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PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON DANCE AS A PEDAGOGY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

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ABSTRACT

Joan Muli: Pre-service teachers' perspectives on dance as a pedagogy in early childhood education and care

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The aim of this research is to explore pre-service teachers' perspectives on dance as a pedagogy in early childhood education and care. By seeking pre-service teachers' insights on dance, this study aspires to raise an awareness of dance as a teaching method and to explore the possibility of using dance in the classroom and thus improve young children's learning.

To answer the research question, What are pre-service teachers' perspectives about dance as a pedagogy for young children? a survey was carried out among 13 participants who are in their 3rd year studying early childhood education and care of the English program. Data is analyzed using content analysis.

Pre-service teachers' attitude towards dance as a pedagogical tool is related to their prior knowledge of dance and previous work experience. To the participants, dance has five attributes in relation to the meaning of dance, which includes self-expression, fun, play, art, and holistic learning experience. While there was some variation in how pre-service teachers perceived dance as beneficial to young children's learning, growth, and development, they shared many views and appreciation for dance as a pedagogy. However, they have limited personal and professional preparation in using dance in their future profession, hence they were all willing to partake in dance pedagogy training, provided either by the university or their workplace. Interestingly for dance pedagogy to make it to early childhood classroom, pre-service teachers might also need to challenge themselves as well with some dancing.

Keywords: dance, pedagogy, early childhood education and care

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

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1 INTRODUCTION

I love dancing. For me, it is an effective way to exercise and have fun at the same time. It also relieves my stress and uplifts my spirit when I feel down. I firmly believe that dance has many positive effects on our body and mind, which is why I incorporate it a lot in my classroom activities. As a dance choreographer for school events to my former fellow teachers and an interventionist to children with special needs for several years, I realized how impactful dance can be to people, no matter what age or situation they are in.

In addition, dance has been found by many studies to be helpful in young children's learning and development, hence it is widely used as a teaching strategy in the classroom, especially in the early childhood settings. It is a form of art which has multiple positive effects on children (Lobo and Winsler, 2008). For instance, one study highlighted the significant improvement of children's social competence and behavior as a result of an instructional program in creative dance movement carried out among low-income preschool children in a metropolitan area in the mid-Atlantic region of the USA (Mathews, et al., 2016). Mathews, et al. (2016) further write,

Clearly, the extent research documents the importance of rhythm to children's development and suggests the use of rhythm as a pedagogical strategy-that is, as a facilitator of children's learning. (Mathews et al., 2016, p.5).

Therefore, it is important to explore pre-service educators' perspectives on dance in relation to teaching. Investigating early childhood education teacher-trainees' views on dance is significant if dance is to be utilized as a pedagogy in the classroom. Hence, this qualitative research will investigate if pre-service educators would integrate or use dance in their future practice, the reasons they would use dance or not in their classroom and the correlation between one's interest in dancing to using it as a pedagogy. This study also aims to discover early childhood education and care undergraduates' opinions on challenges they

may encounter if they facilitate dance-based activities with young learners and if they would consider taking part in a dance pedagogy training if given an opportunity.

By realizing pre-service teachers' insights on dance, I aspire to raise an awareness of dance as a teaching method and to better explore the possibility of using dance in the classroom and thus improve young children's learning. To answer **the research question**: What are pre-service teachers' perspectives about dance as a pedagogy for young children?, a survey approach is employed. A qualitative questionnaire was administered to collect data from 13 participants who are in their 3rd year studying early childhood education and care of the English program. Data has been analyzed using content analysis.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Dance has been found helpful in the development of children's learning skills and is used in the classroom as a pedagogical tool to teach literacy skills at an early age. According to Howe (2021), both body and mind work together to enable children to achieve their full potential to learn and to be creative and intelligent. Dance involves creative movements and provides many positive effects in the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional domains of child development; hence it should be included in the pre-primary curriculum (Shu-ting 2008).

The National Core Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education in Finland (2014) emphasizes that the duty of pre-primary education is to advance children's skills in self-expression by exercising basic skills in music, visual arts, crafts, and bodily and verbal expression, and that children are motivated and guided to use different forms of expressions, one of which is through 'dance'.

To open the basic concepts of dance as a learning experience and pedagogy, a few core concepts will be defined briefly. The importance of knowing the real meaning of dance can make planning of pedagogical activities more efficient and easier, besides, one cannot teach something if one has no good knowledge of what the phenomenon exactly means.

2.1 What is dance?

Many research studies defined dance in early childhood settings. These labels include free dance, creative movement and dance, modern educational dance, movement education, dance movement, and even music and movement as mentioned in the studies carried out by Adrienne Sansom (2009). Stinson (1988, p.11) further states that 'movement is not always dance but dance always

involves movement'. Another definition of dance proffered by Stinson (2002, p.157) (as mentioned in Mathews, et al., 2014) is 'rhythmic movement, usually done to music'. Stinson, nevertheless, considers dance to be more than rhythmic movement when she suggests 'dance is not what we do, but how we do it.' Therefore, it can also be argued that rhythm is a form of dance, since it is defined by the educators who participated in the study conducted by Mathews, et al. (2014), as patterns, patterns that were created in repetition, beat, and/or movement. The learning of rhythm started with beats and patterns in the environment that were then internalized through movement and feeling (Sansom, 2009). Furthermore, Stinson (1988) defines dance as a movement given importance, and that is when a child moves with intention or purpose.

Stinson (1988) believes that creative movement or creative dance movement is the type of dance that is most appropriate for children. They do not necessarily have to follow a choreography or memorize a set of dance steps just like ballet, ballroom dance and the like, instead, children create movements based on a theme. Some may portray trees swaying in the forest or butterflies flying around the flowers. This idea is supported by Joyce (1994) in her research called 'First Steps In Teaching Creative Dance To Children', as a field of science that can be used in honing children's creativity, thus calling it 'creative dance'.

Moreover, Boyle (2020) supports this by saying that in creative dance movement, no dance routines are involved, but a free form of expression where the learners can unleash their own ability to create and explore with the help of a framework. This framework constitutes dance concepts which include energy, space, and time. Each concept represents movements. Every concept of dance works hand in hand to direct movement. Boyle further explains that each concept represents movements. Energy refers to the quality of movement. It can be explained in terms of the four elements of the earth, water, air and fire. Flowing water, for example, can be shown by carrying and moving a long piece of cloth like a river. Space on the other hand can be portrayed using different areas such as small or big movements, working solo or in groups or by placing objects on different heights or levels such as low, medium, or high. Lastly, the time, which involves rhythm and beat with music (Boyle, 2020).

Numerous studies have shown that dance has several meanings based on how it is used in the classroom (Dogan, 2018). Pedagogical definitions of dance given by different researchers in the literature presented here may vary depending on the teacher's own perception of dance as a teaching methodology and that creative dance is a form of dance that is most suited to young learners due to its nature and simplicity. It does not have complicated dance steps for children to memorize.

I cannot agree more with the definitions given by the previous studies. Based on these studies and drawing on my own personal experience of teaching, I define dance for this study as a form of art and expression where creativity and play take place, thus providing a positive learning experience.

2.2 Why dance as a teaching method?

Numerous studies claim that dance has multiple advantages when used as a pedagogy or a teaching strategy. The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2004) supports this and explains that dance among any other form of arts is an artistic expression which encourages children to learn and improves their motor skills. Sansom (2009) in his research on creative dance among young learners which is steered by the curriculum of the Ministry of Education 2017 in New Zealand shows that while dance greatly helps in making children physically active, it is also aesthetically pleasing which supports children's engagement in the classroom, especially when taught in child-centered activities, that is when children's agency is exercised.

