

## CONCLUSION

My research question asks

**How do I improve my learning as I use my knowledge and experience to design a course of flamenco dance that is educational?**

In my research journey I have learnt that Self-Study Action Research using the Living Theory Methodology is not only a research approach but simultaneously a journey of self discovery. It has afforded me the opportunity to explore what I value and why and to look for evidence of my values in my practice. I have become more aware of how I teach and why and have had to challenge my previously held knowledge as I attempted to validate teaching flamenco in a way that I regard as *educational*. I have discovered that my research approach, as well as my practice, are unique and draw on my unique experience and knowledge. I have therefore become aware of my living theory as an explanation of my educational influence in my own learning and the learning of others (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 104) exercising my inventiveness (Whitehead, 2009a) in a “disciplined process of problem-forming and solving” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 107). I realise my living theory cannot be ‘boxed’ for mass distribution, but it can be examined in the light of seeking resonance across ‘boundaries’ where similar issues or challenges are identified.

I have developed “new view-points from which to envisage all our vast accumulated material of knowledge” and become more aware of existence as holistic (Smuts, 1927, p. 6). I have become aware of the boundaries of many ‘boxes’ which I and others use to divide, as not as impermeable or absolute as imagined and that my past and present and future together with my epistemology, ontology and axiology are continually mutually informing. I have become aware that the boundaries between my personal and social experience too are permeable, where my practice evidences my educational influences in my own learning and that of others. I have observed my values seeming to inform one another, guided by my love of dance, education, children, flamenco and individual authenticity in holistic relationship. While developing my living theory, I have come to understand flamenco as *educational*, using some of its techniques to explore across the boundaries of self and others, in a way which is grounded in the values which I believe carry hope for society and humanity.

I have seen evidence of my values of mutual respect and trust within the group, as well as individual authenticity within and supported by the group. I have also seen evidence of my value of inclusion in an educational environment that is 'safe' to explore individuality using flamenco as holistic experience. I have become aware of the potential of flamenco as educational to encourage empathy within a group of diverse individuals and my values of discipline and hard work in an atmosphere of fun and enjoyment. Above all I have become aware of how much I love encouraging children to dance.

I believe my understanding of flamenco as Educational may provide useful insights for others as they reflect on their practice, but that it cannot be generalised or viewed as absolute or transferable. Currently as dance struggles to find purpose and place in mainstream education, I have come to believe that the diversity within the 'dance box' in South Africa should be and can be embraced. In my view continuing to fuel the debates of whose dance is more suitable or worthy of a place in mainstream education is paralysing dance education and simply ignoring dance in education is also not an option.

This stalemate that I have observed leaves dance styles in hierarchical 'boxed' formation according to perceptions of educational or professional value. Instead of ignoring or disrespecting the diversity of dance forms available, I have come to consider that perhaps they should be re-examined in a new light, in order to transform them into something more appropriate for education in a multicultural society. I believe flamenco (and other dance styles) can provide insights into other ways of knowing/being/dancing. Perhaps dance experts and educationalists should expand the vision for dance beyond 'whose' dance to 'how'. I believe humanity should envision enriching ways of sharing 'difference' and that flamenco as educational may assist endeavours to encourage respect for such difference. I am not suggesting that the 'purity' of original dance forms be abandoned, but that dance styles move forward, while simultaneously engaging with the past and that the transformation of dance styles for education, should be *in addition to* not *in place of*.

Flamenco as educational has helped me to become more aware of the educational potential of flamenco and that it may even serve to soften cultural and gender boundaries. I have come to believe that dance education should be more than 'learning

someone else's steps' and should be respected for what it is, or could be, instead of being relegated to the back of the educational queue, as is so often the case. I have come to the conclusion that an arts programme which doesn't include dance is incomplete and that any educational curriculum which does not include the "original language" of man which is the "corporeal" (Sienaert, 1990, p. 96) is also incomplete. I concur with Jousse who found the "corporeal – manual" expression of the body to be "the most faithful form of human communication"(Conolly, 2002, p. 3) and I believe it is a matter of urgency that the challenges facing dance education are addressed so that it can take its rightful place in any educational curriculum and be accorded the respect that is its due. By this I do not mean dance as elective subject, but rather dance for all, in mainstream education.

Perhaps the educational crisis in Africa, which Soudien (2007) identifies, is also reflected in the challenges which I have observed dance education confronting. Africa is indeed, as Soudien suggests, engaged in a two way process with the global community. It is also engaged in multicultural interchange within its own boundaries. I believe in South Africa, this requires dance educators to embrace this multicultural environment evident in many schools and to look for ways to teach dance that builds and nurtures tolerance and respect for diversity. I believe this will require a new vision for dance in mainstream education, one where the dance forms available, are adapted to embrace diversity and educational aims, while simultaneously respecting the origins of these dance forms. In this way, perhaps dance education could become a way forward in nation building, where new commonalities may emerge while respect for difference is encouraged. I believe this will require educationalists and dance experts to collaborate, in a way that respectfully envisions a new way forward for dance in mainstream education.

The "cause" of my discontent (Smuts, 1927, p. 143) was my experience in schools prior to this research and my response was to personally envision a way forward for dance education, in South Africa, using flamenco. I could perhaps have chosen another dance style but I chose flamenco because of my love and knowledge of it. I also perceived it to be highly suitable for reasons given in my introduction. The outcomes of this research have been nothing like I could have imagined and have completely transformed my understanding of self and the world around me. With this 'new' understanding I can now envisage other dance styles also possibly adopting 'new'

approaches in education. I also believe the challenges facing dance education are not exclusive to dance and that perhaps, education in all its forms could be encouraged to consider adapting old ways of teaching for ones more suited to the present situations in schools.

For flamenco and perhaps other forms of dance, I believe there may be two possibilities. The first could be to train generalist teachers to teach flamenco/dance and the second could be to train flamenco/dance teachers to teach dance in a way that is educational. I suggest that both will require specialised training and understanding of the challenges of diversity found in many classrooms, as well as sound knowledge of dance techniques and education.

I have found flamenco as *educational*, highly suitable to introduce to a diversity of learners, but I am also left wondering if perhaps my years of experience, were fundamental to the outcomes of my research. I am fascinated by the idea of further research and reflection. Perhaps I could explore the possibility of training other flamenco specialists or generalist teachers, to teach flamenco in a way that was *educational*. I have taught many primary school teachers as private pupils but have not explored the possibility of them using flamenco in their learning programmes. I have however learnt that research is an all consuming activity, as is teaching and that in order to do them justice I would need to allocate extensive time to such projects.

Through this research I have come to realise that personal experience of dance is very transforming and I now feel more than ever, that one of the ways forward is to begin with the young. I have seen how an “external ‘cause’” can “become internalised and transformed” where “the organism has made the stimulus its own,” and “the result is ‘new’ in one degree or another” (Smuts, 1927, p. 143). I gave the children the opportunity to ‘internalise’ the steps and to make them their ‘own’ and the result was many ‘news’ in one degree or another. I believe each child is unique and that this uniqueness should be considered in my teaching approach (Levine, 2003).

Many children reflected on how their personal perceptions of self and others were also transformed through this experience. I saw the boundaries between many ‘boxes’ become permeable as individuals found resonance across personal as well as social boundaries. I believe if this is what transpires in eight hours I can only imagine what transformation could take place with more time. Perhaps flamenco as *educational* could

be used to introduce dance to a multicultural society where cultural boundaries seem to divide. Perhaps thereafter, the introduction of other dance forms may receive less resistance. I can only speculate on such ideas but I am left wondering ...