



6. the growth of Community dance in Britain

Funmi Adewole

Community dance is a term used to describe projects, be these in the form of workshops or the devising of performances that are organised for the enrichment of the participants. There might be a performance however this is secondary to the process. The Foundation for Community Dance in Britain simply describes community dance as being about professional dance artists working with people (Animated, winter 2009, page 36). The aesthetics of the work celebrates the individuality of the participants over and above the formalised dance traditions and techniques. Community dance artists come from a variety of dance backgrounds. The practice is not limited to dance artists of a particular technique. They are skilled in the ability to devise creative tasks to suit the needs of the group they would be working with be this a group of homeless people living in a shelter, children in a school or elderly people in a old people's home. They could support the participants to dance and create dance that will provide them with a transformative experience. The first community dance artists in the 1970s were called amateurs for this reason.

The general approach to the question as to what makes a community, is that a community is a group of people who come together due to similar goals, background or due to similar circumstances. The issue or issues that bring the group together is generally the starting point for the dance artist in their role as a facilitator whether these issues are confronted directly in the work or not. People who are together due to socio-political situations imposed upon them from the outside are considered communities in this context such as those in a prison for example.

Advocates of Community dance believe everyone should have the opportunity to experience and participate in dance and reap its benefits. Dance provides space for self-representation, and personal development as well as the opportunity to explore or devise strategies for working together and group decision making. It confirms and re-affirms the relationship ones relationship with oneself as well as the relationship between performers and viewers. The audience participates through clapping, cheering or silent, respectful acknowledgment of the values they are communicating through their performance. A number of genres of performance have as an ethos the goal of 'self expression' and 'political change' for the participants. It overlaps with applied theatre, Participatory arts and Theatre for social change (Kupper, 2007).

The existence of traditional dances is evidence that dance has always functioned this way. Dance in traditional communities and rural communities is part and parcel of daily life, marking transitions to from childhood to adulthood, aiding the grieving process and celebrating the birth of new life. Within age group association or amongst members of the same profession such as farmers, hunters or market women, Dance gives a platform for self-representation and is a means of developing self-esteem. One could also argue that modern dance and contemporary dance with in the theatrical context work survive by continually massaging the human need for community. Audience development initiatives, educational projects, events like talks are tools for creating a community around the work of the dance theatre company, one that sees the relevance of the work and celebrate the values that the aesthetics represent. Dance companies seek to evolve as society evolves. The dance techniques and dance forms seek to evolve as the society evolves. The company and their dance have to remain relevant or loose its audience, its community. All Dance, be it Club dance or Sacred dance cultivates a shared experience and generates community.

The emergence of Community dance suggests that being part of a shared experience, with in a community can no longer be taken for granted. Urbanisation, migration and globalisation trigger a reconfiguration of lifestyles that leaves parts of society marginalised and outside the ebb and flow and progression of their environment. Certain groups find it difficult to access activities that would enhance their personal development and social life. Activities that were once taken for granted, children's play in open spaces, or intergenerational contact between old people and the very young are absent from some people's experience. The demonstrations of respect for the elderly and for the various occupations that make up a community are not the themes of social dancing now a day. Community dance unlike social dance is organised and delivered by professionals. One could say community dance is bridging that gaps created in societies as they shift in to new shapes and that it is seeks to answer questions that social dance can not answer. The emergence of Theatre for Development in Africa and Asia, places that still have strong social and traditional dance cultures suggest that this might be the case.

The profile of Community dance in Britain and arguably the world is growing. The authors of *Dance Mapping: A Window on dance 2004-2008*, a report commissioned by the Arts Council England and completed this year describe the community dance movement in Britain as 'one of the major successes of the dance sector in the last 30 years'. There is now a critical mass of practitioners. The aforementioned reports describes the 1472 strong membership members of The Foundation of Community dance (FCD) represents 4,500 professionals working in this area of the dance sector (Dance Mapping, 2009, page 129). This is significant, seeing that in 1995 the membership of The Foundation of Community Dance was 400. The organisation has also seen an increase in their international membership. The organisation's magazine *Animated* comprises of articles from practitioners around the world.

With the profile of Community dance growing it is worth looking closer at the circumstances which stimulated its growth and how it is being organised and seeks to sustain itself. An account of the history of Community dance in Britain shows that Community dance came out of a variety of dance backgrounds. As dance artists from various background sought to expand the scope of dance practice beyond the theatre previous audience members became participants. The infrastructure for community dance movements has been constructed out of the relationships various artists and organisations have developed in order to make dance in the community work. The paper will show that community dance has grown due to cultural entrepreneurship and activism of people in the dance profession – performers, producers, managers, and teachers. It has co-opted the infrastructure that the government has made available to address issues around social exclusion, ill health, aging, youth crime, disability, mental health and others, which left unaddressed could result in certain groups being marginalised. Community dance is a bridge builder. It creates relationships and new contexts for relationship. How this practice operates in Britain is briefly explored here.

