A leadership challenge paper in support of UNESCO Futures of Education 2050

Dancing Futures in Education

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UNESCO, through its *New Futures of Education* initiative, is visioning and strategizing the role it has when asking, "what should be the role and purposes of education" (Zewde, 2019). I also inquire, in the same spirit as UNESCO, what are our roles and responsibilities as Alberta dance educators for the futures of dance education in our province? Creating a provincial *community of practice* (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2015) for dance educators to gather to discuss our role as dance educators can help guide us to where we want dance education, including its curriculum, to be. One of the central challenges we face here in Alberta is that even the ministry cannot identify the number of active dance programs in the province. When we wait for others to take the lead, what are the consequences? Through shared "intellectual leadership" and "collective action" (UNESCO, 2019) to build and re-envision dance education, dance can have a meaningful, sustainable future to continue to transform the lives of students.

In our work as dance educators in Alberta, through *ensemble,* we can encourage, challenge, and support as we guide ourselves and students in "learning to become" (UNESCO, 2013) through a humanistic dance community and curriculum. "When we think together, we can act together to make the futures we want" (Zewde, 2019). This goal aligns with the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. Ubuntu is part of the Zulu phrase "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu," a Nguni Bantu term meaning, *humanity* and translates to: "I am because we are" (Afrika Tikkun, 2020). What might we become after our time together? This concept of *humanism* is present in diverse cultures, dance education, and has a long tradition in UNESCO. "Such an approach has implications for the design of learning processes that promote the acquisition of relevant knowledge and

the development of competencies in the service of our common humanity" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 37).

Learning to Become (UNESCO, 2015) also invokes the need for educators and students to develop the capacity to imagine education in the future for a good and fulfilling life. "For the many that live in conditions of poverty, exclusion, displacement and violence, the future can appear more as a set of shrinking possibilities than a world of hope and promise" (UNESCO, 2020, para. 8). How can dance offer a sense of "hope" and "promise" in public schools through dance education in Alberta?

Why a *community of practice* to enhance dance education?

"What kind of future do you want me to imagine and why?" (Zhao & Gearin, 2018)

Dance, as a separate *non-core option*, is growing in my school division with approximately 30 teachers identifying themselves as dance educators. What are the implications of not having a provincial dance curriculum and no dance teacher pre-service training courses at the university level, in the Education faculties? Quality teacher education is important and "by its very nature, requires significant faculty time and investment" (Risner, 2007, p. 18). How are "we" defining dance and what "knowledge" is worth knowing in dance education and in response to the Teaching Quality Standard? (Alberta Education, 2018). Who is the "we"? Is dance education accessible for all students and educators? What are the possibilities of dance in education that we have not uncovered or explored yet? What are our biases about dance, and what can we let go for the best interests of all students to support diversity and inclusion? The UNESCO *Mandate of the International Commission,* calls us to "collectively reflect on how education might need to be re-thought in a world of increasing complexity, uncertainty, and

precarity" (2020). Certainly, broadening and enriching what UNESCO frames as 'education' needs to include dance education.

Who could this *community of practice* benefit?

Teachers can be supported within the dance education community, and can learn from within the collective with shared, research-based pedagogies and plans to assist with the wellbeing of teachers and students. Collaborative learning communities can expand for both teachers and students in and beyond their school experiences. Connecting students and educators to the larger dance community can support life-long learning participants and patrons of dance.

Causal Layered Analysis

Using the strategic foresight tool, "Causal Layered Analysis, (CLA)" (Inayatullah, 2009) I will explore the leadership challenge of creating a *community of practice* through a *flourishing learning community* (Cherkowski & Walker, 2018) that will support, connect, and mentor Alberta dance educators and dance in public schools.

Using foresight strategies such as CLA, allows us to view the future, not necessarily for the future, but "to expand our perception of the present by liberating our imaginations from the constraints of likely or desired futures" (Miller, 2018, para. 20). The CLA is a research theory and method that creates a "transformative space" to investigate a futures topic through four levels: *the litany, systems/social causes, discourse/worldview and myth/metaphor* (Inayatullah, 2009, p. 2). Inayatullah suggests these categories "need to be derived through doing in interaction with the real world of others – how they see, think and create the future. And something must be done after the analysis, that is, action learning must ensue" (2009, p. 4). Therefore, the work is not about defining the future, as in forecasting, but to open up the future to questions.