Dance is associated with play, too. In her doctoral dissertation, Eeva Anttila (2003) narrates the relationship between the two entities. Her realization is that play and dance are entangled. The relationship between the two entities is so evident that no thorough explanation is required. Play is expressed through dance and vice versa; there triumphs oneness of being. "Dance is a special and very perfect form of play." (Anttila, 2003, p.252)

I remember my parents telling me how I would automatically move around the house dancing freely every time I hear the music plays. They said, I would make up some dance steps and teach my brothers how to move their hips and feet. Those moments were my own version of 'play'. Dance is play and play is fun. Up to now I make up dance steps and use it to teach my own daughter and my students in the classroom. Afterall, learning should be fun.

However, recent research shows that children do not get a considerable amount of challenging physically active play in early childhood settings (Little, 2017). To address this concern, an early childhood center in North Shore Auckland sought the help of Jennifer Nikolai and Andrew Gibbons, both research practitioners who conducted a study on risky play and its handling through dance. Gibbons and Nikolai also led a workshop afterwards to further enhance the teaching practices of the center's early childhood teachers. The objective was to increase awareness of dance concepts, such as proper breathing, body awareness and correct body alignment towards moving with exploration (Gibbons and Nikolai, 2018). "The lack of confidence or professional development that teachers have, using dance as a subject, often deters dance as an entrance point to discovery" (Snook, 2012 as mentioned in Gibbons et al. 2018 p.37).

This literature review listed some of the many beneficial effects of dance in early childhood setting. It is therefore justifiable and of great importance to understand the phenomenon deeply through investigating pre-service educators' perspectives on dance as a pedagogy.

3 METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

My research question: What are pre-service teachers' perspectives about dance as a pedagogy for young children? - is answered using a qualitative questionnaire study. I asked thirteen current Tampere university students of the English program of early childhood education and care about their views on dance as a pedagogy for young children. "Qualitative research is a systematic empirical inquiry into meaning that includes a planned or orderly exploration of how individuals make meaning or sense of social phenomena." (Shank, 2006, p.5 as cited in Mathews, et al., 2016, p.4). Since the aim of this study is to understand pre-service teachers' insights on dance as a pedagogy, qualitative research design appears to be suitable for this study.

3.1 *Survey*

The survey design guides this study. According to Albon and Mukherji (2018), surveys are a very helpful tool in research in early childhood. It is a way of gathering information from the participants, using different methods such as questionnaires and interviews. They also mentioned that although the term 'survey' has many definitions, its general idea is to investigate or to examine. The two kinds of survey are longitudinal, following a group of individuals through a period of time, for instance, from birth to adulthood, and cross-sectional surveys, where information is obtained from a set of participants at one point in time only (Albon and Mukherji, 2018, p.159). They further explained that surveys are used for two main purposes: descriptive and analytical. "A descriptive survey is one that sets out to discover what people think or do, while analytical surveys can be used to test a hypothesis" (Albon and Mukherji, 2018, p. 159). In this study, I used descriptive cross-sectional survey, since the questionnaire was sent only once to a group of pre-service educators to investigate their perspectives on dance as a teaching strategy.

For surveys to be effective and reliable, Kasunic (2005) suggests following a seven-stage process in designing a survey (as cited in Albon and Mukherji, 2018, p. 150-151). The first stage is identification of objectives. The researcher should know the aim of the study. This research has a clear objective and that is to find out the perspectives of pre-service educators on dance as a teaching strategy. The second stage is identification and characterization of the population; a group of individuals to whom the study is targeted. As previously mentioned, this research is targeted to obtain information from pre-service educators, hence it is justifiable that I selected my classmates who are also pursuing early childhood education and care teacher degree. Next stage is design of sampling plan. Mukherji and Albon (2018) describe sampling as the process of choosing participants (p.27). "There are two decisions to consider when choosing a sample: (a) How will the participants of the survey be selected? (b) How many participants will be needed?" (Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p. 152) Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj-Blatchford (2001) explain that sampling methods can be (1) probability sampling which is quantitative in nature and (2) non-probability sampling, where collected data does not represent the whole population (Siraj-Blatchford and Siraj Blatchford, 2001 as cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p.289). My proposed qualitative study results do not aim to be applied universally.

The focus of this research is to understand the views of the participants on dance as a pedagogy. Therefore, non-probability sampling will be used to choose the participants in the study. The specific non-probability sampling that was employed in this research was self-selected sampling wherein participants may or may not agree to take part in the study (Lavrakas, 2008). I sent a letter to my classmates through e-mail requesting them to participate in my research together with the prepared survey questionnaire. Participation is voluntary and it is my classmates' decision whether to agree or decline to take part in the sample.

The fourth and fifth stages in designing a survey are writing the questionnaire and testing it. (Mukherji and Albon, 2018) explain that most successful surveys have a questionnaire which contains questions that enable researchers to obtain significant information. They further advised researchers to test the questionnaire

first before distributing it to all targeted respondents. To pilot a questionnaire is to have it answered first by a representative of the whole target group to check if the questionnaire needs some modification or if the questions asked are indeed helpful in getting your desired information (Mukherji and Albon, 2018). Two of my classmates who are both native English speakers tested my questionnaire and each of them gave their own opinion. One found the questions clear and easy to understand, while the other found one question confusing, but even so, all the answers met the desired key information for the survey and even after I practiced analyzing the results. A suggestion to modify that specific question was taken into consideration. Finally, the last two stages are distribution of the questionnaire and analysis of results and writing the report. After receiving an approval for the research proposal, I began distributing individually the questionnaire to my classmates through their university provided e-mail. Collected data was analyzed using content analysis.

3.2 Participants

Study participants are 13 Tampere university students who are in their third or final year of studies. All participants are from Faculty of Education and Culture pursuing a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and care teacher under the English program. Two of them are male and eleven are female. Their participation is voluntary.

3.3 Questionnaire

The data came from the responses of the participants using a qualitative questionnaire. A questionnaire is a data collection method in surveys which includes a list of questions or statements to elicit information from the respondents or participants to address researcher's aims (Mukherji and Albon, 2018).

The questionnaire I developed is a mixture of open and closed questions. Kumar (2014) explains that open questions are questions that can be answered in any manner or language respondents want, while closed questions are ones that

respondents only need to select from a given set of responses (as cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p. 263) Mukherji and Albon (2018) also state that open questions are commonly utilized when a researcher's aim is to find out in depth views of the respondents. I would want to know the ideas and opinions of pre-service educators on dance as a pedagogy, hence the questionnaire I developed consists mostly of open question type.

In addition to the questionnaire, some important details were added to the email. These included my full contact details and the purpose of the research. I also indicated that confidentiality and anonymity will be kept. They also have the right to decline to participate in the study. A sincere statement of appreciation was also added to the introduction of my email. The questionnaire was tested by my two native English speaker classmates, and the results showed that the obtained data answers the research question, 'a main element for validity' (Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p. 274). Questionnaires were sent to my classmates via e-mail after the research proposal was approved.

3.4 Content Analysis

After every receipt of an accomplished questionnaire, the data was analyzed using 'content analysis'. According to Coffrey (1999), in qualitative studies, the researcher's influence over the data collected and the manner it is interpreted is an essential part of the process. Hence, Fontana and Frey (2000) remind researchers to be reflective when interpreting their results (as cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p. 355). As suggested by Guba and Lincoln (2005), researchers need to acknowledge the fact that their attitudes and beliefs will unavoidably affect their data interpretation and that it must be tackled when making conclusions (as cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p.355).

Content analysis is a research method commonly used to interpret data in a subjective manner through classifying data systematically from the process of coding to identifying patterns or themes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). Coding is the process of identifying words or expressions significant for the aims of study (Denscombe, 2014, as cited in Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p. 357).

