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Aspects of Dance Teacher Education: Analysis of Students' Dance Education Research

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Abstract. Learning paradigm orients teacher to be a consultant, assistant, researcher ready to apply evidence based teaching. To prove research competence future dance teachers have to perform a dance education research. This study revealed pedagogical problems which interest future dance teachers: attitudes and motivation, dance in schools, dance teacher education, dance for people with special needs. Choise of research methods shift from quantitative towards qualitative.

Keywords: *dance education, dance teacher, dance education research.*

Introduction

Teacher phenomenon and its notion over the last decade distinguish as one of the most complex and shifting. Worldwide documents on education emphasize the importance of high quality teacher education which ensures appropriate teacher competences acquisition (Common European Principles for Teacher Competencies and Qualifications, 2005; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007; Mokytojo profesijos kompetencijų aprašas, 2007). Complexity of teacher competences which include not only perfect knowledge of the subject matter, but also knowledge of pedagogy as well as skills required to guide and support learners has always been an issue of discussions and investigations. Scholars (Aramavičiūtė, Martišauskienė, 2006; Martišauskienė 2009; Matonis, 2007; Subotkevičienė, 2008) investigating teacher roles exposed through competences needed to fulfill these roles reveal complexity and diversity of teacher competences structure and

definitions. Learning paradigm which takes stronger positions in contemporary education practise orients teacher to be a consultant, adviser, assistant, as well as a researcher ready to apply evidence based teaching (Banevičiūtė, 2012; Čiužas, Jucevičienė, 2006; Vaičekauskienė, Paravinskaitė, 2012). Though, investigators report that teachers lack competences in communication, information management and research (Čiučiulkienė et al., 2007). Teacher skills to undertake classroom-based research and to incorporate the results of classroom and academic research into their teaching are underlined as of high importance improving the quality of teaching at schools (Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007). Not exception is dance teacher. However, findings (Banevičiūtė, 2012) show that future dance teachers rank dance education research skills quite low: in the list of importance of dance teacher skills – place them in fifteenth position out of eighteen. Though, in-service dance teachers see these skills as the last in the list of importance. This situation indeed causes concern as European and national documents requires improvement of education on a basis of research results of education process and content (Common European Principles for Teacher Competencies and Qualifications, 2005; Improving the quality of teacher education, 2007; Mokytojo profesijos kompetencijų aprašas, 2007; Teacher education in Europe, 2008).

To prove their competences acquired during study process future dance teachers have to provide final work which according to regulations of dance pedagogy study programme in Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences consist of creative work and thesis. Creative work of dance pedagogy students together with children, which result is a dance composition, reveals: skills to implement dance education in a comprehensive school and informal educational institution and skills to create and perform dance movements and movement combinations, dance pieces of various genres according to genre and style features i. e. pedagogical and creative skills of future dance teachers. Thesis demonstrate students' level of research skills including critical and analytical thinking, understanding of dance education problems, creativity in problem solution, application of pedagogy, psichology and dance didactics knowledge.

As a researcher and member of academic staff of Arts Education Department I am closely connected to dance teachers' preparation process through teaching in Dance pedagogy bachelor study programme and supervising preparation of final thesis. Since the first dance pedagogy graduates produced their thesis in 2009 till now I am a member of the Board of Final Thesis Defence and Qualification. Therefore my scientific interest in dance education research is induced by my concern to improve quality of study programme which should provide relevant competences for dance pedagogy graduates. One of students' research competence aspects is detection of dance education problems, which also reveals research interests of future dance teachers.

The purpose of this study is to reveal pedagogical problems, research sample and methods that dance pedagogy students choose for their final thesis as well as tendencies of these choises.

Seeking the goal, **methods** of literature review and content analysis of dance pedagogy final thesis were applied. Forty seven research works of period 2009–2013 since graduates of dance pedagogy programme exist were analysed.

Results of the research. The analysis of dance education research problems revealed certain areas of interest which appeared firstly in subcategories, later were grouped in categories. Six categories of pedagogical problems chosen by future dance teachers to investigate distiguish: attitude and motivation to participate in dance activities, dance education process in comprehensive schools, dance for people with special needs, dance teacher and dance collective phenomenon (table 1).