Litany

The litany includes "quantitative trends, problems, often exaggerated, often used for political purposes" (Inayatullah, 2009, p. 9) and are usually presented by the media. Inayatullah claims that a vertical approach in the CLA, looks at the deeper layers of the litany to be "contested, opened up, and questioned" (2009, p. 7).

Dance educators see the potential and the benefits of dance education to transform students, not necessarily just as "technically" trained performers, but in ways of experiencing embodied knowledge, creativity, understanding self and others, and histories through dance as well as a way of being and working in a collective, in community. UNESCO's publication of *Learning to Be* (1972) supports the importance of preparing people for lifelong learning and learning to live together. As reported in the "Evidence: A report on the impact of Dance in the K-12 setting" (Bonbright, Bradley, & Dooling, 2013), American dance researchers collected data on the value of dance education and its positive impact on student achievement and overall individual and collective wellbeing. UNESCO reminds us that the "innovations of youth" can have impact on the economies and societies around the world yet we need to have initiatives to guide us for ongoing changes in the world (Zewde, 2019).

On the other hand, the strong presence of social media, television shows, such as "World of Dance," and private dance studios, typically perpetuates Eurocentric narratives and narrow ideals of what quality "dance is," and "should look like;" therefore, public school dance education, in general, is viewed "as less than." The question can become, why invest in something that is not considered as valuable? When public dance education is "free" (for the most part), the neoliberal view of "you get what you pay for" also questions the value of "free" experiences especially when process and creativity are highlighted more than product in dance

education. Money is associated with performance. Parents also "buy" into private dance systems as they want the best for their children to succeed for example, "winning" in dance competitions is considered winning for dance future opportunities — if you can't afford it, you can't win.

When 'new' dance educators are hired to teach dance in schools, it is common for them to come from a dance studio culture (myself included) where we are then prone to teach in the same way we were taught, based on our experiences and mentorships of the "right" way of doing things and a "banking system of knowledge" (Freire, 1993). In doing so, it is common that a Eurocentric frame-work of favouring steps over anything else —comparable to studying and memorizing for "the test," occurs and where there is a lack of understanding of how to implement critical thinking through dance experiences and dance histories. If dance education preservice training and mentorships do not exist, then dance education programs will continue to perpetuate Eurocentric ideals and the status quo of thinking, this is how we've always done it.

Leadership Quality Standard #4: *Leading a Learning Community* (Alberta Education, 2018) asks leaders to nurture and sustain a culture that supports evidence-informed teaching and learning. How can I bring community together, to continue to learn and support my school goals as well as share the leadership within a larger, dance collective, for the future of dance education? Having the time and energy to be leaders in our own schools seems taxing enough. How can a collective, help to avoid teacher burnout?

Overall, dance teachers feel misunderstood with the many conflicting litanies in addition to feeling undervalued, and left out of major arts education conversations and initiatives in Alberta. How can dance educators help to advocate for a better *litany* of what dance education is, what it values, and its importance place in schools?

Systems and mechanisms

This second layer of CLA includes "the social causes, including economic, cultural, political and historical factors. This type of analysis is usually articulated by policy institutes. The data is often questioned; however, the language of questioning does not contest the paradigm in which the issue is framed. It remains obedient to it" (Inayatullah, 2009, p. 10)

A litany from dance educators includes blaming external factors for dance education's slow to rise, specifically in the systems that already, or don't, exit. For example, there are no dance preservice teaching training courses or graduate courses in the Education faculties within any Alberta university; therefore, limited, if any, dance education research is occurring with the lens of dance education in schools. What systems are in place to support dance educators in our province to advance their knowledge in dance education for K-12 schools? Is dance really accessible and inclusive in schools?

There is no provincial dance curriculum currently. Alberta is the only province *without* a dance provincial dance curriculum. Therefore, no data is being collected in Alberta regarding dance in schools such as, where and how it is being offered? How can we look back to move forward? Who is the "we" in this collective strategic planning? What do we bring to dance education for students in our area, in the province? What does dance look like currently in schools throughout Alberta and where do we want to go? What are the possibilities? Whose voices are being heard? Who wants to be heard? Who are we asking and not asking to be invited to dance, teach dance, and discuss dance? Who and what are we waiting for, to gather together and create dance standards and build dance education in our province?