Hsieh and Shannon (2005) outline the stages of conventional content analysis. The first stage is collating responses and familiarizing oneself with the data. Second, every word must be carefully read to initiate the process of coding. The researcher then makes notes of his or her initial opinions and analysis. Exact words from the responses of the participants which are helpful in the research study will be identified and highlighted, each of which will be assigned with a name or a code. These coded responses will be sorted into categories and themes will be identified. The analysis can be presented in a way that each of the categories has descriptions followed by examples from the data (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p.1279).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a vital phase of research which must be given high importance. According to Aubrey and colleagues (2000), ethics is “The moral philosophy or set of moral principles underpinning a project” (as cited in Mukherji & Albon 2018, p.107). The participation consent was obtained with the guidance of ‘voluntary informed consent’ which Curtis and Curtis (2011) refer to as the most important aspect of an ethically appropriate research. As mentioned in Abdulai and Owusu (2014), Curtis and Curtis reiterated the following: voluntary as related to open to choose; informed as the notion to having enough knowledge of what is required from them; and consent as an affirmation of agreeing to take part out of their own free will, provided with all the information required from them, which is also known as the formal process.

Moreover, Mukherji and Albon (2018) advise that participants must be fully aware of: a) the objectives of the research; b) the reason behind their participation; c) how their contribution is relative to the research; d) what exactly they need to do; e) their entitlement to information about the entire research process; f) the anonymity of individuals involved will remain; g) the right to pull out of the research at any time; h) data management; i) the purpose of the data and who will see it (Mukherji and Albon, 2018, p. 110-111).

A letter requesting research participation with information about the research, and an emphasis on anonymity and a questionnaire was sent individually through participants' university-provided e-mail. Ethical approval was first obtained from the researcher's institution. The collected data will remain in the researcher's e-mail, OneNote App and private computer hard drive and will be deleted when the research project has ended.

Moreover, researchers must be very cautious with their own biases in the entire research process (Byrne, 2017c). Researchers' biases are influenced by his or her own value system and background, hence one must carefully think about or contemplate how these factors could influence the study, more especially during the analysis and interpretation of data (Byrne, 2017c). In the entire duration of this research, I acknowledged my own biases and understood that these biases could significantly affect this study, hence I tried to be more reflexive, especially while interpreting my data.

3.6 Data Management Plan

An appropriate data management plan is incredibly significant in the research process. The Finnish Social Science Data Archive (FSD) emphasizes that data management plan is a fundamental part of a research plan. The data plan can be reexamined and extended during research, but the researcher should at least have identified the main principles and procedures before starting the research. Data management plan is made with the main intention of protecting the data and good scientific practice is adhered to in the entire research. There should also be a possibility of sharing the data after the original research has been finalized. In addition, ethical review during the first stage of research planning must be considered (Data Management Guidelines 14.09.2021).

The data for my research was collected using qualitative questionnaires and content analysis was used to analyze the data. Based on the guidelines given by The Finnish Social Data Archive (FSD), the textual data or responses to open ended questions can be formatted without restrictions. However, it is recommended to have the data in plain text format or in widely used office

formats, such as docx. In addition, using PDF/A or OpenDocument format is recommended if document layout needs to be preserved and understood.

Storing the data and managing files in a systematic way is my sole responsibility. All filled in questionnaires from the participant's email was transferred and organized in OneNote App provided by the university and were also saved in my computer's hard drive and university-provided e-mail, which are password-case sensitive and can also be opened using my biometrics only. Data security is important to preserve its integrity and back up files should also be protected for easy recovery and to avoid partial and complete deletion of files. Finally, dispensable data files used must be deleted when no longer needed and after the research project is finished (Data Management Guidelines 15.09.2021).

4 ANALYSIS OF DATA

After thorough examination of collected data from 13 participants, 11 themes were constructed which answer **the research question**: “What are pre-service teachers’ perspectives about dance as a pedagogy for young children?”

These themes included Prior Knowledge; Previous Experiences; Fun; Play; Self-Expression; Art; Holistic Learning Experience; Contributes to Children’s Learning and Development; Personal; Environmental; Professional Development and Personal Development. These themes gave answers to the analytical questions and are represented in Figure 1. below.

(1) How do pre-service teachers’ background in dance and experiences of dance relate to their attitude towards dance in their future profession? (Students’ Background of Dance and Attitude Towards Dance),

(2) How do pre-service educators define dance? (Dance Means),

(3) How do pre-service educators describe the outcomes of dance as a pedagogy? (Outcomes of Dance),

(4) How do pre-service educators view the challenges of using dance in their teaching? (Challenges To Using Dance As A Pedagogy)

(5) How do pre-service educators talk about dance pedagogy training? (On Dance Pedagogy Training).

I discuss each theme below.

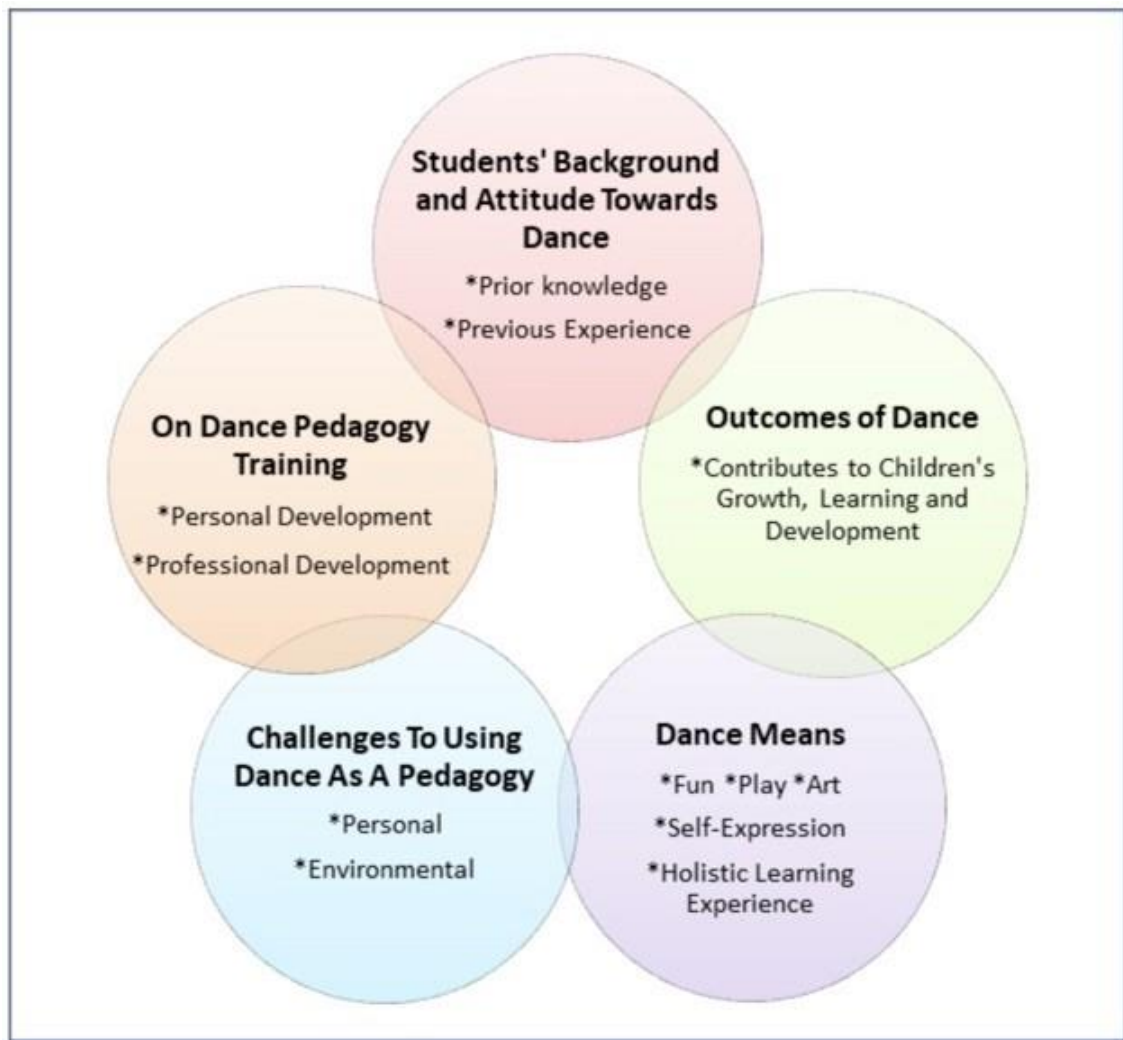


FIGURE 1. Pre-service teachers' perspectives on dance as a pedagogy in early childhood education and care

4.1 Students' Background and Attitude Towards Dance in Future Practice

The majority of pre-service ECEC teachers described their background of dance which includes their prior knowledge and previous experiences of dance. I explore below how students' background (formal training, university-required practice teaching and experiences at work) is connected to their attitude towards dance in their future practice.

