CLASS TEACHER STUDENTS' SELF-CONCEPT IN DANCE

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Abstract
This study examines the dance self-concept of student teachers studying physical education as a minor subject at the University of Eastern Finland (UEF). The theoretical framework is based on the position of dance in Finnish basic education, teacher education, and self-concept. The study represents qualitative research, and the data was analysed using theory-based content analysis. The purpose of the study was to explore the nature of student teachers' self-concept in dance and the factors affecting it. Data were collected with an electronic questionnaire from 32 respondents. The results show that close to half (14/32) of respondents had a positive self-concept, around one in ten (3/32) a neutral self-concept, and one third (9/32) a negative self-concept in dance. Six respondents' self-concept in dance remained undefined. Previous hobbies, gender, and sense of rhythm had the biggest impacts on dance self-concept.
Keywords: *self-concept in dance (dance self-conception), dance education, self-concept, teacher education*

Introduction

Our research is based on the status of dance in primary education in Finland, as well as student teachers' self-concept, the factors affecting it, and the connection to beliefs about self-efficacy. Despite the attempts of dance professionals (Anttila, 2013), dance does not have the status of a subject as part of art education in the latest curriculum in Finland (Anttila, 2013; Anttila, Jaakonaho, Kantomaa, Siljamäki & Turpeinen, 2019). Even though dance was not given official status in primary school (Anttila, 2013), the curriculum obliges to teach dance or body expression to some extent as part of other subjects (Opetushallitus, 2014). For example, in physical education, dance is mentioned as a part of versatile movement and in music education it is an important part of the music and movement study module (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014).

In teacher education, dance is taught as part of the pedagogical studies of physical education, and it is also approached in music studies in the form of music movement.

In the Department of Teacher Education at University of Eastern Finland (below – UEF), all skills and arts subjects – music, visual arts, crafts, and physical education – are integrated into three large entities (UEFOPS, 2018–2021). According to the course descriptions, a total of 10 hours of major group teaching and 48 hours of minor group teaching are allocated for physical education as well as other arts and skills (the course descriptions can only be found through the IDs of UEF). UEF offers an opportunity to complete undergraduate studies in physical education as a minor subject. Beginning in spring 2018, students in early childhood education and special pedagogy, class teacher students, and subject teacher students (Itä-Suomen yliopisto, filosofinen tiedekunta, 2017) have been able to apply to this minor subject. We wanted to explore students who were completing a minor in physical education as the extensive 25-credit minor studies offer more comprehensive physical education compared to multidisciplinary courses. Consequently, a greater proportion of dance and music and movement studies are also included.

Teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and self-conception have always had an impact on students' learning outcomes (Ashton & Webb 1986; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), this is also true concerning dance studies (see Schupp, 2010). According to Woolfolk Hoy and Davis (2005), teachers with a strong belief in their own ability to teach a particular subject are motivated to teach it (p. 120). In turn, teachers with an uncertain view of their own skills in a certain subject are inclined to avoid teaching it (Anderson, Greene & Loewen, 1988; Coladarci, 1992; Bandura, 1994, 1995; Renne, 2015). Therefore, we wanted to find out what the future teachers' relationship to dance is according to their own assessment. Utilizing models of self-conception, we explored different dimensions of self-conception in dance, forming them into a whole. The purpose of this study was also to determine what factors contribute to the formation of student teachers' dance self-conception in order to provide direction for further research on the development of dance education in elementary school and in teacher education.

Dance and Its Role in Finnish Society

Dance is part of cultural behaviour influenced by human values, beliefs, and attitudes. It is an independent, influencing factor in culture and society (Hoppu, 2003; Lehikoinen, 2014). However, dance is not merely a phenomenon based on human corporeality and sociability but is strongly associated with individual experiences. It is a diverse, body-driven activity that requires awareness and concentration. Dance can produce experiences, impressions, sensations, and emotions. It involves issues such as problem solving, creative self-expression, producing one's own movement, and building a composition (Bandura, 1983; Anttila, 2009; Vitola, 2013; Lehikoinen, 2014). Dance is also strongly associated with musical talent and sense of rhythm, listening to music, and being absorbed by it (Viitala, 1998; Juntunen, Perkiö & Simola-Isaksson, 2010; Anttila, 2013).

Anttila (1994) divided dance into three basic pedagogical concepts: early dance education, dance education, and dance instruction. Dance education is usually limited to learning and practicing different dance techniques, while dance creation is holistic. Dance instruction is part of dance education and is based on most art dances, competitive dances and other dance genres based heavily on technique. In dance

education, on the other hand, the focus is on the basics that are common to all dance styles, such as body-expression, aesthetic observation of movements, and positive experiences of self-expression through movement. Performance accuracy is not necessarily central in dance education, enabling experiences of success for those who fail to attain these experiences in other, performance-oriented sports (Siljamäki, 2007; Laakkonen, 2009; Anttila, 2013). The dance content in basic education is dance-educational and based on bodily expression (Viitala, 1998; Anttila, 2013; Nirhamo, 2016).