My dance *community of practice* currently exists within my K-12 school, and it includes myself, a full-time high school dance educator, alongside a full-time jr high dance educator and a

part-time elementary dance educator. This is rare, as typically if dance is offered, there is only one dance educator in a school with a part-time dance schedule. My dance colleagues and I try to gather at least once a year with the dance educators in my division, which we call our *Dance Network*. I have a sense of what dance education looks like in my school division but not beyond this. What can we learn from knowing what dance education looks like, sounds like, and feels like within other school divisions in our province? How does our school location affect the dance programming we are providing, or not? What are the systems of influence for each school? How can we work collaboratively to bring dance to the forefront in schools and as embedded, meaningful experiences?

Generally, teachers create locally developed curriculum based on teacher biases that can be confused with "expertise." A limited understanding of curriculum design and research in dance education can affect how the locally develop is created. I was part of these processes in my division where exemplars of curriculum that favoured Eurocentric ideals of dance, specifically ballet and modern dance were the preferred guidelines.

Provincial dance organizations do exist as dance resources and include the *Fine Arts Council* (AFA), an initiative through the Alberta Teacher's Association that holds an annual arts conference with an opportunity to gather during a weekend per year, for a yearly membership fee and conference tuition. This organization relies heavily on teacher volunteers. There are no initiatives that involve futures thinking for building and re-envisioning dance education in schools. Buying a membership needs to feel "worth it" with some individual benefit, otherwise teachers are less inclined to join. How are our current dance supports being re-envisioned?

It is common for dance educators in my area, to not only teach within the regular school timetable but also teach before and after school courses and rehearsals. It is also not common for

dance educators to have a full-time dance schedule and are therefore teaching multiple courses with the demands to attend to multiple areas of professional development and department meetings, taking its toll on the well-being of teachers. "Part-time faculty dependence model with administrators making the case for arts education faculty and programming today frequently face a Sisyphean challenge" (Risner, 2007, p. 18). The language of *core*/*academic* and *option/elective* courses also creates tensions for students when planning what knowledge is worth more, and counts for more? Time to gather as a collective can be challenging. Dance teachers have high burn-out rates due do their physical work-day alongside the extra work-load, and artistic pressures in the job. (Koutedakis, 2000, p. 121).

Dance may remain as status quo in its current state or may be the first to go due to the lack of support systems for dance education in the province.

World views/Paradigms

Using other ways of knowing, particularly categories of knowledge from other civilizations, is one of the most useful ways to create a distance from the present.

Inayatullah (2009, p. 5)

Salah Abada, Director of the Section of Creativity and Copyright, UNESCO, in his 2001 opening speech, asked, "How can we organise and promote art education for our children efficiently over the years?" He referenced several issues from arts delegates relating to the guidelines for the preparation and implementation of arts education curricula. While many dance delegates agreed that dance, music and drama were inseparable within African communities, as is with many cultural dances, "others argued that some modern dances were performed in silence (without sound or music) hence the need to treat music and dance as separate disciplines" (2001, p. 9). Single stories can affect our futures thinking so whose stories are we listening to?

It is said that social media forums such as YouTube and TikTok, are the new dance educators. With free access to internet and innovative dance programming online, how we learn, teach, and view dance is changing and affecting ways we interact with dance.

An American 2002 legislation declared the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), mandating that dance as an art form must be taught by a "qualified dance educator." Dance education around the world faces common challenges: who should teach, who should teach the teachers, and what they should teach? Burridge and Nielsen remind us "there is a connection between teacher preparation in arts education and community engagement [which] remains an important and potentially persuasive tool for arts education policy and support" (2015, p. 18). In some dance educational institutions in the world, dance syllabus certifications and "familial curriculum" (Clandinin, Murphy, & Huber, 2011) is considered synonymous to an education degree. How can "other" teacher certifications in dance affect student opportunities and Alberta teachers? Dance education is sometimes confused with "the education or training that leads to theatrical dancing, as opposed to dance in education" (Strate, 2015, para. 5). There are also assumptions that a professional dance artist or someone who has obtained dance certifications in a specific dance form makes them qualified as a dance educator in public schools. What makes a dance educator? Who decides what the qualifications are?

To create a high functioning learning community, we can look at the research, such as the McMillan-Chavis Model (1986). This model includes four major elements required for a sense of community: *membership, influence, integration, and fulfillment of needs—shared emotional connection* (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Investigating how other learning communities operate successfully, can assist with dance future planning.