4.1.1 Prior knowledge of dance (Formal Training)

2 out of 13 participants have received formal education in several dance styles. This formal dance training seems to influence the way they would use dance in their future profession. Dave and Rufi in their own words said:

Personally, I took one year of ballet when I was seven. I remember the “7 positions”. If there are more I am sure we didn’t learn them. In high school, our 9-12 grade physical education teacher taught 1 trimester of aerobic dancing each year. (Think Jane Fonda VHS videos.) I think that is all the “training” I had as a child. As an adult I took ballroom dancing classes to be able to attend weddings without embarrassment. (I do quite well because I know how to follow a leader...which is a skill I learned while being the passenger on a motorcycle believe it or not...) (Rufi).

I have received formal dance education in several dance styles (Hip-hop 7 years, Locking 4 years, dancehall Reggae 2 years) (Dave).

Although both had prior knowledge of dance, their perspectives towards the relationship of their dance background and their future use of dance in teaching are completely opposite from each other. Rufi’s personal interest came to be an additional factor that affected her liking to use dance. Rufi further explained:

I don’t have a strong background or love of dancing in the way other people do. I want to share with children the things I love and have an interest in (Rufi).

Dave on the other hand expressed confidence that his background in dance would be helpful in his future career as a teacher. Dave said:

I am striving to be the kind of teacher who keeps updating his expertise as a teacher and I would like to find more ways to combine my dance background at my soon to be profession. Dance is a tool I have a relationship outside of teaching already, why not learn to use to its best in teaching as well. Dancing makes some people feel vulnerable, and I as someone who is confident when dancing, must keep that in mind (Dave).

Pre-service teachers’ prior knowledge of dance influenced their attitude toward using dance in their classroom. While having formal dance education could be an advantage, personal interest could also affect one’s motivation to use dance with children in the future.

4.1.2 Previous Work Experience (Learning at Work)

All 11 pre-service teachers completed their practicum at English preschools in Tampere and Helsinki as part of the university degree program for ECEC students. However, two students were unable to participate in the practice teaching due to the daycare's protocol for Coronavirus pandemic, hence they were only given written tasks. According to some participants, this practicum exposed them to different pedagogical tools, dance included. These learnings led them to realizations on how to use dance in their teaching. Rofi and Anna expressed their thoughts in this way:

I will use dance and use it differently in the future. Frankly, after watching what you did with it during our practicum, it taught me a lot about how to use it and how it is useful. Also watching the children going along with the videos was eye opening for me, too. I have a different attitude towards dance now (Rofi).

I have actually, in our placement period. I think it's a good pedagogical activity but not in the sense that music has to accompany it, I don't listen to music myself and if I do, they are now instrument based so just vocals only songs but I think that dance can allow children to relax and leave off some steam, especially when it's not overwhelming which I believe dance when accompanied with music can be for children (Anna).

In these quotes the participants reveal what they learned from the practicum. Rofi's attitude towards dance changed upon observing her classmate conduct a dance activity. She also thought that children could dance along with the videos. Anna on the other hand learned that children could dance with or without music. They realized that dance, when done properly, could be beneficial to children's learning and development.

In addition to practicum, some participants had worked as either a substitute, part-time or a full-time ECEC teacher where they gained firsthand learning experience of using dance as a teaching tool. 7 out of 13 participants described their experiences of dance in the classroom. The participants' attitude towards dance as a pedagogy in the future is strongly affected by and connected to their previous experiences of dance at work. Some of the examples of students' perspectives are as follows:

I have used dancing...during children's concerts in the past. I would make different decisions now, with our newfound knowledges, and let the children choose what they wished to present, if they even wished to 'perform,' as I don't believe all children wish to 'perform' nor are comfortable doing so...upon reflection I would not advocate a teacher led routine. Children's agency should be taken into account (Cris).

It was not very helpful for me so far. It feels stressful for some children and if the activity relies heavily on dance, it might fail sometimes. And since we approach it as a way of self-expression, I would not feel creating extra pressure for the children (Shaze).

Cris' experience at work made him realize that children's interest should be considered when implementing creative activities such as dance and that it should be child-centered. Although Shaze had negative experiences of implementing dance in her classroom, she still uses it because she saw it as an aid to help children express themselves. She also mentioned that she likes dancing. Shaze when asked if she dances:

If you ask me in general, yes, I like dancing. If you ask with children, yes, I try sometimes. I think it is a good way of teaching self-expression skills (Shaze).

Cris and Shaze have used dance at their workplace. Their previous experiences changed their views on how to work with children more effectively in the future, which includes ways on how to use dance appropriately.

Pre-service teachers' attitude towards dance as a pedagogical tool is related to their prior knowledge of dance and previous work experience. Although students who received formal education in dance had an advantage of being knowledgeable about dance, they did not share the same level of confidence or interest in using it in their classroom in the future. However, the analysis clearly showed that pre-service teachers' learning and realizations gained from either positive or negative teaching experience during their practicum or at work, were valuable experiences in shaping their understandings about ways they can utilize dance with young children in the near future. Participants value dance in children's learning and well-being. Anttila's (2003) research resonates with my participants' views as she described how her formal education in dance during her younger years gave her an opportunity to be a genuine learner of dance and

that she took every class as a learning experience. She also highlighted that her experience as a learner of dance made her become committed to becoming a 'one-of-a-kind teacher' (Anttila, 2003, p.10).

4.2 What does Dance Mean?

To the participants, dance has five attributes in relation to the meaning of dance. These attributes are self-expression, fun, play, art and holistic learning experience. Their responses showed that self-expression is the most eminent characteristic of dance. They said:

...through dancing children can express themselves with their bodies (Gema).

Dance is also a great way for children to connect to one another for the brave ones facilitate self-expression and joyfulness to the shy ones through dance and others are more likely to join in (Claire).

I believe dance can help expression, it can be fun. Many cultures dance differently, just as individuals express themselves differently (Cris).

Students viewed dance as a tool in helping children express their thoughts and emotions. Through dance, the more confident children serve as role models for the less confident peers and help them in activity engagement. Different cultures were also considered and taken into consideration in dance.

Pre-service teachers also considered that dance is a fun activity. Here are some of the participants' thoughts:

During substituting I have used dance in class because it is fun (Claire).

I think it gives the children an opportunity to be creative and have fun (Imee).

It's fun and motivating for children (Roda).

Most of all we do it for fun in the classroom (Shaze).

One participant admitted that she did not like herself dancing, hence she only used dance as a fun activity with children. When asked if she dances herself:

Not really. Maybe for fun with the kids sometimes, but nothing serious. I'm not a fan of myself dancing (Imee).

However, she believed that dance is good for children. She further explained:

I think it gives the children an opportunity to be creative and have fun (Imee).

Most preservice teachers clearly expressed that dance includes an element of fun. Although one participant did not like dancing herself, she still considered using it in her classroom.

Participants also thought that dance is a form of art. Cris and Gema said:

Like art (drawing, painting etc), and as a form of art, we all have our own styles (Cris).

Dancing is a form of art (Gema).