6.1 history of Community dance

The history of Dance in Britain is for the most part written from the perspective of its evolution as a theatrical art form, the migration of various dance forms and approaches to dance making through the efforts of artists, producers and benefactors into Britain and on to the stage. The history of community dance conversely, is the story of how dancers from the theatre took dance to the people, providing opportunities for people from all walks of life to dance, participate in dance pieces and perform. Community dance is not the same as social dance though there might be overlaps between them. Community dance is defined by its professionals. It is borne out of structures of the 'dance as art' world and the academy.

The drive to establish Classical Ballet in Britain began after the death of Sergei Diaghilev in 1929. Ninnette de Valois and other collaborators set up a school and ballet company. The growth of Ballet in England was enabled by good business sense and the development of a network of subscribers. In the beginning there was no government funding for productions. Performances of the Vic-Sadler's Wells Opera Ballet in 1930 and the opening of Sadler's Wells theatre in 1931 marked the beginning of Ballet putting down roots in British soil (Walker, 1987, pages 101-104). It was to become Britain's favoured theatre dance. During this period the ideas and practice of Rudolf Laban was also spreading across England. Though the work of Laban did not conquer the theatre in the manner of Ballet, it did enter the training programmes of actors and dancers and made a great impact in education, in workplaces, and in recreational and health settings (Peston-Dunlop, 1987, pages 204-224). After the war in England Laban's work was readily embraced by Education authorities. Teachers saw it as a sure way to fulfil the post-war mandate 'to educate children not lonely according to their age but also their individual abilities and aptitudes'. His ideas and practice were also adapted to the curriculum of teacher training colleges (Peston-Dunlop, 1987, page 233).

According to Tamara McLorg community dance in Britain as we now know it is linked to the development of contemporary dance rather than to Laban's 'Modern educational dance' which dominated the teaching of dance in schools in the 1940s and 1950s. Robert Howard with the support of Martha Graham, founded the London Contemporary dance school in 1964, and the London Contemporary Dance Theatre company in 1967. With the founding of these institutions, the dance culture of the country began to change significantly. To develop audiences for contemporary dance, the school organised 'lecture-demonstration groups' to go into schools and colleges and introduce potential audiences to this newly arrived art form. McLorg points out that this activity at the time was not described as Community dance however it was a precursor. It was still dance being taken to the people.

The Arts council of England bought into value of contemporary dance as an art form and provided support for companies and their educational projects. The 1970s saw in the first Youth dance festivals. These events provided fun and entertainment for young people and also served as a recruitment ground for the dance profession. Arts council also made support available to graduates from contemporary dance schools in London to form companies in the regions. Many went to set up companies in the regions where they continued delivering educational workshops with the aim of expanding their audiences. McLorg who was part of one such company the Emma Dance Company notes that Community dance began to emerge as the dancers leading these educational dance workshops began to realise that audiences did not just want to come and see performances but wanted to perform themselves. Due to the abundance of dance companies young dancers had the opportunity to develop their performing, teaching and choreographing skills and the skills needed to work with communities. With time the education dance workshops designed to introduce an unsuspecting public into an audience for Contemporary dance began to develop into ones which were designed to give the public the opportunity to dance for the sake of dancing itself (CAN DO CAN DANCE, 2006).

Community dance also grew through the 'artists in residence' programme created and delivered through the 1960s and 1970s by the late Peter Brinson, then the director of the UK branch of Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. Artists took up residence in schools and to a lesser extent, in prisons, hospitals and other workplaces with the aim of engaging with the host community offering classes or demonstrations and such the like. These residencies in the community appealed to the political sentiments of young artists of the time who believed the arts should be taken outside special buildings such as theatres and galleries. With the abundance of contemporary trained dancers graduating from dance schools with out the possibilities of getting work in established dance companies, in roads were made into education. Contemporary dance took the place of Laban's 'Modern educational dance' in secondary schools. However the Laban Guild remained healthy and Laban's ideas continued to inform the creative dance provision in primary schools (Thomson, 1999).