Dance forms are numerous, depending on their purpose and origin (Lehikoinen, 2014). The primary purpose of social dances, such as ethnic, stage dances and old dances, in high school are togetherness, social interaction, and fun. Also, creative dance may fall among social and inclusive dance (e.g. Viitala, 1998). The other extreme of these are performing dance forms, such as ballet, modern dance and tap. There are also numerous dance forms between these so-called extremes that combine both, such as breakdance, hip-hop and other street dance forms (Anttila, 1994; Nieminen, 2007).

The research question setting of this study does not distinguish dance by any category; rather, the concept of dance may include all of the above-mentioned forms of dance, depending on how the concept of dance is interpreted by those involved in the study.

The Role of Dance in Primary School and Teacher Education

Dance has been proven to have a lot of positive effects on the holistic wellbeing and school amenity of children (Sansom, 2011; Anttila, 2013; Anttila et al., 2019; Anttila & Svendler Nielsen, 2019). Dance is mentioned in the latest Finnish curriculum as just one part of varied movement in the field of physical education (Opetushallitus, 2014). Therefore, the teaching of dance is solely dependent on whether the gym teacher has the skills and desire to teach dance in their classes (Laakkonen, 2009; Anttila, 2013). Despite the attempts of dance professionals and advocates for the importance of dance education, dance was not included as the subject of its own in the curriculum that took effect in autumn 2016 (Anttila, 2013).

The teaching of dance varies greatly among Finnish schools because teacher education institutes do not provide sufficient unified capacity for teaching dance (Laakkonen, 2009). The teacher's own proclivity towards dance plays a big role, as their personal experiences guide their choices in terms of working habits and goals. For example, if a teacher regards dancing only as a form of fitness, the art educational side of dance remains unaddressed (Woolfolk, Rosoff & Hoy, 1990; Siljamäki, 2007; Laakkonen, 2009; Anttila, 2013). Siljamäki (2007) underlines that it is important for teachers to be aware of their own dance preferences, as their relationship with dance may be very different from that of the pupils.

Effect of Gender Attitudes on Dance

Dance is very strongly associated with gender prejudice. It is often considered a feminine form of art and, consequently, starting from a young age, few boys engage in dance (Anttila, 1994, 2013; Risner 2007). Throughout history, in societies that

emphasize male masculinity dance has been seen as a feminine art form and male dancers have been labelled as homosexuals, extensively restricting male dancing (Butler, 1990; Lehikoinen, 2004, 2006; Risner, 2007; Burt, 2007, 2009). With this tendency in Finland, dance began to be heavily modified in a heteronormative direction, that is, to remove feminine features from dance to bring boys and men into dance circles (Lehikoinen, 2006). Nevertheless, dance is still seen as an exceptional phenomenon in the present day among boys and men, and boys who practice or pursue dance are still a rarity (Turpeinen, 2015).

Engaging boys in dance lessons also causes confusion among dance teachers and often forces them to modify their teaching habits (Löytönen, 2004). Anttila's 'Whole School Dancing!' research project, in which dance was included as part of one school curriculum over four years, showed that many teachers found motivating boys to dance to be challenging. One interviewed male teacher said that his own negative attitude towards dance has a direct impact on his pupils and their motivation. One of the main objectives of the project was to dismantle preconceptions of gender in dance. During the project, it was noted that boy pupils especially in the first and second grades (age 7–9) entered well into the project. Gender differences were more pronounced in the upper grades. The research project revealed that boys in upper comprehensive school (age 13–16) found it difficult to admit their enthusiasm for dancing. Teachers also felt it challenging to discern whether pupils are covering up their enthusiasm due to social pressure, or whether their experience of dance is actually negative (Anttila, 2013).

Self-conception

Self-conception refers to one's perception of oneself. The formation of a person's self-conception is influenced by their environment and the groups of people with whom they have interacted and continue to interact with. Self-conception is in constant change, influenced by experiences of good self-efficacy and being accepted. According to Burns (1982), self-conception is multifaceted and consists of several different perceptions of the self. Moreover, according to Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976), self-conception can be used to predict the actions of an individual in a variety of situations. Self-conception therefore helps to explain and predict the behaviour of an individual.

Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton's (1976) model of self-conception is hierarchically divided from general self-conception into increasingly smaller aspects of self-conception. The academic self-concept shapes the perception that a person has of themselves as a student and how he/she feels they are coping in different subjects. Other aspects of self-conception include social self-conception, comprising interpersonal relationships, emotional self-conception responsible for handling emotions, and physical self-conception, which, in turns, include a person's perception of their own physical ability and appearance. These can all yet be divided hierarchically into smaller parts, depending on what aspect of self-conception one wishes to look at (Shavelson et al., 1976; Davis & Yates, 1982).