One participant highly expressed that dance is a form of play. Cris said:

I have used dancing in games and play activities such as 'the freezing game'. It was typically used as a form of play. I think dance, when it is not considered a 'performance', and when it is 'fun and free', can be very useful indeed, particularly within play.

He explained that dance could be incorporated in games and play. Dance as a form of play is also effective if it is fun, spontaneous and not structured nor forced.

Pre-service teachers viewed dance as a holistic learning experience. They explained that dance covers a comprehensive aspect of learning which is helpful for children's development. In their own words:

Dance is a holistic experience, you use your body, your mind, your senses and you feel the sensation of dance (Dave).

Dance brings together movement, both fine and gross motors elements, music, rhythm as well as social aspects. Such an activity allows a very rich educational experience for children (Ben).

As what Dave and Ben mentioned, dance is a holistic approach to improving one's overall well-being.

Pre-service teachers defined dance in multiple ways. They described dance as a form of self-expression, a fun activity, a form of play, a type of art and a holistic learning experience. Among all five attributes in relation to the meaning of dance, self-expression was the most eminent feature of dance. Children have limited ability to express themselves fully and tell their experiences and understandings of life verbally due to their development and age (Rogers, 2018). However, as Wright (2012, as cited in Rogers, 2018) explains, self-expression can be feasible in a non-linguistic way such as creative arts. The arts permit us to cut through the borders of verbal and written language and show our feelings and thoughts beyond words (Roy, Baker, & Hamilton, 2015 as cited in Rogers, 2018). Rogers (2018) highlighted in her research the importance of arts for personal and cultural expression and therefore must be utilized in every culture on earth.

The participants also pointed out that dance is a form of play, and that dance is fun. They also referred dance as a holistic experience. As how one participant described it: "You use your body, your mind, your senses and you feel the sensation of dance." The Finnish national agency for education (2021) believes that early childhood is a stage of exceptional development and learning. They also add that the goal of ECEC is to promote holistic learning, growth, and development with the help of guardians and that play is an essential element in pedagogical activities. Dance is associated with play. Anttila (2003) narrates the relationship between the two entities. Her realization is that play and dance are entangled. The relationship between the two entities is very evident that no thorough explanation is required. Play is expressed through dance and vice

versa; there triumphs oneness of being. "Dance is a special and very perfect form of play." (Anttila, 2003, p.252)

Anttila (2007) discussed play as a culture of every child and believes that a child culture is somehow different from the culture adults created. Sansom (2009) supports this by saying that the world of children and the culture of play are significant to the construction of children's dance. She upholds that the relationship between dance and play provides more than fun or enjoyable experiences; it is also meaningful, in terms of understanding oneself, connection to others and the world (Sansom, 2009).

4.3 Outcomes of dance

All participants believed that dance has many pedagogical benefits for children. These benefits include physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Pre-service teachers understood dance as valuable in children's holistic well-being.

4.3.1 Dance contributes to children's growth, learning and development

Seven participants viewed dance as a helpful tool in children's cognitive development. Dance contributes to the improvement of children's memory, concentration, intelligence, rote learning, language, creativity and imagination. As what participants stated:

It is one way to show children's creativity (Pol).

Body movements stimulate the brain, increase memory, sequencing skills, and order. I am a tactile learner; I learn best through moving and doing things, so I think dance surely is beneficial for kinesthetic learners as it is for me (Jay).

I think it would be good for memory (learning routines), gross motor skills, following directions, teamwork, improving creativity and imagination, physical activity (Imee).

As for pedagogy, dance also helps with language development if we dance to music with lyrics or we dance according to some word commands example: now everybody turn around (Claire).

On top of it being a fun physical activity, it helps others with concentration and others with motivation. It's a great way to memorize and relax and most of all express oneself (Dave).

Through physical activity such as dance, a child's ability to think and process concepts or ideas is developed. As what Jay said, kinesthetic learners like her would benefit from dance because they learn best through body movements.

Emotional and social development were also two of the most highlighted positive outcomes of dancing. To nine participants, dance helps build children's confidence and trust in oneself. It helps children learn and manage their emotions and become more engaged in classroom activities. Dance, most importantly, creates an opportunity for children to learn social skills. It also provides a sense of community. These perspectives were described by the participants in these ways:

It is a good way of teaching self-expression skills and understanding rhythm and different music genres as well as for learning emotions (Shaze).

I think that dance can allow children to relax and leave off some steam, especially when it's not overwhelming (Anna).

Dance is useful in motivating children to let loose and open up (Roda).

I believe dance can have a bonding aspect for the students (Claire).

Dancing together is a beautiful way to feel togetherness and gain confidence and trust (Dave).

It builds a community feeling (Roda).

I think that dancing is overall a great activity for children because moving together with music can help children bond as a group and feel a sense of community (Gema).

Children learn to socialize with others, practice expressing emotion comfortably in front of others (Jay).

Dance is an effective way to relax and let go of strong emotions. Through dance, children learn to work well with others and get a sense of belonging while building self-esteem.

Most participants recognized dance as a valuable tool in improving children's engagement in classroom activities. They explained:

I believe that children's engagement level surely can be fostered by integrating body movements and music, especially in teaching logical subjects (Jay).

I think it can be quite difficult to actually have the children engaged at all times, but it does help at times when they're just not sitting around all day (Anna).

If children get to move and express themselves enough during the day, then they are more likely to engage themselves in other kinds of activities. By arranging interesting and versatile activities, we as teachers help children to stay motivated and interested in all the activities done during the day (Gema).

Dance is an interesting activity which can help increase children's engagement level.

Six pre-service teachers consider dance to be useful in contributing to young children's physical development. They expressed their views in this way:

I think that dance is the one of the ultimate expressions of physical development (Ben).

Dancing is a great way of moving in general, and it supports children's physical development, for example balance and coordination (Gema).

It is good for the development of children's bodies, teacher can pick certain dance moves to tackle certain muscle groups and ask the children to follow (Claire).

...develop body movements, muscle strengths in a safe environment (Jay).

Dance supports the physical growth of young children. It strengthens their muscles and improves balance and coordination.

While there was some variation in how pre-service teachers perceived dance as beneficial to young children's learning, growth, and development, they shared many views and appreciation for dance as a pedagogy in early childhood education. They believed that dance contributes to children's physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Traditional education settings tend to treat the

three domains of learning—physical, cognitive, and social-emotional—as separate entities; however, the domains are intrinsically interwoven such that facilitation of one enhances the others (Stork & Sanders, 2008). In Finland, physical activity and arts are greatly promoted to help develop children’s holistic well-being. This national goal is evident in the Finnish ECEC curriculum which encourages educators to implement pedagogical activities that fulfil its recommendation for physical activity and artistic expression. The National Curriculum Guidelines on Early Childhood Education and Care in Finland (2004) explains that dance among any other form of arts is an artistic expression which encourages children to learn and improves their motor skills. Sansom (2009) in his research on creative dance among young learners which is steered by the curriculum of the Ministry of Education 2017 in New Zealand shows that while dance greatly helps in making children physically active, it is also aesthetically pleasing which supports children’s engagement in the classroom, especially when taught in child-centered activities, that is when children’s agency is exercised.

4.4 Challenges to Using Dance as a Pedagogy

While pre-service teachers viewed dance as advantageous to the child’s overall development, they also thought that incorporating dance in their classroom could be challenging-though that did not change the feelings of most participants towards the possibility of using dance in the future. All participants thought that the challenges or constraints they may face in implementing it in their teaching could be for personal and/or environmental reasons.

4.4.1 Personal Challenges

7 out of 13 participants foresee that their lack of sufficient knowledge of dance pedagogy is their personal challenge to realizing dance in their classroom. They said:

My own lack of personal knowledge is the weakness (Rufi).

I do not yet have too much experience as a teacher, and so I am uncertain on how I could implement it (Maan).