In the 1976, the Gulbenkian Foundation provided funding for the first community dance post. This was taken up by Veronica Lewis. Other community dance posts were established the same year in Cardiff and Swindon and another in 1980s in Fife, Scotland. According to Alysoun Tomkins who like McLorg, is a pioneer community dance artist, these posts marked the starting point of Community dance being recognised as a profession. At the time community dance artists were called dance animateurs (Tomkins, 2008, page 9-12). McLorg comments agree with this assessment of the dance animateurs role. The existence of animateurs changed the way dancers saw themselves and transformed for them the meaning of 'working with the community'. The evidence she gives in this regard is that many dancers continued working in the community even the funding for regional dance companies began to dry up (CAN DO CAN DANCE, 2006). The dance animateurs continued to be relevant with out the covering of a funded dance company.

The funding of what was known as 'Minority arts' also had an impact on the development of community dance as did the 'New dance movement'. Both these developments took off in the 1970s. The activism of artists of non-western heritage was directed towards canvassing for government provision with out which they could not participate with in the visible, mainstream British arts scene. A number of communities - West Africans, Caribbean, Pakistanis, Polish people, Ukrainians, Greek Cypriots and others were settled in England and renting spaces to put up their own events with little support or recognition from the wider community. Artists wanted the financial backing to both tour and make work and deliver education and community projects. Without funding the work on non-western artists would not be able to go beyond the boundaries of their own communities.

The groundbreaking report 'The Arts Britain Ignores' was published in 1976 made a strong case along these lines. It was written by Naseem Khan and sponsored by the Arts Council of England, the Calouste Gulbenkian foundation and the Commission for Racial Equality. The author argued that the overlooking of the arts of these communities by regional arts association and local authorities was hampering the integration of these communities into Britain. To avert a situation where these arts began static and nostalgic they needed to be supported in a way that would enable the artistic practice to put down roots in the country. Khan argued that art could become a space for communities to interact with wider society and for different generations of the same communities to interact. It was only by providing this space Khan argued could Britain truly be considered a multi-cultural society. The report ends with a list of recommendations which included the establishment of more post for Community arts officers and the establishment of an advisory service for Minority Arts (Khan, 1976). In 1977, The Minority Arts Advisory Service (MAAS) was established with the aim of supporting minority arts groups to organise themselves and apply for funding and extend their reach beyond their own community.

The funding for the first black dance companies came from funding geared towards social oriented programmes. Though funded to tour and make work, due to their funding category exists in a half way house between 'dance for the sake of art' and 'community

dance'. MAAS Movers was the first funded 'Black Dance Company' and as the name suggest it came under the auspices of MAAS. More investment was made in Dance after the Brixton riots of 1981 and 1982 when angry black communities erupted violently in response to racism and alienation. Adzido Pan African Dance Ensemble established in 1984 and originally funded by the Manpower Services Commission grew to employ over 24 dancers and musicians and grow to be the largest African dance company in Europe, touring the country for 20 years. Debates around the nature and purpose of non-western dance companies and how to define their artistic practices were rife between the late 1980s and late 1990s, as the relationship between host and new communities was adjusting.

Having said this, these companies make considerable impact on both the theatrical dance scene and the community dance scene, challenges ideas about the nature of dance, art and culture. 'Minority arts' found an advocate in the Late Peter Brinson. Dance companies drawing on non-western forms were booked by the organisers of carnivals, anti-racist projects and festivals to perform and were invited to give open workshops to the general public. This work facilitated the coming together of diverse groups of suspicious people and broke down many barriers. Furthermore, the ways of working introduced by these companies to Britain - the display of traditional and social dance and the fusion of dance forms -expanded the scope and reach of community dance and what is done under this banner and contributed to what is community dance in Britain today. In addition, the Theatre in education companies that emerged from non-western communities did a great amount of work to break down racial barriers and dispel prejudices.

The New dance movement advocated the blurring between dance by dancers and non-dancers and through the 'New dance magazine' promoted all forms of dance, giving a platform to post-modern choreography, 'black dance', Asian dance, mime artists and others working outside the interests of the established arts criticism. The magazine was significant in opening up people's attitudes to who should dance or perform and made the idea of participating in a workshop or performing in a community centre accessible. The movement promoted Release technique, Contact Improvisation, Pedestrian movement and non-technique based dance and the person-centred approaches to choreography that is favoured by community dance (Makrell, 1992).