Myths and Metaphors

This fourth level provides an "emotional level experience to the worldview under inquiry. Deconstructing conventional metaphors and then articulating alternative metaphors becomes a powerful way to critique the present and create the possibility of alternative futures" (Inayatullah, 2009, p. 11).

The success of dance programs, as separate courses, seems to be dependent on school, school location, school size, and leadership support — what I call the *postal code success.* "Schools of choice" are created to attract and meet the needs of interested student-clientele. Why do students want to participate in dance programs? Do they have a choice?

There are so many diverse dance forms, and dance contexts, what dance teaching course(s) could meet the needs for all dance educators in Alberta? What dance forms would you focus on in? Dance pedagogy is not necessarily about 'what we teach' but how we teach and the whole child. There are common dance concepts in every dance. Assessment practice is also an area of concern for arts educators as art is concerned subjective.

Myths include, *why invest time and money in dance education when*:
- *not everyone from K-12 will be interested in dance, especially boys*. The "*real* boys don't dance, especially ballet" myth is still heard today. The recent 2019 comments from news host, Lara Spencer, perpetuated this myth and male-dance-bullying after questioning Prince George's "like" of ballet class.
- *dance is only for skilled dancers, dance isn't for everyone, dance is not possible for people with disabilities,*
- *only teach ballet as it is the foundation of all dance*
- *dance already appears in P.E courses and everyone is required to take PE until grade 10 so it is happening, there is no need to take it as a course on its own.* Dance in PE is a focus on coordination and fitness and not the aesthetics in dance.
- *adding dance will create other consequences. If dance becomes a part of K-12 schools, then something has to go, maybe another subject.*
- *dance requires a large space, special floors, dance attire, ballet barres, mirrors… it's too expensive to operate*. Dance educators know that dance studio spaces were non-existent in early dance practice, as was formalized dance instruction. The dance stereotypes of

studio space, who can dance, and why we dance, represent colonized ideas derived from Eurocentric and privileged ideals. How do address other ways of knowing in dance education?

Conclusion: Possible dance futures

The four layers of Causal Layered Analysis overlap. "Using CLA on CLA we can see how the current litany (of what are the main trends and problems facing the world) in itself is the tip of the iceberg, an expression of a particular worldview. Moving up and down levels, one can develop a tapestry of the inner self. That is, what are the implications of my stories on how I construct the world, how I organize the systems of selves?" (Inayatullah, 2009, p. 12). What biases do I bring to this process? Is my worldview authoritarian?

After using CLA, what could Alberta dance educators accomplish together as a *community of practice*? What are come possible outcomes? As Miller (2018) reminds us, the future is not one but many. Here are some possible future implications:

- Advocate for dance education in schools, through our schools, communities and provincial organizations such as the Fine Arts Council – where is our place in provincial organizations?

- Highlight dance in our own communities, share knowledge, and create collaborative, learning dance experiences for teachers, students and community members. A dance conference of professional dance artists, dance educators and dance students from the province could occur: workshops, live performances, films, keynotes and presentations. An opportunity for developing relationships among schools, dance professionals and other stakeholders in dance education. (Pulse Ontario Dance, 2020; NHSDF, 2020).

- Create an online presence with shared resources, focusing on curriculum and "encourage[ing] and support[ing] the development of dance education" (CODE, 2020).

- Collect data and evidence for future dance planning. In shared leadership, this can become a great tool for us to see the gaps in our understanding of where dance exists and doesn't and the work we can do to support and educate. What can we learn from this data to help re-envision and build meaningful dance programs and where dance education is better understood?

- Access to university level, dance education pedagogy courses for Alberta teachers, even online course offered through other universities but recognized with credits in Alberta universities. "Teachers need to be trained to facilitate learning, to understand diversity, to be inclusive, and to develop competencies for living together and for protecting and improving the environment." (UNESCO, 2015, p. 55)

Inviting a learning community to work together in moving dance education forward, alongside the initiatives from UNESCO Education 2050, could be what dance educators need right now, especially during COVID-teaching— support for dance education programs and teachers to focus on "learning to be" and "learning to live together" (UNESCO, 2015). Transformational and shared leadership seeks to "raise participants' level of commitment, to encourage them in reaching their fullest potential and to support them in transcending their own self-interest for a larger good." (Leithwood, Leonard, & Sharratt, 1998, p. 243). Let's "step up" dance educators.

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