbolic links to the professional world of dance. Lave and Wenger: Situated Learning	Links to the strict standards in the professional world of dance. Dance-world culture.	RQ3 Theme 5	171

Semi-structured Student Interviews	Eight students described the physical environment of the dance studio as “helping you to get into the right mindset”	Symbolic links to the professional world of dance. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger: Situated Learning</a>	Cultural aspects of the creative space within a dance studio.	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 4	172
Semi-structured Student Interviews	Six students expressed busy, cluttered rooms can make them anxious and much preferred the open space of the dance studio.	Symbolic links to the professional world of dance. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger: Situated Learning</a>	Cultural aspects of the creative space within a dance studio.	RQ3 Theme 5	172
Semi-structured Student Interviews	The dance teacher was seen as a significant and interesting part of a dance class. In contrast, no teachers were mentioned in relation to interesting aspects of classroom-based subjects.	Students recognised the importance of the dance teacher as teacher and facilitator. Students pointed out the significance of observing the teacher and their peers in facilitating effective learning.. Five students acknowledged that artistry is developed from observing other students who have received positive feedback from the teacher. <a href="#">Vygotsky ZPD. Socio-cultural perspectives.</a>	Students recognised that collaborative practices were seen as important to their knowledge and understanding. Significant role of the teacher was also confirmed.	RQ2 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 5	173
Photographs	Symbolic links to the professional world: links to theatre/ performance areas.	Majority of classrooms presented desks in a linear pattern potentially minimising collaborative practices (except for good example of LLP in maths class). Dance studios generally much brighter spaces and containing only necessary items for those classes. Classrooms were generally more cluttered, containing items not relevant to what was being taught. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger LPP.</a>	Links to culture of dance world: Professional theatre and studio environments.	RQ3 Theme 5	175

**Appendix 7: Synthesis of data referring to RQ3 Impact of students' future aspirations – Meaningful Learning (Theme 6)**

METHOD	EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS/ THEORETICAL LINKS	EMERGING THEME	RESEARCH QUESTION	THESIS Pg. No.
Questionnaire	20 dance students highlighted importance of subject content to their future careers. Links to their dancing were seen as essential requisites to their own personal development.	Strong single focus to future career. Students making their own assumptions/decisions as to relevance of subject content. <b>Kolb Experiential Learning</b>	Meaningful curriculum – related to dance studies.	RQ3 Theme 6	120
Questionnaire	Using past experience... finding content interesting... relating theory to practice (link to personal aspirations)	Students linking previous knowledge to new. Students expressed the significance of how theory informs practice. Strong single focus to future career. <b>Social Constructivism</b>	Meaningful curriculum/ Student focus/ Application to teaching	RQ2 Theme 3 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 6	137
Questionnaire	Favourite learning environment – culture/symbolic/situated professional environment	Strong links made between studio environment and the professional world – sub-conscious references made to situated learning. <b>Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</b>	Meaningful curriculum/ Symbols and Culture/ physical learning environment	RQ1 Theme 1 RQ3 Theme 5 Theme 6	139
Questionnaire	Dance identified as most meaningful subject	Further comments related to importance of future careers – subject content therefore had deeper significance <b>Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</b>	Meaningful curriculum	RQ3 Theme 6	140
Focus Group	Students linked subject content with future aspirations as a factor in levels of interest for each subject ...”something we’re not interested in” “A lesson is always boring if it is not going to help us in the future”	Strong single focus to future career. Students making their own assumptions/decisions as to relevance of subject content. Significance of transferable knowledge. <b>Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</b>	Meaningful curriculum/ Student perceptions on learning	RQ2 Theme 3 RQ3 Theme 6	149



Focus Group	Students' perceptions on relevance of subject content - "It's okay if you are learning a skill but most things are just not of any use"	Dance-related knowledge – significant. Students making their own assumptions/decisions as to relevance of subject content. Singular focus on dance career. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</a>	Meaningful curriculum/ Student perceptions on learning	RQ2 Theme 4 RQ3 Theme 6	150
Focus Group	"In science you learn about the body and so you can understand what's happening to yourself when you're dancing"	Dance-related knowledge – significant. Self-reflection linking theory to practice. Transferable skills. <a href="#">Kolb – Experiential learning</a>	Meaningful learning	RQ3	150
Focus Group	"When learning something new in dance it is to make something we already know better"	Students linking previous knowledge to new. Students express the significance of how theory informs practice. Strong single focus to future career. <a href="#">Constructivist Theory</a>	Meaningful learning/ Student focus/ Application to teaching	RQ2/3	150
Student Voice	"I work better in the subjects I find really interesting"	Students relating their own motivation to relevance of subject content. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</a>	Meaningful learning/ Student focus	RQ2/3	155
Lesson Observations – time sampling	Students fully engaged: Dance studio = very high %. Classroom = low %	Students' behaviours differ vastly in the two contrasting environments – situated learning/ culture/ studio etiquette/ subject content are all significant. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</a>	Student focus/ meaningful learning/ physical environment	RQ1/3	161
Lesson Observations – time sampling	Enactive (action-based): Dance studio = very high %. Classroom = very low %.	Evidence (or lack of) - process of theory into practice – creating strong link and relevance between theory and practical application. <a href="#">Bruner – 4 modes of learning.</a>	Meaningful learning/ Application to teaching	RQ1/3	161

Lesson Observations – time sampling	Dance studios: Students fully engaged for majority of lesson. Strong focus and interest evident towards subject content	Students linking previous knowledge to new. Students express the significance of how theory informs practice. Strong single focus to future career. <a href="#">Constructivist Theory</a> . <a href="#">Kolb – Experiential Learning</a>	Meaningful learning/ Application to teaching/ Student focus	RQ1/3	124
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Studio – high level of discipline/ students fully engaged / good awareness of studio etiquette/ situated professional setting	Established patterns of behaviour/ working – close links to professional industry. Well-managed teaching space making good use of symbolic and cultural links to industry. <a href="#">Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</a>	Meaningful learning/ Symbols and Cultures/ Student focus/ Physical environment/ Student perceptions on learning	RQ1/2/3	163
Lesson Observation – marginal participant	Atmosphere of studio – similar to professional company – teacher makes regular use of links to professional dance world  Classroom – “no links made to industry” no sense of “real-world culture” expressed by students	Students recognise significance of industry links – establishes strong motivation.  Emphasise connections dance students make towards subject content <a href="#">Lave and Wenger – Situated Learning</a>	Meaningful learning/ Symbols and Cultures/ Student focus/ Physical environment/ Student perceptions on learning	RQ1/2/3	164
Diamond Ranking	F – Meaningful Curriculum – ranked 3 <sup>rd</sup> highest in priority of key elements of effective learning	Strong single focus to future career. Students making their own assumptions/decisions as to relevance of subject content. Significance of transferable knowledge. <a href="#">Constructivist Theory</a>	Meaningful learning/ Student perceptions on learning	RQ3	146