In 1979 the Arts Council of England established a department for Dance. Up until this time Dance came under the music department. There was now a recognisable independent dance sector. The independent dance sector comprised of dancers who worked outside established companies. They earned their income by freelancing for dance companies and by initiating and delivering projects in schools and in the community. They were also equipped to handle the administration for these tasks. Commissioned by the Arts Council Graham Delvin wrote a report which was published in 1989 entitled *Stepping Forward*. This report was to guide the development of dance for the next ten years (Siddall, 2001 page v). The report recommended the establishment of National Dance Agencies (NDAs) to strengthen the infrastructure for dance. These agencies were to form the backbone of the British dance ecology offering provision for regional artists such as space for rehearsal and performance and opportunities to deliver open classes for the general public and launch for community projects in the vicinity (Siddall, 2001, page 136). The first National Dance Agencies were built on the framework of established community dance projects, a testament to the resilience and viability of these projects.

Other support organisations that formed the Dance ecology of Britain have been spear-headed by artists themselves to provide infrastructure for specific concerns. The Foundation of Community dance is one of these. Dance UK is another. Others which have emerged to promote diverse dance practices are Akademi (for South Asian dance) and the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) catering for dance practices originating from African, the Caribbean and Africa-American communities. The Foundation for Community dance began its life as the National Association of Dance and Mime Animateurs (NADMA) in 1986. Its aim was provide a forum for Animateurs to

network, share information and raise their profile. It was re-launched as the Community dance and Mime Foundation (CDMF) in 1989 and changed its name again in 1995 to the Foundation for Community Dance (FCD). By 1995 the Dance sector had grown to the point that the organisation could shift its focus from serving area of community dance to facilitating its development and providing direction and strategic leadership (www.communitydance.org.uk, 2009).

6.2 working in Community dance

The account given here of the history of Community dance in Britain testifies to the entrepreneurial nature of the dance profession. It appears that only a few years after the establishment of the first contemporary dance schools did it become apparent that many dancers would never work with in a dance company in receipt of regular funding. Presently the face of a recession it is imperative that dancers are prepared to find new contexts or create new contexts in which their art form will be relevant. The provision that the government has made to deal with issues surrounding Regeneration, Social inclusion, Health and Youth justice has been noted by dancers and these funds are being targeted to fund community dance projects. This is especially true when the Arts council or other funders of the arts ask for proposed projects to secure match funding. Arts are encouraged by the Arts council to develop relationship with their local government. Most local governments have Cultural or Arts departments and can support arts projects through funding that arises from their partnerships with the European Union (British Council 2009).

Most dancers work on Community dance projects on a freelance basis. Dance officers with local authorities and Educational officers with dance companies might have a full time or part time post. It is possible to get consistent work with specific companies. A number of dance companies exist which have become specialists in delivering projects relating to specific areas. *Dance United* for example has a strong track record for delivering dance in prisons and *Breathing Space* works with children in hospitals and health centres. These companies will be run using a small core of dancers whose work will be supplemented by freelancers. Time must be spent by the dance artist building relationships with such companies.

Freelancers can also get work with touring companies who develop a profile from presenting work in theatre contexts. These companies might have a part time or freelance educational officer that sets up community projects for the freelancers to deliver if the performers are not able to do so. Local authorities will also engage companies and individuals to deliver projects for local events or in local institutions. Many community dance projects however are initiated by dance artists. The artist might notice a local need and carry out research to identify stakeholders and design a proposal to present to them suggesting how a dance project might address the said need.

The idea of being a 'dance artist' or a 'dance practitioner' is popular with dancers as most hold down 'portfolio careers' and they feel this term describes their way of working more accurately than 'dancer'. According to *Dance Mapping: A Window on dance 2004-2008*, commissioned this year, by the Arts Council England, the type of dancer that is presently most in demand as being one 'who can teach, facilitate dance work community contexts and manage and produce the work' (Burns and Harrison, 2009, page 129). The report also reminds that the unpredictability of the dance career is not a new phenomenon and has been reiterated in research papers for the last two decades and quotes as statement '*Mapping Dance: Entrepreneurship and professional practice in dance higher education* published in 2006.

'The (dance) sector exists in a state of uncertainty and complexity and therefore constant evolution and adaptation is required of its workforce, who needs to be multi-

skilled with transferable skills, capable of managing portfolio working as well as able to carry out more than one role. This means that individuals who wish to pursue careers in these labour markets must be entrepreneurial and innovative. They have to create new styles of work, explore new ways of working that give them access to future employment opportunities or resources, diversify by finding new employment areas'

(Burns cited in Burns and Harrison, 2009, page 127).

Community dance is often only one aspect of a dancer's work. Some dancers mix and match their community dance practice with work outside dance such as with in graphic design. The loss of leadership and experience of older dance artists who leave the sector completely has been noted.