Table 1. **Pedagogical problems of dance education research**

Category	Subcategory
Attitude to dance activities	Children / adolescent attitude to dance
	Parents attitude to children dance
Motivation to participate in dance	Adults motivation to dance
	Adolescent motivation to dance folk / street dance
Dance in schools	Dance teaching methods
	Creativity in dance
	Assessment of dance achievements
	Leadership in dance classes
Dance teacher	Aspects of dance teacher education
	Quality of dance pedagogy studies
	Dance teacher competences
Dance for people with special needs	Dance activities for people with hearing impairment / mental disorders / physical disability
Dance collective	Artistic educative aspects of folk dance collectives

Every of these categories are constituted of subcategories which show aspects of chosen problems. In case of attitude investigation students were interested in children, adolescents and parents attitudes towards different kinds of dance such as folk, ballroom and street dance. Motivation to dance was questioned amongst adults and adolescents. Future dance teachers also were keen on dance activities of people with hearing impairment, mental disorders and physical disability as well as artistic and educative aspects of folk dance collectives well known in Lithuania.

Most broadly students analysed problems of dance education in a comprehensive school: aspects of teaching methods, creativity development, achievement assessment and leadership were introduced in final thesis. This could be explained by the fact that Dance pedagogy bachelor study programme in Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences aims to prepare dance teachers for general schools starting from primary to upper secondary schools as this is the most common area of employment for dance peda-

gogy graduates. Side reason of interest to research dance at schools could be pedagogical practise which mainly takes place in general schools.

Choice of research problems was connected with dance style, especially in dance collective investigation area, adult dance, attitudes and motivation. These issues were closely related to certain dance style – folk, ballroom, street dance, etc. Dance style was another aspect of dance pedagogy students' research works investigation (table 2).

Table 2. **Dance style in dance education research**

Dance style	Number of choices
Not connected to dance style	19
Lithuanian folk dance	8
Contemporary dance	6
Ballet	4
Street dance	2
Ballroom dance	2

The analysis of dance styles in dance education research showed that most often future dance teachers chose dance which is not connected with particular style. This situation relates to the fact that dance classes at a comprehensive school are not connected with dance style as they are more orientated to natural movement use, creative processes, dance appreciation, etc. Lithuanian folk dance was in the second place of choices to investigate and it was related to issues of dance collectives, attitudes and motivation. Contemporary dance was analysed in relation to dance collectives of adults, adolscents and professional dancers. Ballet was analysed investigating issues of motivation of future professional dancers at ballet school or ballet teachers' competences. Least students were interested in street and ballroom dance – only two choices each.

Results of research sample choice analysis revealed that mostly dance pedagogy students examined pupils of primary and main schools as well as dance pedagogy students (table 3). This might appear because of two reasons: 1) often students implement their research during pedagogical practise which takes place in a comprehensive school; 2) dance pedagogy students are the easiest to reach and contact as they are colleagues from a lower study year.

Table 3. **Research sample of dance education research**

Research sample	Number of choices
Pupils of primary school	7
Pupils of main school/adolescents	7
Dance pedagogy students	7
Professional dancers	5
Dance teachers	5

Research sample	Number of choices
Pupils of secondary school	4
Leaders of dance collectives	4
People with special needs	4
Amateur dancers	3
Parents	2

Second group of sample which interested students were professional dancers and dance teachers. Three choices of each were related to ballet dancers and ballet teachers. Leaders of dance collectives were chosen when students investigated folk dance collectives and their artistic and educative activities. Least students were interested in parents who were questioned seeking to reveal their attitude to dance of their own children of pre-school age.

Analysis of research methods chosen for dance education research showed that quite a broad range of methods is used including quastionaire, interview, observation, content analysis, case study, action research (table 4).