According to Burns' (1982) self-concept theory, the concept of self has three dimensions: a conscious understanding of the self, i.e. what a person feels they are; an

ideal vision, i.e. what the person would like to be; and a comrade perception, i.e. how the person believes others might see them. These dimensions are further divided into physical, social, academic, and emotional aspects.

Tulamo (1993) applied the models of Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton, as well as Burns' self-concept, in her own research, in which she looked at the musical self-conception of schoolchildren. In her own model of musical self-conception, Tulamo does not distinguish between academic and non-academic subdivision as closely as Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton. She shares musical self-conception in the manner of Burns with a known, ideal and comrade concept, which are still divided into a musical conception of straightforward, social, emotional, and physical-motor musical self-conception (Tulamo, 1993). In the model of dance self-conception of this study (see Fig. 1), we have used the hierarchical structure of the model of self-conception by Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton as well as Burns' model of self-conception, and applying Tulamo's model of musical self-conception, which is a combination of the previous two.
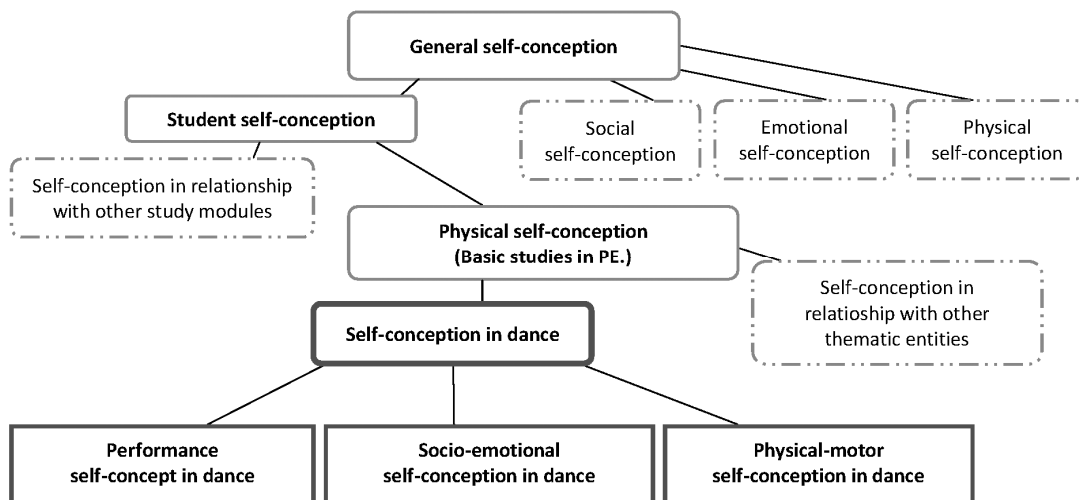

Figure 1. The structure of self-conception in dance

Implementation of the Study

The data was collected through an online questionnaire during the winter of 2018–2019. A total of 32 student teachers with a minor in basic physical education studies participated in the study. Of the participants, 11 were male and 21 females. Respondents were asked to write an approximately one A4 page length reflection on their own dance ability and the factors that might affect it. Examples had been given in the assignment to support the reflection. In addition, respondents were asked to consider their own readiness to teach dance in the future. The study is qualitative. For data analysis we used a theory-driven (abductive) method of content analysis, which applies both theoretically defined models as well as data-oriented reasoning (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002).

Research questions

1. *What is the self-conception in dance of student teachers who are qualifying with a minor in physical education?*
   Sub-question A) What is their performance dance self-conception?
   Sub-question B) What is their socio-emotional dance self-conception?
   Sub-question C) What is their physical-motor dance self-conception?

The main purpose of the study was to identify the dance self-conceptions of the student teachers participating in the study. General dance self-conception consists of three sections in this study: performing dance self-conception, socio-emotional dance self-conception, and physical dance self-conception.

2. *What factors affect the dance self-conception of the respondents (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education)?*

Human self-conception at a general level is constantly shaped by the environment, other people's opinions, and personal experiences of success (Burns, 1982). Therefore, it can be assumed that there are also various similar factors behind dance self-concept.

3. *What is the readiness of the respondents (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education) to teach dance in future?*

The study mapped student teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach dance in their future profession and also examined whether this is significantly associated with their dance self-conception.

Results

In our study, we looked separately at each aspect of dance self-conception (performance dance self-conception, socio-emotional dance self-conception, and physical-motor dance self-conception).

Research question 1: *What is the quality of the dance self-conception of the respondents (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education)?*

We grouped all self-conceptions into four categories: negative and predominantly negative (see Table 1), positive and predominantly positive (see Table 2), neutral and predominantly neutral (see Table 3), and contradictory (see Table 4) dance self-conception.