Dance artists with guidance that might come from support organisations must forge their own progression pathways.

Community dance practice is innovative and it can be used to address a startling range of issues: The Moving Words project for example, created by Dance artists Soo Wright and Etta Ermimi used dance to aid women from Bangladesh and Morocco to improve their learn English (Wright, 2009, page 28). Innovative projects often require a research and pilot project which might not be easy to fund. This notwithstanding case studies show dancers find ways to test ideas at appropriate moments and think on their feet.

6.3 aesthetics and artistic approaches

Though the emphasis is on process in community dance, dance artists approach the work artistically and aim for high standards in the work. However the aesthetics of the performance will emerge out of the values, concerns and qualities the participants bring to the project. The technique and choreography can be assessed in community dance. However in community dance they will reflect different values to than in professional theatrical dance. Choreographers and teachers will of necessity draw on specific traditions of dance or of structuring movement as they do in professional work. Here also Dance communicates to audiences through stylized movement, recognisable gestures, re-occurring patterns and motifs, be these in space or in time, and the deliberate use of facial expression or the display of personality or attitude.

Indeed technique and structure are two of the reasons why dance can be used effectively in socially oriented projects, geared for personal and community development. Learning these kinds of movements takes the participant beyond the mundane. To perform them alone or in tandem with others, can give an individual a great sense of achievement and confidence. Watching a group of various body shapes and sizes and backgrounds performing the same pattern with focus and style and seeing this pattern reoccur but in ways that reflect the individuality and range of participants has its own fascination. A significant feature of community dance is its person-centeredness. Dance has not been used to mould the participant's body into a special body to serve a particular technique. Dance serves ordinary bodies to move in that are special for them.

Person-centred approaches allow the choreographer gives space for individual abilities and individual expression is favoured in community dance. The use of post-modern choreographic approaches, Laban analysis, dance forms which might allow for individual interpretation of a given step, or which emphasis rhythmic structure over shape, accessible urban and social dance styles which allow for improvisation can be used in this way. The dance artist might draw on visual arts, drama, everyday movement to devise tasks. Having met a group the artist seeks the most appropriate way to engage the group and facilitate their creative journey. One way of working is to begin by setting some material for the participants to learn and repeat and then give creative tasks

so they can create their own sequences. Sometimes pedestrian movement and gesture are used to generate the material so the choreography they learn is recognisable. Dance United, a company well known in England for their work in Prisons often use this method of working. During rehearsals inmates might be summoned from rehearsals for interviews and other prison procedures. Working this way they however in spite of interruptions they are able to produce a high quality dance piece in a short period of time, sometimes only a week.

Choreographers or dance teachers whose dance background includes non-western dance forms are often invited to teach community groups repertoire or choreography based on these forms. The aim of these projects might be to give participants an experience of dance from another perspective or a window into another culture. Though the work being taught the students might be of African or Asian origin in the teaching of the dance an intercultural process is taking place. The movements are adapted to be bodies and by the experience of the students learning. In this vein choreographers might work with participants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds to draw on their own traditional dances in the creation of a piece of choreography to celebrate their heritage.

6.4 training for Community dance practice

There is no definitive route into a career in Community dance. Dancers in Britain arrive in Community dance from many places. It is expected however that anyone seeking to gain skills to work in community dance is already skilled at dancing. Gaining skills in Community dance tends to be a post graduate or post experience activity. Support organisations such as Dance UK, Artists Development at The Place, Akademi or the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD) can point dancers in the direction of Professional development opportunities. Some offer life or career coaching at subsidized rates, fellowships to support specific career opportunities and forums for networking. Professional development may take the form of mentorship, volunteering on a community dance project and shadowing an experience professional. These methods of gaining experience are particularly useful if one wishes to gain insight as to how to work with certain groups of people and build relationship in those areas.

Short courses are useful as a means of filling in gaps in one's knowledge. Dancers need to take time out during the course of their working life to identify these gaps. One can learn methods of creating accessible choreography by taking courses with the Laban Guild or taking Dance leaders in the community course for example. Adult education colleges such as City Lit provide a wide range of short courses and organisations such as Cultural Industries Development Agency (CIDA) offer such courses as business planning for artists, fundraising and proposal writing. Teaching is often used as a way in to community dance. Teacher's training provides a good foundation as the dancer learns about working with groups, the best way to teach dance and health and safety. However further skills and knowledge will need to be developed through professional development opportunities especially in setting up and managing a project.