When teachers are not equipped with enough knowledge or training on how to use it in the classroom (Pol).

Knowing how to plan a successful activity that isn't time consuming and tiring, for both child and educator/teacher (Ana).

Mostly, lack of skills in teaching dance without intimidating the children (Shaze).

My own personal unfamiliarity with dance pedagogy (Maan).

They thought that not being knowledgeable in dance pedagogy is a hindrance to effectively use dance in their classroom.

Another challenge seven participants referred to was the lack of self-confidence and/or feeling of discomfort with dancing and not having a sense of rhythm. They expressed their concerns in these ways:

I think the biggest challenge I would face will be my own discomfort with dancing. Dancing can feel very performative, no matter the context, and since I feel I am not a competent dancer, it challenges my use of dance (Ben).

Challenges I will face, and have faced in the past, include motor capabilities, overcoming fear of performing (Cris).

There might be other adults or children who don't have the confidence to participate due to previous bad experiences or not wanting to be vulnerable in front of others (Dave).

Personal challenge could be my own self-esteem and self-consciousness to dance in front of others. I know children probably won't care about how I look, but I myself might feel self-conscious in dancing in front of others (Maan).

Dance to some participants is a performative activity. Since they fear performing, it challenges them to use it in their future profession.

Imee admitted that she was not confident with dancing and expressed limitations of abilities to conduct dance with children. She mentioned:

Challenge would be myself. I am not confident with dancing and I wouldn't know where to start with introducing more dance into my activities (Imee).

Although she expressed fear of making the activity uninteresting for children due to her lack of confidence, she still believed that dance is very useful. In her own words:

I think it would be very helpful and useful though, as I can see the amount of joy the children get when dancing. I guess I don't want to take something they enjoy and turn it into something 'boring' because I don't really know what I am doing and I make it too structured (Imee).

While she had reservations about using dance, she still thought highly of it, seeing that dance adds joy to children's lives.

Most pre-service teachers have considered using dance in their classroom in the future, acknowledging the fact that dance is beneficial in children's overall well-being. Surprisingly, only one participant has not considered implementing it in her future profession. Although Maan was the only participant who has not considered incorporating dance in her classroom due to personal interest, insufficient teaching experience and self-esteem, she was not against the idea of using it. She explained:

I have not yet considered using dance as a pedagogical activity, because it is not really something I am super interested in personally, so that personal interest affects it. There is also the fact that I do not yet have too much experience as a teacher, and so I am uncertain on how I could implement it in my practice. - I do want to note however that while I have not yet considered using dance in my classroom, I am not opposed to using it by any means. Who knows, perhaps once I gain experience and familiarize myself with dance and pedagogy, it could become a thing. Remains to be seen for now.

Maan was still hopeful to apply dance as a pedagogical tool in her soon to be profession once she became more knowledgeable in dance pedagogy.

Aside from participants' personal interest, children's interest was also seen as a hindrance to an effective and successful dance activity. According to seven participants:

Some may not like dancing (Roda).

...some children not wanting to dance (Anna).

Some children would not like to take part in it. But then it is ok and that could happen with any activity (Gema).

Some kids shy away from dancing, challenge can be how to help them be more comfortable express their movements in front of the group (Jay).

There are children who feel shy to dance in front of others (Claire).

Shyness was seen as one of the factors that affect children's participation in dance.

Jay and Claire also expressed some concerns about accompanying music to dance. They said:

Choosing the right kinds of music that spark interest for all the kids (kids' preferences for music can be diverse, hard to find one-fit-for-all) (Jay).

...they do not like to listen to music, and they from my experience have either started to protest the activity or simply not participate (Claire).

Whether to apply music or not and selecting the right music that all children are interested in were the dilemmas some perceived when carrying out dance activity.

Not all children would participate in dance, hence participants thought it would be problematic. Dave foresaw that everyone's participation is important for dance to be successful. He said:

Dance is something that will not work if everyone does not participate, and no one should be forced to dance (Dave).

On the other hand, Claire argued that the activity should continue if majority of the children are keen to participate. While it could be challenging, it should not be halted by just a few children who are not interested in the activity.

I do not think we should force them to participate but we can also not stop the activity for everyone if one or two children do not want to do it so that can be difficult (Claire).

Participating in dance should be done willingly. Teachers should not be forcing children to dance.

Most participants admitted that not being knowledgeable about dance pedagogy and lack of confidence could make implementation of dance activities challenging. Participants' interest in dance and children's participation were also contributing factors that could influence the success of dance as a teaching method.

4.4.2 Environmental

Environmental factors such as children's physical learning environment and social environment were seen by future teachers to be intervening or disrupting the success of implementing dance in their future work with young children. These factors were described by the participants in these ways:

Lack of classroom space (Anna).

Finding a proper space might also be a challenge (Maan).

There might be limitations in the classroom physical and social environments (cramped spaces or bullying for example) that limit the possibilities for all age groups (Dave).

An acceptable activity space and learning environments were reported by participants as necessary in conducting dance with a group of children.

Children's safety was also one of future teachers' concerns. Roda and Jay expressed this like:

It can get wild, someone could get hurt (Roda).

Ensuring children's safety- socks should be removed to avoid accidents (Jay).

While there were some concerns about children's safety, Maan believed that it could be addressed accordingly. She explained:

There might be some physical challenges if you dance with a group of children – for example, you need to set down ground rules with children, so there is lesser chance of accidents or any unwanted contact (Maan).

All participants thought that the challenges or constraints they may face in implementing it in their teaching could be for personal and/or environmental reasons. They thought that not being knowledgeable in dance pedagogy is a hindrance to effectively use dance in their classroom. Dance to some participants is a performative activity and since they fear performing, it challenges them to use it as a pedagogy. While one participant has not yet considered incorporating dance in her classroom due to personal interest, insufficient teaching experience and self-esteem, she was not against the idea of using it and was hopeful to apply dance as a pedagogical tool in her soon to be profession once she became more knowledgeable in dance pedagogy. Children's attitude towards dance and music accompaniment were seen as some of the factors that affect children's participation in dance. Participating in dance should be done willingly and adults should not force children to do it. In addition, environmental factors such as children's physical learning environment and social environment and safety issues were seen by future teachers to be intervening or disrupting the success of implementing dance in their future work with young children. While these challenges were deemed daunting, most of them have considered using dance as a pedagogy in the near future.

In Gibson's ecological perception theory, children pick up information through perception in natural environments (Miller, 2011). For example, people need the ground or floors that are called spatial layouts, temporal events in order to adapt to the world, such as walking around in it, finding things in it, playing in it, and even surviving in it. The stimuli we get from these objects and events are not only simple sensations of light and sound, but complex relational units (Miller, 2011).

Gibson's theory's main idea is 'affordances'. Affordances is what the environment offers or provides an organism. For example, a ball gives an affordance of grasping for a baby and a floor, giving him/her an affordance of giving support for walking or crawling. Social environment can also give affordances. When someone smiles, an affordance of positivity is given, while an angry face gives a negative affordance. This concludes that the person's actions and the environment's affordances make a person and environment fit together to form a whole (Miller, 2011).

In addition, an early childhood center in North Shore Auckland sought the help of Jennifer Nikolai and Andrew Gibbons (2018), both research practitioners who conducted a study on risky play and its handling through dance. Gibbons and Nikolai also lead a workshop afterwards to further enhance the teaching practices of the center's early childhood teachers. The objective was to increase awareness of dance concepts, such as proper breathing, body awareness and correct body alignment towards moving with exploration (Gibbons and Nikolai, 2018). They highlighted that "The lack of confidence or professional development that teachers have, using dance as a subject, often deters dance as an entrance point to discovery" (Snook, 2012 as mentioned in Gibbons et al. 2018 p.37).