Table 1. Negative and predominantly negative dance self-conception
(Total 9/32, Male 4/11, Female 5/21)

M=male F=female	Performance self-conception	Socio-emotional self-conception	Physical-motor self-conception
M 26	negative	negative	negative
M 29	negative	negative	negative
M 16	negative	neutral	negative
M 8	negative	neutral	cannot define
F 7	negative	negative	negative
F 30	negative	neutral	negative
F 12	negative	positive	negative
F 18	negative	positive	negative
F 21	neutral	negative	cannot define

Table 2. Positive and predominantly positive dance self-conception
(Total 14/32, Male 3/11, Female 11/21)

M=male F=female	Performance self-conception	Socio-emotional self-conception	Physical-motor self-conception
M 5	positive	positive	positive
M 31	positive	positive	cannot define
M 2	negative	positive	positive
F 3	positive	positive	positive
F 11	positive	positive	positive
F 14	positive	positive	positive
F 19	positive	positive	positive
F 22	positive	positive	positive
F 6	positive	positive	cannot define
F 27	positive	positive	cannot define
F 13	positive	positive	neutral
F 20	neutral	positive	positive
F 24	positive	positive	neutral
F 25	neutral	positive	positive

Table 3. Neutral and predominantly neutral dance self-conception
(Total 3/32, Male 3/11)

M=male F=female	Performance self-conception	Socio-emotional self-conception	Physical-motor self-conception
M V9	negative	neutral	neutral
M V17	neutral	neutral	neutral
M V28	neutral	neutral	cannot define

Table 4. Contradictory dance self-conception
(Total 6/32, Male 1/11, Female 5/21)

M=male F=female	Performance self-conception	Socio-emotional self-conception	Physical-motor self-conception
M 15	neutral	positive	negative
N 1	neutral	positive	negative
N 4	negative	positive	neutral
N 10	neutral	positive	negative
N 23	positive	negative	cannot define
N 32	negative	positive	neutral

The quality of holistic dance self-conception is determined by what quality is represented mostly in the different areas of dance self-conception. A conflicting group was formed from such responses where each subdivision was of a different quality. Regarding the six responses whose physical-motor dance self-conception we were not able to define, our rating is based on positive and negative aspects. For example, if a respondent's performance dance self-conception was positive and socio-emotional dance self-conception was neutral, we categorized this response as predominantly positive.

Research question 1

Sub-question A) *What is the quality of respondents' (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education) performance dance self-conception?*

In this study, we refer to a person's perception of their own performance, abilities, and sense of competence in relation to dance. In the questionnaire, we referred to this point by urging respondents to reflect on themselves as dancers in a variety of dance-related situations. Positive performance dance self-conception was found in 12 respondents (10 female, two male). Of this group, eight females felt that their strong positive assessment of performing dance was influenced by their past experience, having danced as a hobby.

> *"I belonged to a performing dance troupe for about six years, from the beginning of middle school to the end of high school. Dance has been a part of my life for a long time."* (V13)

> *"Since I was little, I've been involved in various musical activities and dance and gymnastics groups. […] Music and musical movement have been strongly present in my life. I like dancing and it's been really natural and meaningful for me."* (V14)

> *"I never danced as a hobby, but through gymnastics and TeamGym, and I have performed dance-like gymnastics sets for several years. […] I'm able to move my body well to the pace of music and at the same time be absorbed in music."* (V24)

The remaining respondents assessed their dance skills as good for a variety of reasons, such as courage or sense of rhythm.

> *"I've always been physical and even a bit musical in my opinion. I have a good sense of rhythm and I can move quite well to the pace of the music."* (V5)

Negative performance dance self-conception was found in 12 respondents (three female, nine male). In their responses, men underscored the fact that because of their gender they have never joined any dance groups and for this reason have not gained enough experience of dancing. Uncertainty about their competence due to lack of experience was also highlighted by some women.

> *"As a man, I never danced much in childhood or adolescence because boys don't dance. Dance hasn't grabbed my interest at all either."* (V2)

> *"For me, since I was a child, I've had the impression that dancing was a girls' thing. Because of that, I have never practiced it, and it's always been a very distant thing to me."* (V8)

> *"Dancing has always been an issue I've wanted to learn and know how to, but I feel I can't. […] I feel that I have a sense of rhythm through other hobbies, but its transition to dance (say, hip-hop or aerobics etc.) feels difficult."* (V32)

Neutral performance dance self-conception was found in 8 respondents (five female, three male). These respondents felt that they could dance to a degree, but that they lacked any real skill of dancing. Reasons for this insecurity included lack of personal free-time engagement in dance, motivation, or sense of rhythm, as well as narrow competence in the respondents' own view.

> *"When dancing alone, you feel like you're somehow too exposed and judged. […] When dancing with a partner, there's more emphasis on collaboration and you're not singled-out in the same way. I also have more experience of pair dancing […]"* (V15)

> *"I think playing the guitar when I was younger helps me find the rhythm when dancing and to keep to it. I'm also not that afraid to screw up, and I easily get excited about challenging things, so going out of my comfort zone when dancing doesn't seem that insurmountable. I generally have a neutral attitude towards dancing."* (V21)

Research question 1

Sub-question B) *What is the quality of respondents' (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education) socio-emotional dance self-conception?*

By socio-emotional dance self-conception, we refer here to how people experience themselves in relation to other people in dance situations, as well as the kinds of emotions they experience when dancing. For example, whether the opinions of other people affect the performance and sense of meaningfulness of their dancing.