In 2004 Palatine, the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music, commissioned a report entitled *Mapping Dance: Entrepreneurship and professional practice in Dance Higher Education* which sought to gain an overview as to how courses in university are preparing students for an entrepreneurial or 'portfolio' career in Dance. It was found Higher education institutions have been responsive to the demands of the dance industry and seek to prepare students to work with in it. However it was felt certain areas needed more attention.

After surveying the content of a number of three year courses in dance the following:

'The skills associated with entrepreneurship including self-management, reflection,

creative problem solving, communication, negotiation and networking are all being taught in an explicit way by all courses over all three levels.

Strategic thinking is more often covered in an implicit way (63%).

Aptitudes such as flexibility, ability to take risks, working in complex situations, multi-tasking and managing independently are encouraged by the majority of courses at all levels.

87% of programmes explicitly encourage the ability to work collaboratively and in teams over all three levels.

Knowledge of the sector (policy, infrastructure, support agencies etc.) is delivered in all three levels. However, only 74% of respondents cover this area explicitly, with the remainder covering it in an implicit way.

Knowledge of business planning (76%), self-employment (45%), marketing (50%), finance (60%), CV writing, job search and audition techniques (86%) are mainly delivered at level 3 in an explicit way.'

(Burns, 2006, page 22)

The Foundation for Community Dance recommends university degrees to would be dance artists rather than training in a conservatoire for dance. The latter concentrates on technique and performance whilst the former also focuses on dance in a broader context. Most degrees in Dance will contain units or modules which introduce the students to Dance related careers such as Arts Administration and Fitness. In relation to community dance, the course will also place an emphasis on 'dance teaching, working with different groups of people, project planning, work based learning and historical and contextual studies related to community dance i.e. its purpose, place and identity' (www.communitydance.org.uk, 2009). The only postgraduate course in Community dance in England at the time of writing is: The Post Graduate Certificate: Dance in Community delivered by the Laban centre for Dance. It was launched in 1981.

Non-western and urban dance practices and fusions of dance forms are being increasingly taught in Higher education. These courses enable students to build dance experiences they may have acquired before entering the academy or broaden their cultural understanding of dance. Experience a diversity of forms can give dancers the confidence to work professionally in a range of contexts, both commercial and theatrical and might give them particular confidence working with certain communities. Two examples of higher education courses that offer a diversity of dance forms are the B.A in Dance Urban Practice at the University of East London and the M.A in Dance Cultures at the University of Surrey. On the B.A in Dance Urban Practice students study urban styles including Hip-hop, break, popping and locking and Contemporary dance. They also participate in developing and delivering dance projects and workshops for communities. The course has links with the East London dance, a dance agency, a professional dance company, Urban Classicism, run by Robert Hylton who is known for his combination of Hip-hop dance styles and Cunningham technique, and Newham Sixth Form College. (www.uel.ac.uk/programmes/combined/undergraduate/summary/Dance_Urban_Practice.htm.)

At a postgraduate Level the University of Surrey in England offers an M.A/Postgraduate diploma in Dance Cultures. The course equips the student to 'interrogate a myriad of dance practices' and undertake 'practice-based research'. The course prepares students for doctoral study or further professional developments. Opportunities to explore careers in choreography, community dance, education and health are provided. Former students have gone on to work in the National Health Service and Secondary School education (www.surrey.ac.uk/Dance/Postgraduate/Index.htm). The possibility of working in a variety of contexts is a selling point of the course.

6.5 professional standards

Though modules related to community dance are taught in Higher education, dance artists on the whole are responsible for getting the right experience and skills through professional development opportunities. The fall out of this is that employer and dance artist might have different ideas as to who is qualified to lead a project. The outcomes of the 2007 survey attest to this:

'There is some discrepancy between what employers are looking for, and what dance artists offer. As well as specialist dance skills, employers seek artists that can meet the particular needs of each individual and group, with a high level or awareness of context, culture and community, and a thorough knowledge of safety and support issues. They feel that qualifications are seldom a guarantee or actual ability to do the job, and interpreting equal valence across a range of qualifications/training/experience can be problematic. Despite the match of values and shared agendas, the lack of common cross-sector networks and benchmarks presents challenges to the clear communication of expectations between employer and artist. Artists are not always able to evidence their competence in ways that provide potential employers with the reassurance they need, and the in the absence of special advice, or clear guidelines around the recruitment and selection of dance artists, non-dance employers in particular lack confidence in this area.'