4.5 On Dance Pedagogy Training

Participants were asked if they would consider attending a teacher's training on how to use dance as a teaching method in the classroom if given an opportunity. While all participants showed interest in attending dance pedagogy training, some expressed some concerns about attending one. However, they perceived this education as useful for their personal and professional development. They talk about their views in these ways:

I would like to attend in such training, as I want to apply various kinds of activities involving dance, so that I can apply it in various ways too, in order to keep the children interested and to maximize learning (Pol).

It's nice to get new ideas from others, especially if they are more knowledgeable or experienced (Roda).

I would consider attending such training, definitely! Dance does have its' benefits as a pedagogical tool, and since I am unfamiliar with it personally, all the more reason to educate myself further in order to become better teacher (Maan).

I would like to feel more confident with using dance in the classroom and I would be happy to attend a training that would teach me more about dance and using it with children (Imee).

I really like dancing myself and would love to learn more about how to use it with children (Gema).

They viewed that dance pedagogy training could give them the knowledge and the confidence they needed to use dance with children. Some would also like to attend because they were personally interested in dance.

Four participants put an emphasis on the content of dance pedagogy training. They said:

I would consider it, but I'm a bit skeptical. Mainly due to not knowing whether there would be practical tips given and not just theories and approaches (Anna).

To get very practical ideas of how to use dance in the daycare (Ben).

I would gladly attend training, so long as the dance education training revolved around devising pedagogies that are child centred and revolve around the concept of dance as a form of expression and as being 'fun' and 'free' for the children (Cris).

I would love to participate in such training to see what kind of dances and what kind of pedagogy other teachers have thought of to base the dance on. I would also like to see what options these teachers have found for the non-participating students (Claire).

Practical application of dance with young children were preferred more by the participants than theoretical aspects of dance.

Maan and Rufi would attend if it is provided by the workplace as a course or a training. Rufi stressed that she would be willing to pay for it:

As a regular teacher, it would need to be something I could do/pay for myself (Rufi).

On the contrary, Maan argued that it had to be provided free of charge.

As a professional though, I in the future might hope that my workplace would pay for this kind of training instead of me having to pay it out of my own pocket (Maan).

Rufi also added that in the university program, dance subject has to be paired with music instead of putting visual arts and music together. She suggested:

If it were included in uni, well, then yes. I think this subject could be taught as a partner to the music course we had instead of pairing it with art (Rufi).

She explained that teaching music would be effective if accompanied with body movements:

When teaching the music concepts: fast, slow, crescendo, rhythm, tempo, loud, etc etc, all these things can be incorporated. Example: a rainstorm. Half the children use their bodies as an instrument to create a soft rainfall... There is a lot to unpack in this one story about teaching music. About how music can be physically experienced, too (Rufi).

Music and dance work hand in hand. Children learn music concepts effectively when experienced through creative movements.

Pre-service teachers valued the importance of dance pedagogy training in their future profession. They argued that it would significantly improve their personal and professional skills and address the challenges and dilemmas that go with using dance in teaching. The training should mainly be about practical ways of applying dance in the classroom and revolves around child-centeredness. They were motivated to take a dance pedagogy course provided either by the university or by their future workplace. Finally, as part of university training, dance deserved to be a subject on its own and could be paired with music instead of pairing music with visual arts.

The impact of university training for student teachers was one of Altun's (2018) interests when she conducted her research on pre-service teachers' adequacy of university training on play for their future profession. Her findings showed that university training was not enough to help the soon to be early childhood teachers

to comprehend play thoroughly. She pointed out the need for collaboration between colleges and preschools to help in the practical implementation of teacher candidates' knowledge in the future (Altun, 2018, p.96).

5 CONCLUSION

Pre-service teachers value the importance of dance as a pedagogy. However, they have limited personal and professional preparation in using dance with young children. Future ECEC teachers may need support to effectively implement creative teaching methodologies during their career. It is the responsibility of every ECEC teacher to provide high quality care and education to children and provide them with a variety of learning opportunities. By becoming reflexive-carefully thinking through pedagogical intentions informing activities so children can benefit the most, pre-service teachers would be able to provide creative learning experiences such as dance for young children (Stinson, 2002).

Physical activities provide possibilities for children to try and explore so that teachers can understand their interests. From there, they could reach their full potential. Creative movement or creative dance movement is a pedagogical physical activity that is proven to be an effective tool in teaching not only early literacies such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing but also helping children learn compassion, empathy, love, kindness, and all other good values while having fun (Lobo & Winsler, 2008). When a child participates or finishes a task and believes that he or she can do something valuable or discovers that he or she is good at something, it gives them a sense of accomplishment which can boost the level of his or her self-esteem, confidence, and self-worth. In addition, working in a circle where everyone can see each other, and their participation and contribution are recognized and celebrated gives a sense of belonging, acceptance, and identity (Lykesas & Tsompanaki, 2020).

The aim of this research was to investigate pre-service teachers' perspectives about dance as a pedagogy for young children. All participants value dance as a teaching tool and saw it as very beneficial to children's growth, learning and development. While they understood its importance, they saw personal and

professional challenges as hindrances to effectively implement it in their classroom. However, they were willing to attend dance pedagogy training to address their fears and concerns.

First, the majority of pre-service ECEC teachers described their background of dance which includes their prior knowledge and previous experiences of dance. Some of the participants had received formal dance education while the others had work experience either in their practicum or at workplace. The students' background (formal training, university-required practice teaching and experiences at work) is connected to their attitude towards dance in their future practice. This conclusion was evident when they explained how these knowledges and learning experiences changed their views on how to use dance more appropriately with young children in the future. It was also noted that although students who received formal education in dance had an advantage of being knowledgeable about dance, they did not share the same level of confidence or interest in using it in their classroom in the future. I believe it is worth trying for aspiring teachers to have an open mind to exploring dance or dance pedagogy so that they can discover their hidden capabilities. As what Matthews and colleagues (2016) argue, "If students and educators lack experience of rhythm inside and outside their work lives, they may not develop or recognize their maximum potential as individuals (Matthews, et al. 2016). How would someone know his or her full potential if he or she would not even dare to try? All participants foresaw personal and/or environmental challenges in implementing dance in their teaching. Lack of adequate knowledge of dance pedagogy or teaching experience was the biggest hurdle in incorporating dance in their classroom activities. Little to no confidence in using dance also posed the pedagogy of most pre-service teachers. Participants had worries about not being able to manage classroom properly and children getting physically or emotionally hurt. There was also the lack of classroom/activity space I believe that if a dance pedagogy course is included in the university ECEC teacher curriculum and when adults find the courage to experience more dance, and if preschools create conducive spaces for such activities, the presence of dance will be more visible and advocated, perhaps even can become a taken-for-granted part of preschools.

Dance in early childhood is problematized due to little presence of dance in preschools (Gripson, 2021, Lindqvist, 2021, Østern, 2021). Even in the neighboring Nordic countries of Finland such as Sweden and Norway, dance is used very minimally in preschools (Lindqvist, et al. 2018, as cited in Gripson, et al. 2021). Although adults who have previous experience of dance outside their work life and those who acquired formal education in dances with already made sets of steps/movements such as hip hop, ballet, ballroom dance, etc. seem to have an advantage over the others who are inexperienced, bringing dance to preschools is still problematic. Since university ECEC teacher training program lack dance pedagogy, early childhood teachers find it hard to use dance in their classrooms. Knowing dance styles is not enough. One must also know how to teach it and teach with or through dance. Teaching is not only about transmitting knowledge (Lahtinen, 2017). While the national curriculum for ECEC in these countries stipulates that young children should experience dance, implementing it in classrooms is challenging. Although some teachers may have ideas on the content of dance activities, they do not know how to execute it (Gripson, et al. 2021).