Positive socio-emotional dance self-conception was found in 21 respondents (four male, 17 female). Members of this group were selected based on their mention of

dance as producing positive experiences. This group featured both participants with a strong dance background as well as those who did not practice dance as a hobby.

> *"I've never really practiced any dance (except old folk dancing at school), but especially from teenage onwards I've liked dancing, though mainly I've only danced by myself at home."* (V5)

> *"For me, dancing has always been a very natural way of expressing myself. I love music and I often want to get up and dance if I hear something that I like. I'm not embarrassed to dance in public and I often feel relaxed while dancing."* (V22)

> *"I really like dancing a lot. I dance at home while making food, I often dance to the end of the night at clubs, and I also dance in the lessons of the music and movement study module of the physical education minor programme."* (V3)

There were also some respondents in this group who felt uncomfortable dancing alone as well as with others. However, this did not significantly affect the meaningfulness of their dancing overall.

> *"It's only recently that I've started to get enjoyment from dancing in the sense of a good mood. Being at a more mature age, I no longer care about the opinions of others, and I have attended both ballet and other dance classes."* (V2)

> *"I see dancing somehow as a deeply personal thing because the body expresses itself and its emotions so clearly. [...] In the end, however, I enjoy dancing a lot and have thought about starting dance classes."* (V12)

Negative socio-emotional dance self-conception was found in five respondents (two male, three female). In this group were respondents who mentioned not enjoying dancing for one reason or another. The reasons cited included fear of failure, the body aspect of dancing, and lack of interest.

> *"I always react to music with my body and for good reason, too; it would be nice if dancing was more natural to me. However, the fear of failure has always been so strong (this, of course in other areas too) that I'm not particularly inspired to try dancing outside of the school environment."* (V7)

> *"I've found that I like supervised dance aimed at improving my physical condition better than creative dance. I like, for example, to take aerobics group exercise classes for leisure, but the more dance-based Zumba lessons have not attracted my interest. I also find dancing in bars a bit embarrassing."* (V21)

> *"The problem is the rigidity and stiffness of my movement. [...] My approach to dancing and its different forms is therefore a bit negative. I don't like dancing or expressing emotions with my body."* (V29)

Neutral socio-emotional dance self-conception was found in six respondents (five male, one female). We categorized responses as neutral when the respondent

maintained that they only felt comfortable with certain styles of dance. We also categorized responses where the respondent's socio-emotional relationship with dance had recently changed as neutral.

> *"...I've also been afraid of what other people might say about my dancing. The opinions and glances of others have influenced my attitude. [...] At the moment I have an open mind about dancing, and I don't care anymore about what others think. This has been greatly influenced by the music and movement study module of the physical education minor studies."* (V30)

> *"Dancing alone I've never liked, but I like pair dances. Dancing alone, you feel like you're somehow too exposed and evaluated."* (V15)

> *"Even though my dancing looks stupid I don't let it affect the performance itself. I rather think that it doesn't matter what others think or what my dancing looks like, I do things for myself not others. [...] Of course, I don't like all dance types because my sense of rhythm isn't very good. [...] In some dances all my concentration goes on searching for the rhythm and staying in it. I can't really get anything out of that style of dancing, and I don't like it much."* (V16)

Research question 1

Sub-question C) *What is the quality of respondents' (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education) physical-motor dance self-conception?*

In the responses, the most central skills were staying in rhythm and synchronising leg and hand movements. In addition, in this sub-question we also considered mentions of choreograph design expertise. Bodily expression highlighted how much the respondent dares to express themselves with their body and how they experience their body in dance situations. Six responses were left undefined in this section because the respondents' physical-motor dance self-conception could not be defined based on their expressions.

Positive physical-motor dance self-conception was found in nine respondents (seven female, two male). In this category, we included responses where respondents felt that their motor skills were good in dancing and that their bodily expression was meaningful. We also interpreted respondents who had good ability to design choreographies as positive in this category.

> *"Blending music and movement has always been easy and I've always liked to design different choreographies."* (V11)

> *"I'm used to watching in a mirror and in videos how I dance, so I don't feel insecure dancing in front of a camera or the mirror. I'm used to analysing my own dance and my group."* (V19)

> *"I like expressing myself bodily and, in the PE, minor studies it was awesome to find that improvisational exercises still felt meaningful [...]"* (V25)

Negative physical-motor dance self-conception was found in 10 respondents (six female, four male). We categorized as negative those responses from which we

interpreted the respondents as experiencing the bodily aspect of dance as uncomfortable. These respondents also considered, in their opinion, that they lacked the motor skills that dancing requires.