(Making a Move: Towards a professional framework for community dance- news update for policy makers and funding bodies, 2007)

According to The Foundation for Community Dance, efforts made by it toward developing a professional framework work is 'driven by the expectations of employers, education institutions, local authorities, funders and crucially government policy' (Craddock, 2009, page 36). There is a concern that dance artists should now how to negotiate the legal and policy frameworks that might overlaps in the creation of a community dance project.

The Arts Council of England way of addressing this situation has been to promote best practice through an action research project. In 2002 The Arts Council put out an invitation to dance organisations working in the community to participate in this programme. The outcome of the programme was published as a report in 2006: *'Dance Included: towards good practice in dance and social inclusion'*. The report delineates 'areas of good practice' at the various stages in the project planning process of each of the six arts companies that were finally selected. The report also included an evaluation of the impact the projects have had on the participants and organisations involved. £40,000 to £60,000 was given to each of the participating organisations.

All the projects as expected required the development of partnerships with community organisations. Some projects were borne out of the arts organisation to a local need and others were the brain child of the community organisations. The following are descriptions of the six projects:

- *Dancing Inside led by Motionhouse Dance Theatre*
A dance residency and performance project delivered within a therapeutic community at Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Dovegate. The project explored the therapeutic impact of dance participation and performance on participants
- *Physical Justice – Hook'd led by East London Dance*
A dance-led cross-arts programme aimed at young offenders and young people at risk of offending. It aimed to show how dance could reduce re-offending, prevent young people from engaging in criminal activity and contribute to educational learning
- *Third Symphony – Men at War led by Dance United*
An eight-week project that aimed to use the creation of a dance performance in a young offender institution to support the accreditation of participants in basic and key skills

- *Time to Dance led by attik dance and Barbican Theatre*
A two-year programme of dance classes and social events for older people which aimed to increase participants' mental wellbeing, reduce health inequality, and increase feelings of pride and self-esteem
- *The Water Project led by The Place and Cardboard Citizens*
A programme for homeless people which included outreach, weekly dance classes, intensive projects and attendance at performances. It aimed to improve the well-being of participants and motivate participants to make positive lifestyle choices
- *Infusion led by tees dance initiative and Dance City*
A project delivering weekly classes and other activities in three educational institutions. The project aimed to help participants develop positive attitudes to school and learning, develop personal and social skills, acquire employment skills and realise alternative career choices

(Dance Included, 2006, page 4)

In evaluating the projects, the authors reported that the stance that all the project leaders took was that they delivered dance as a 'creative and artistic activity that had value in itself' and which 'could be usefully combined with other elements'. Dance however was not used 'simply as social tool' (Dance Included, 2006, page 6). From the report suggests for the dance artists to be in a position to work this way a lot of effort had to go into developing the context of the project. This involved developing a good working relationship with the community organisations through which the participants on the project would come. At the planning stages projects the needs of partner organisation and potential participants were considered, clear and realistic aims and objectives were jointly set, and space to adapt to the project as the needs of the participants came to light was factored in. Successful partnerships were the result of a common vision between the dance organisation and the community organisation, a clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities and effective communication systems.

Recruitment and retention of participants is key to success and a range of methods were used to overcome the 'practical and psychological barriers' which discouraged the participants from engaging with the project. Besides the usual use of flyers and leaflets to advertise the activity, word of mouth, referrals from those already involved in the organisation and the provision of 'taster sessions' on the participants' 'home ground' were some of the recruitment strategies used and considered effective by the report (Dance Included, 2006, page 15).

In terms of the project activity, the contribution of lead artists and the drive to maintain high artistic standards were considered to be 'vital' to the success of the project implying that if the quality of the artistic process was compromised it would affect the social goals and every other aspect of the work. In order to work effectively in new environments the dance artists leading the work often required training. In the case of the 'Physical Justice – Hook'd' project, artists underwent three days training to learn about the youth justice system and how to manage the behaviour of individuals and groups in this area. The report says it was challenging for artists to apply this training as the project unfolded. One of the outcomes of the evaluation was that they needed the support of more experienced practitioners as they began to put it into practice. Another project, 'Time to Dance' required making connections with a wide range of organisations from day centres for training and transport providers, organisers of carnivals, performances and such the like.

Responding to individual need in terms of breaks, refreshment and timing was also noted as being important for retention of participants. Continuity of staff was also deemed necessary as participants found changes in lead artists disruptive. The outcomes of the projects was increased physical health, a knowledge of dance, increased social skills and ability to trust and in the case of 'Third Symphony- Men at Work', improvements in the level of literacy of the boys (Dance Included, 2006, page 22).