Moreover, not all who finished their undergraduate teacher training continue to further their teaching skills. In 17 interviews conducted in different preschools all over Sweden by Gripson and his colleagues (2021) on how Swedish teachers understand and use dance, a number of preschool teachers who use dance in their classrooms are those who are very interested in dance and took the initiative to learn dance pedagogy from education providers outside their workplace. They then share this knowledge with their fellow preschool teachers, but not all of them use dance in their classroom for several reasons. The thought of executing choreographed dance seems terrifying for them due to limited rhythmic skills. Gripson and his colleagues (2021) also pointed out that preschool teachers only get clues and pointers or ready-made dance programs that limit their ability to create lasting pedagogical teaching skills in dance which are necessary for creating new dance content and teaching strategies. If this is the case, it is safe to say that in order for dance to have a strong and long-lasting presence in early

childhood education, dance pedagogy education must be of high quality and comprehensive.

However, the indigenous Sami people's preschools and Reggio Emilia preschools highly incorporate dance in their activities because it is integrated in their culture and core values (Gripson, et al. 2021). In Sweden, Sami people's preschools receive extensive dance learnings from local dance teacher, teacher educator and local dance teacher educator (Gripson, et al. 2021). The management of Reggio Emilia preschools employ a dance teacher to advance their preschool teachers and staff's dance pedagogical skills. This dance teacher visits these preschools regularly which helps teachers gain confidence in implementing dance in the classroom. In Finland, Sami and Reggio Emilia preschools are considered a minority and the majority of ECEC centers in Finland are not based on preschool models. I assume that this could be one of the reasons why I did not see dance that much in Finnish ECEC centers I have visited, more specifically in the place where I and my fellow pre-service teachers had our practicum. Moreover, some Swedish preschools collaborate with an organization called 'kulturskolan' to promote and conduct dance activities with children and school staff (Gripson, et al. 2021). With these findings, I conclude that there is a necessity for seeking external dance experts to help preschool teachers and staff to hone their ways of using dance with young children. This can only be possible through pedagogical leadership and management support. I also believe that collaboration and cooperation among ECEC stakeholders should be given importance if dance is to be fully incorporated in early childhood education.

Moreover, preschool teachers' nature of work is very demanding and stressful (Kelly and Berthelsen, 1995). Preschool teachers are experiencing stress from the demands of their work doing teaching and non-teaching duties which include but are not limited to paperwork and cleaning of classrooms. Since preschool teachers assume that dancing is mainly about choreography that is about traditional and fixed sets of dance steps and movements (Gripson, et al. 2021), which requires energy and practice, teachers, knowledgeable in dance or not, would deviate from doing such activities that would contribute to more exhaustion and fatigue. This deviation from doing something performative, I believe, is one

of the potential causes of limited dance in ECEC centers. However, as what Stinson (1988) suggests, the focus in dance for preschoolers is not on emulating the teacher, but on the child's own searching of dance within oneself. As explained previously, adults do not need to model the movements for dance activities to work. It is possible to look more into ECEC teachers' daily workload and well-being and its impact on the implementation of pedagogical activities with young children in future studies.

Second, to the participants, dance has five attributes in relation to the meaning of dance. These attributes are self-expression, fun, play, art and holistic learning experience. Among all five attributes in relation to the meaning of dance, self-expression was the most eminent feature of dance. Dance is a tool in helping children express their thoughts and emotions. Different cultures were also considered and taken into consideration in dance. If all participants are willing to learn dance pedagogy because they believe dance is beneficial for children, then what is the reason why there is so little dance in preschools? Fear of being judged by others (Ørbæk, 2021) is one of the possible reasons for this. Preschool teachers are concerned about what others will think about the way they move (Gripson, et al. 2021). While teachers do not mind children looking at their body, they are reluctant to dance in front of other adults. As what one participant said, she did not care about what children think of her body. In Finland, it is the law and practice in ECEC that in a group of children depending on its size, must have at least one main teacher and an assistant teacher. Most of the time, there are three adults per group. The staff-child ratios mandated is (1:3 under 3 years, 1:8 3 years and over, 1:13 pre-primary education 4hr/day) for both public and private service providers (OECD, 2012, p. 207 as cited in OECD, 2016, p.6). Teachers are afraid of making mistakes. They are expected to conform to society's expectations of them as a role model which adds to the burden they already have (Kestere & Kaļķe, 2015). Because of these expectations teachers might resort to not dancing at all. They conduct activities that they thought are easier so that they are less likely to make any mistakes. As one preschool teacher said, "Generally, we feel safer with painting." (Gripson, et al. 2021).

In addition, dancing with people they feel confident in is incredibly important (Markula, 2021). Teachers feel more comfortable working with people they know and trust. They can dance and create movements, not worrying about not being liked. Unfortunately, teacher turnover is also problematic in countries like Finland (Räsänen, K., Pietarinen, J., Pyhältö, K., Soini, T., & Väisänen, P. (2020) and building long and good working relationships would be challenging. If this is the case, finding effective solutions to increase teachers' work satisfaction and retention must be given importance.

I do want to stress that educators need not feel too conscious of their body when using dance with children because teachers can conduct activities in dance even without them moving or dancing. Besides, not all successful learning is achieved through modelling. Movement when initiated by children's imagination could lead to creativity and discovery. My hope is for pre-service teachers to draw inspiration from dedicated and motivated educators who in spite of their physical disabilities managed to create an impact on children's lives. One of them was Hellen Keller, a renowned American educator who at the age of 18 months lost her sight, hearing and speaking due to an acute illness. There are also non-walking teachers who conduct inclusive dance activities for students with different disabilities.

Lastly, pre-service teachers saw the value of dance pedagogy training in their future profession. They believed that it would greatly improve their personal and professional skills and address the challenges and dilemmas that go with using dance as a pedagogy. The training should mainly be about practical ways of applying dance in the classroom and revolves around child-centeredness. They were keen to partake in dance pedagogy training provided either by the university or by their future workplace. Finally, it was suggested by one participant that as part of university training, dance could be paired with music instead of pairing music with visual arts. Although it is an idea worth considering, I still believe that ECEC degree programs should have dance as an individual course. Dance pedagogy is a complex subject because it tackles many areas of movement, children's behavioral analysis and creative teaching techniques, just to name a few, which are part and parcel of building strong pedagogical skills.

Participants were students of the English ECEC university degree program. Their curriculum did not include dance pedagogy workshops, hence students thought they had little to no knowledge of how to use dance with young children. The perspectives of pre-service teachers under the Finnish ECEC degree program of the same university are worth looking into for further research.

I came across several challenges when doing this research project. First was when I had the questionnaire tested before I distributed them. The questionnaire was tested by my two native English-speaking classmates to check whether the questions were free from ambiguity and if they were easy to understand. While some corrections were made and questions were paraphrased, some participants still found some questions a little confusing. With this I had to paraphrase some questions again to help them answer the questions more easily. Second, some of the responses had typographical errors so I had to email them back to consult them if what they had written was exactly what they meant. Third was when some questionnaires were returned late. Although this was the case, the questions were answered comprehensively which brought richness to the data analysis. The survey was conducted with only 13 participants, hence their perspectives about dance as a pedagogy in early childhood education and care do not share those of pre-service teachers in general, future research is recommended.

Finally, I put importance on reliability while evaluating this study. I checked the consistency of the participants' responses by rereading the completed questionnaires multiple times until correlations between participants' responses from the same person and my interpretations seemed reliable. In addition, I sent follow up questions to get participants' reasoning behind the previous statements they made in the initial stage of data collection which helped me in analyzing and interpreting the data so that I could produce a logical conclusion based on the participants' perspectives. During the evaluation of the study, I reflected on my own opinions, values and beliefs recognizing that these may influence my study. I tried to exclude my own biases so that it would not reflect on my research as much as possible.

Dance deserves to be recognized as an important matter beneficial for educators, children, families, and the whole community. But how can this be put into action if adults do not even try to come out of their own comfort zone? How can we be more reflexive? What are we willing to sacrifice and change within ourselves to create an impact on children's lives?

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