> *"I still fell on edge if someone (e.g. a teacher) watches me dance; my feet immediately go into a knot. My body has also changed, and I've become more insecure about that."* (V1)

> *"[...] my body is relatively stiff and, for example, contemporary dance and other dances requiring flexibility are challenging already in that respect."* (V7)

> *"[...] I don't feel like I'm very good at expressing myself with my body. I'm somehow shy about my movements, and I'm not brave enough to hang loose like I should."* (V15)

> *"When I try matching my arms with my leg movements, I get very quickly and easily confused."* (V29)

> *"I've always wanted to escape from situations that involve dancing. The biggest factor in this has certainly been the body and the sight of it."* (V30)

Neutral physical-motor dance self-conception was found in 6 respondents (four female, two male). As neutral or contradictory, we categorized those responses where only motor skills or body expression was perceived as good, or both were somewhat uncertain.

> *"Dancing is nice if you have a feeling that it doesn't matter much, even when you go crazy in between steps. [...] On the other hand, it feels nice to do and try different movements with my body and learn new moves. I don't experience dancing in any way as distressing unless the dance is only all about spinning the hips and butt."* (V4)

> *"[...] but creative dancing just didn't go anywhere near too smoothly, throwing myself felt challenging. Today the situation has changed a lot, and I can kind of dance fairly ok now in almost any situation. I guess my dancing still doesn't look that great to an outsider though [...]. In the past, for example in aerobics, simultaneous movement of hands and feet felt particularly challenging."* (V17)

Research question 2

What factors affect the dance self-conception of the respondents (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education)?

Sense of rhythm and musical talent are strongly associated with dancing (Viitala, 1998; Anttila, 2013). Dance can also be a means of teaching music because music can be manifested through dancing (Juntunen et al., 2010). Of the study participants, nine felt that they did not have a good enough sense of rhythm or musical talent for dancing. These respondents told that particularly due to their weak sense of rhythm it is tricky for them to remember step sets and keep up with choreographs. Of this group, four had a negative dance self-conception, three had a positive dance self-conception, and two had a neutral or contradictory dance self-conception.

"I don't like all dances because my sense of rhythm isn't very good. […] In some dances all my concentration goes on searching for the rhythm and staying in it." (V16)

"I don't feel like I have a good sense of rhythm, but I still like to move to music […]." (V25)

All 14 respondents were fairly or very certain of their sense of rhythm, but felt their own musicality was either weak or there was no mention of it in the text. Most of the respondents in this group felt their sense of rhythm was strongly associated with their dance skills. Of this group, eight respondents had a positive dance self-perception, five had neutral or contradictory dance self-perception, and only one had a negative dance self-perception.

"I would say I have a good sense of rhythm because I feel I can move according to the rhythm, and I can find the basic rhythm in songs." (V6)

"I've always considered myself unmusical, but thanks to dance classes I feel it's easy to find the right rhythm in music, while rhythming dance sets have also become familiar." (V11)

"I stick well to the rhythm and it's easy for me to find the pace in different songs. I feel that a sense of rhythm can be found in me naturally, and I don't have to think about the pace, for example when learning choreography." (V14)

Musicality and sense of rhythm were experienced by eight respondents. Three of these respondents had a negative dance self-conception, three had a positive dance self-conception, and two had a contradictory dance self-conception.

"I'm very physical and musical. Dance, however, has never felt very much like my own way of moving." (V8)

"I consider myself a musical person with a good sense of rhythm. I often dance and sing alone to the rhythm of music." (V20)

The influence of gender was particularly highlighted in the responses by men. Only four women mentioned that gender has had an impact on their attitude to dance; two of them pondered that girls are supposed to like dancing and learning how to dance better than boys.

"As a female, I feel that girls are required and assumed [to participate] more when it comes to dance in school (perhaps this has affected my own attitude too). Girls should learn the dances faster and be better. During my own school, PE classes usually only had dancing for girls, while the boys played something." (V7)

"My gender certainly affects my attitude. As a girl, I ended up in dance classes, and not, say, an ice rink (voice escalating). […] On the other hand, dancing is also considered a girly sport, bringing the pressure that I should know about it or dance a certain way." (V11)

In addition to these, two women considered the impact of gender on a general level, for example in the future when planning dance instruction. The remaining 26 female respondents did not consider the effect of gender at all. Of the men, nine out of 11 addressed in their responses the impact of gender and the pre-assumptions related to it. Most of these wrote that their attitude to dance had been influenced or still was influenced by prejudice.