Table 4. **Research methods of dance education research**

Research methods	Number of choices
Interview	31
Questionnaire	19
Observation	16
Content analysis	4
Case study	4
Action research	2

The most common research method employed by students was interview. Interviews were used in all categories of dance education problems which future dance teachers investigated. During the investigated period of this study use of this method increased whilst questionanaire use decreased (table 5). Methods of observation, case study and action research were chosen by students since 2011 investigating problems of dance at schools and dance for people with special needs.

Table 5. **Tendency of research methods choice in students' research work**

Research methods	2009 N* = 9	2010 N = 6	2011 N = 12	2012 N = 9	2013 N = 11
Questionnaire	5	4	6	2	2
Interview	3	2	9	8	9
Observation	1		5	6	4
Content analysis	1	1	2		
Case study			1	1	2
Action research			1		1

*N – the number of dance pedagogy student research works at that graduate year

Since 2011 according to the regulations of dance education bachelor's final thesis students in their research have to use several research methods, at least two. Usually students combined quantitative and qualitative methods such as questionaire, interview and observation. However since 2012 students started to employ interview together with observation leaving on a side questionnaire.

The shift from quantitative research methods towards qualitative could be substantiated by the fact that since 2010 academic staff of Arts Education Department which administrates dance pedagogy bachelor study programme was engaged into commitment to improve quality of study programmes by introducing qualitative research paradigm into the area of social sciences especially in educational studies. This commitment and interest was induced by works of Lithuanian scholars (Bitinas, 2006; Bitinas et al., 2008; Žydžiūnaitė, Jonušaitė, 2007) as well as more widely presented experience and tendecies in social sciences of foreign countries to Lithuanian academic community.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicated that dance pedagogy students are interested in a wide range of dance education problems which include attitude and motivation for dance, dance education in schools, dance education for adults and people with special needs, education of dance professionals, dance teacher phenomenon and dance collectives.

These main research problem categories exposed together with dance style (folk, ballet, contemporary, ballroom, etc.), though most of research was related to dance not connected with dance style when investigating issues of dance in a comprehensive school.

Future dance teachers for a research sample chose pupils of primary and main school as well as dance pedagogy students. Some research has been done with professional dancers, dance teachers and leaders of dance collectives. Least students were interested in parents as a research sample.

Tendecies of research method choices showed shift from quantitative towards qualitative research strategy or at least combining them. Application of interview, observation, case study and action research led dance pedagogy bachelor students to look at dance education problems through qualitative research lens, by this showing interest in improving quality of education.

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Šokio pedagogų rengimo aspektai: studentų atliekamų šokio ugdymo tyrimų analizė

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Santrauka

Mokymosi paradigma skatina mokytojus būti konsultantais, padėjėjais, tyrėjais, pasirengusiais taikyti duomenimis grįstą mokymą. Viena iš specialiųjų kompetencijų, kurias ugdosi būsimieji šokio mokytojai, yra šokio ugdymo tyrimų kompetencija, kuriai pagrįsti studentai atlieka šokio ugdymo tyrimus ir rašo bakalauro darbus. Straipsnyje pristatomi 2009–2013 m. Šokio pedagogikos bakalauro studijų programos absolventų atliktų 47 šokio ugdymo tyrimų analizės rezultatai, kurie atskleidė, kad būsimųjų šokio pedagogų šokio ugdymo tyrimų laukas platus, apimantis įvairius šokio žanrus, tiriamųjų grupes, amžiaus tarpsnius. Studentai gilinasi į aktualias problemas, susijusias su šokio ugdymo metodų taikymu, mokinių šokio pasiekimų vertinimu, šokio ugdymo proceso organizavimu, jo kokybe. Aktualios specialiųjų poreikių turinčių asmenų šokio ugdymo, lyderystės, hiperaktyvumo problemos, taip pat ir šokio mokytojų rengimas bei jo kokybė. Šokio pedagogikos studentai juos dominančių šokio ugdymo problemų tyrimams renkasi įvairius tyrimo metodus, tačiau pastaruoju metu daugiausia taikoma kokybinių tyrimų metodų – interviu, stebėjimo, veiklos tyrimo ir atvejo analizės.

Esminiai žodžiai: *šokio ugdymas, šokio pedagogas, šokio ugdymo tyrimai.*