The amount of planning, strategic thinking, research into the context of partner organisations and high level communication and organisational skills required to deliver these projects underline that fact that opportunities to gain hands on experience as well as attending courses is necessary. Standardization here is more about highlighting the areas a community dance artist should seek to gain experience and be able to provide evidence of competence rather than an insistence that the artist achieve this via a specified route.

To enable this kind of standardization, The Foundation of Community Dance has recently published a proposed professional framework for community dance, core values, a professional code of conduct for community dance and is about to pilot the National College for Community dance. These are the outcomes of 'Making a Move', a three year consultation with a wide range of dance artists, dance organisations, partners and employers with the aim of deciding on framework for the professional development of community dance in Britain.

The Code of conduct drawn up by the Foundation for Community Dance covers the five areas which are briefly described as: Professional competence, Responsibility, Safety, Working with people, Commitment to the Code of Conduct. In each of these areas the community dance artists is expected to take responsibility for their actions, work within the parameters of their knowledge i.e. not take on jobs that are outside the scope of their ability and commit to improving their skills and knowledge in that area.

The National College for Community dance will provide a means through which artists can gain or receive recognition for competencies in these designated areas. It will also enable them to stay up to date with developments in the profession. The pilot phase of the project will be delivered this year by FCD in the collaboration of four other partners – Dance City, Dance South West and East London dance (three dance agencies) and De Montfort University. The college will revolve around a cluster of co-ordinated activities – summer schools, professional level courses, conferences, online learning materials, accreditation of prior learning, rather than a static building. It is designed to provide professional development for practitioners at different stages of their careers and accredit clearly articulated skills and knowledge (Craddock, 2009).

The nurturing of the discourse around the practice of Community dance has been one of the factors behind its growth. Besides, giving space to government policy, the activities of The Foundation for Community dance, and the magazine allows for continuous discussion around key issues such as best practice, diversity, inclusiveness, professional development, ethics and philosophy. Each edition of the magazine is usually dedicated to a particular theme such as Dance and Disability, Intercultural exchange, Dance and the Elderly, The Mature dance. Additionally, the magazine gives a large amount of space to practitioners to talk about their work and concerns. The magazine encourages practitioners to be reflective and engaged and up to date. It has fostered a community of practice and encourages Reflective practice.

Reflective practice is a concept that is growing in prominence in the arts especially as it is used in so many settings that might start out being unfamiliar to the artist. The idea of being a reflective practitioner came out of the Health, Care and Social Service professions and then migrated into teaching and artistic practice. Here professionals were encouraged to reflect on their practice, sometimes in very formalised ways such as through journaling in order to understand their strengths and weaknesses and fine tune their way of working. They also make time to conceptualise the results of their reflections and thereby broaden and theorise their methodology (Schon, 1983). It is an approach that encourages the seeking of solutions, research, peer mentoring and skill and resource sharing between professionals. Reflective practice is being increasingly encouraged. Due to the diversity of our societies, the diversity of our working patterns – reflective practice is becoming more relevant to the dance profession and its dance practitioners.

6.6 conclusion

The history of dance in general in Britain has been the result of the entrepreneurship of dance professionals. Community dance in particular has developed out of the responsiveness of dancers to their audiences needs, their belief in the value of dance as a creative activity for all people as and its potential for promoting equality in society. Community dance has continued to expand in spite of funding cuts to the arts because dance artists have been able to access funds earmarked for social oriented activity. In our increasingly diverse and challenging societies it has been a significant and relevant practice. Training for community dance is generally self –directed and in the form of individual professional development projects although modules relating to community dance exist on university courses. In view of this and the complexity of community dance practice the Foundation for Community Dance is presently setting up a National College for Community Dance with the aim of setting standards and providing flexible learning. With less and less permanent jobs available in dance, Community dance practice is becoming a key feature in most freelance dancers' portfolio career. Another impact Community dance is having on society is that the barriers between 'dance as art' and 'community dance' are becoming increasingly blurred. A new way of understanding dance is therefore emerging amongst young people, a new sense of aesthetics being formed.

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City Lit, a popular further education provider – www.citylit.ac.uk

Cultural Industries Development Agency (CIDA) - www.cida.co.uk

Dance UK, support organisation – www.danceuk.org.uk

Dance Leaders in the Community - www.dancesouthwest.org.uk/node/645

Dance United , dance company with a track record of working in prisons – www.dance-united.com

Foundation for Community Dance (FCD) – www.communitydance.co.uk

The Laban Guild – www.labanguild.f9.org.uk

Palatine – The Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music – www.palatine.ac.uk

Urban Classicism – www.urbanclassicism.com