> *"Gender has surely contributed to how much I've danced as well. During middle school, it didn't even cross your mind to start dancing. I'm sure it wouldn't have been a good idea in my group of friends around that time. In high school, it might have already been considered, but maybe at that time there was still a sense in myself that men don't dance. I don't know where this is from."* (V15)

> *"I think my gender has had a bit of an impact on dancing not being the most preferred form of exercise for myself. Even in elementary and middle school, dancing was more of a girl's thing, and yes that attitude still appears in me."* (V28)

> *"My gender has certainly affected different aspects of my school physical education, there has been more music movement in girls' PE as I understand, and we boys have had more games. Certainly, this has partially negatively affected my perception of dance in schools and in life overall, but that perception is crumbling."* (V31)

Some of the respondents who considered the impact of gender also mentioned that in school physical education girls are taught dance more than boys, which has affected their dance skills.

Previous dance experiences and hobby background were clearly linked to the students' dance self-conception. Many respondents with a positive dance self-conception had some kind of dance or gymnastics background. Some respondents also felt that various gymnastics activities had been helpful to them, for example, in moving in rhythm, mastering their own body when dancing, and designing choreographies.

> *"I've been doing team gymnastics for about eight years and also coached it for close to ten years, so improvising and creating choreographies is familiar."* (V14)

> *"My own gymnastics and athletics background was useful, especially when learning breakdance, because I have the strength and coordination skills for different positions that require balance on the floor."* (V24)

> *"I've been doing gymnastics since I was little, so dance and music movement are close to my heart."* (V27)

Based on the responses, school physical education has had an impact on the formation of current dance self-conception. For the most part, however, mentions of school physical education were about lack of dance or dance instruction being offered only to girls, yet some experiences had also been positive.

"When I was in primary school, music movement and dance was not considered something for boys, let alone men. Also, in school PE classes, I don't remember ever dancing, let alone moving with the help of music. My preparedness for the music and movement study module was, therefore, rather non-existent." (V26)

"In middle school, in pair dance classes, I got a bit excited about pair dancing." (V30)

"In elementary school, I don't remember having dance or music movement, but in middle school we had a prom every year around Valentine's Day. We practiced for the prom in PE lessons, and those lessons were nice. The dances became more difficult year by year, and they taught a sense of rhythm, different sets of movements, and also social skills and consideration of others." (V31)

Research question 3

What is the readiness of the respondents (student teachers qualifying with a minor in physical education) to teach dance in the future?

Eleven respondents wrote that they felt ready to teach dance in school, and four respondents felt they would not be able to teach dance. Ten respondents were somewhat uncertain about their dance teaching skills, but several of them felt that with additional practice they would be able to teach dance in school.

"My readiness to teach dance is not very good. I'd have to practice quite a lot to know how to instruct dance. I'm sure you'd learn it by doing it, but you'd have to do a lot of work." (V2)

"I would say I could plan music movement classes as well as carry them out." (V6)

"Although I still don't feel like I get very much pleasure from dancing, I believe I could, for example, nicely lead a small dance class. Basic knowledge of different dance styles and how to direct them is enough to teach dance, your own dancing expression is a sideshow from the point of view of teaching." (V8)

"Dancing and rhythm belong to everyone, and I intend in my own career as a physical education teacher to promote that perspective equally." (V31)

The reflection in this section was missing from the responses of six respondents, so these responses went unaddressed. In general, many students wrote that they received from the music movement study module (in physical education minor studies) a lot of skills as well as the confidence and belief to be able to teach music movement and dance in elementary school.

"However, in my current minor music movement study module, I've learned to relate more naturally with my own dance skills, I've had the opportunity to try many different forms of dance and been able to change my attitude towards dance and be more relaxed when surrounded by others. I've also

> *seen that you don't really need to stress that much about teaching dance, a teacher doesn't have to be a perfect dancer to teach it, and they can teach based on their own skills."* (V7)

> *"However, during my time in the minor studies in physical education, I encouraged myself to express myself through music, as well as dancing with others. Overall, I feel my own attitude towards music movement has become more positive after the music movement study module."* (V26)

> *"My dance self-conception has changed in a more positive direction thanks to the minor studies in physical education. I've had a lot of success experiences that will definitely help me in the future."* (V30)

Based on these results, dance performance conception and experience of self-efficacy to teach dance are not connected, as seven respondents whose dance performance conception was negative still felt that they could teach dance well or fairly well.

Reliability of Research and Ethical Solution

As Eskola and Suoranta note (1998), careful justification of the selection of the subject and background information increases the ethicality and reliability of the research. In this study, we strove to adhere to ethical solutions, from the choice of subject to reporting the research results. Students who participated in the study responded to an anonymous online questionnaire via a link shared by their teacher, so their identity was also unknown to the researchers. We have also omitted any information referring to age, domicile or other personal data from quotes and reporting.

Due to its qualitative nature, the study involves a lot of reflection and interpretation. As is characteristic of qualitative research, we constantly considered the reliability and scope of the research and analysis (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998). The responses we used as material for the study, written by the students themselves, were retained in their original form throughout the study. We strove for an objective interpretation of responses, reading through the responses several times and viewed from different angles and continuously going back to the original texts during the process of content analysis. However, it must be considered that these interpretations are made by the researchers and therefore may not be fully reproducible (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2002). The study confirms previous research findings on the effect of gender on dance attitudes. The results produced by the study are not entirely generalizable as the nature of the study is phenomenological-hermeneutic, aimed at explaining and understanding worlds of meaning rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002; Laine, 2018). The study provides direction for further investigations.

Reflection and Conclusions

As mentioned previously, as the starting point of this study we consider the status or lack of dance as part of basic physical education. Although dance is not part of primary school art education, dance education has been shown to have positive effects on the everyday life of schoolchildren, problem-solving skills, and physical activity (Sansom, 2011; Anttila, 2013; Anttila et al., 2019). As a part of the content of physical education,

dance is taught according to the discretion and skills of the teacher (Siljamäki, 2007; Laakkonen, 2009; Anttila, 2013).

According to a dissertation study by New Zealand-based dance teacher, Suzanne Renner (2015), the self-conception of student teachers' dance teaching was influenced by their observations of their own dance skills, as well as their background. In this study, too, these findings are confirmed. The present study is based on the concept of self-conception, which is a more holistic concept than self-efficacy (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). However, in our study, the dance self-conception section of our study also provides a reference to students' self-efficacy experiences in dance. Studies have shown that the teacher's own attitude towards the content being taught, as well as the sense of ability to teach that content, have a great impact on pupils' learning outcomes (Pajares, 2005; Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2005). Thus, the results also give an indication of how many study participants would likely teach dance in the future.

In this study, students' backgrounds and conceptions of their own dance skills had a strong impact on how they felt they were able to teach dance in the future. However, the male respondents, whose dance self-conception we interpreted as negative, felt that they could teach dance well or fairly well in the future. This study therefore makes it impossible to show that these considerations have a direct connection. This result may also be influenced by a generally strong sense of ability among individual student teachers regarding their teaching skills (Woolfolk Hoy & Davis, 2005) and, for example, positive student self-conception (Burns, 1982). The generally positive attitude of students to dance in this study may also be due to the timing of the survey, which was carried out soon after the conclusion of the music movement study module, when the contents were still in fresh memory.

Another notable study result was that gender had a big influence on dance self-conception. Dance-performing conception was negative in most men. The reason for this was cited, for the most part, as a lack of earlier dance practice due to gender prejudice. This result was not surprising, as the proportion of men and boys involved in dance is quite small (Löytönen, 2004; Lehikoinen, 2006; Risner, 2007; Anttila, 2013; Turpeinen, 2015). Interestingly, most women did not consider the effect of gender at all in their writings. In several of the men's responses, conversely, dance was referred to as a 'girls' thing', which, according to our interpretation, suggests that at some point in their lives the respondents had experienced dance in some way as feminine and as an inappropriate pastime for heterosexual men (see e.g. Risner, 2007). Most male respondents mentioned that as an adult, and especially after the music movement study module, their attitude towards dance had broadened. Based on their school experience, the respondents also reported that dance had been taught mostly only in physical education for girls. This refers to the discussion in recent years of gender stereotypes in physical education (see e.g. Berg, 2010). In our view, gender stereotypes related to dance would be easiest to break in primary school. This topic should be discussed more deeply in teacher education and in the design of educational content. Maybe this issue should be taken up in the teacher education curriculum planning where the importance of dance education as a part of music and physical education should be more underlined. Also, the discussion about the right to dance as well for boys as the girls could be more focused in a way which is not connected to sexual orientations of people.

Another big influence was, as expected, dance hobby background. Based on the results, it was clear that among those who had previously engaged in dance or dance elements, dance self-conception was positive. According to our observations, those who had previously dabbled in dance especially felt that moving in rhythm and reproducing finished choreographies were meaningful. Interestingly, those respondents also found creative dance based on improvisation and free-to-music movement uncomfortable. For their part, respondents who had not previously danced but whose dance self-conception was predominantly positive, felt creative dance was more meaningful than choreographies that required staying in rhythm. This was an interesting finding and an intriguing avenue for further research.

The survey revealed that well over half of respondents had a positive socio-emotional dance self-conception, six had a neutral socio-emotional dance self-conception, and only five had a negative socio-emotional dance self-conception. This is a significant result. The social and mental well-being effects of dance (Anttila et al., 2019) can also be observed among student teachers based on these results. These results may be attributed to the fact that the respondents were individuals who were generally interested in physical activity. It would be interesting to examine what results would be obtained by students who have completed, for example, the physical content of multidisciplinary studies alone.

There is clearly a need for further research. This could be conducted as quantitative or multi-method studies; in which case the sample could be larger. It would be interesting to explore the dance self-conception of class teacher students who do not have separate physical education studies. It would also be interesting to compare the dance self-conception or self-efficacy beliefs of teachers in employment and students still completing their studies. The main goal of the studies would be the development of dance content in teacher education programmes, as well as the mapping of material banks for physical education teachers and class teachers already in working life.

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