CHAPTER 2
Data Analysis

2.1 Introduction

As I watched the video of my first class my intention was to identify a moment or two of critical learning which I could then reflect upon in greater depth. What I discovered was not what I had expected. As I watched I began to realise that I instinctively resisted the idea that a 'moment' could be separated from others and examined in isolation: to do that would be to dissect my class and then try to find life in something that I had just dismembered. Dissecting moments in my class for the purpose of examination and classification would be like attempting to extract and 'box' essential 'organs' of the class and then discovering that what I was examining was in fact now inert and of no use to anyone. I instinctively resisted such activity.

Instead, as I watched and read reflections on my first class, I began to realise that in fact it contained evidence of, and could be viewed as, representative of the entire course. It was part of a hologram where: "every part of the hologram contains all of the information possessed by the whole" (Palmer, 1998, p. 58). Palmer suggests that, "every discipline has a gestalt, an internal logic, a patterned way of relating to the great things at its core" (Palmer, 1998, p. 122).

My first class evidenced an internal logic or pattern and I realised for the first time that to be a student in one of my classes would be to experience a taste of all of my classes. I also realised that while the heart of the class was flamenco dance, the very heartbeat was me and the values which I was living. I could not hope to separate 'me' from my practice and that in fact to try to understand one class would be to begin to understand the whole course and the whole of 'me'. As I continued to try to isolate my 'learning moments' in class one I began to realise that they too contained a 'patterned' relation to the whole. I began to identify in each of my classes, evidence of my personal values as well as educational values in the literature I was reading.

As I watched the video of this first class I saw that it had a definite structure. Although I will now try to divide it up into identifiable sections, it seemed to defy this and 'flowed' almost spontaneously as a river cutting its course through unknown territory.

Yes, I had a plan (or basic structure) which guided the flow, but I also realised that I had tried to allow that flow to be influenced by the 'terrain' it encountered.

1) I waited for the students to arrive and began the class with an **informal greeting**. Students and I then engaged in spontaneous chat. (This particular lesson had a much longer chat session than subsequent ones as I included a "getting to know you" exercise as well.)

2) We made a circle and I did a 5 minute **warm-up** to music which was semi-improvised in nature.

3) I explained and demonstrated the first steps in the circle. (All subsequent lessons had a **recall** period before the learning of **new steps** began.)

4) We **repeated** the steps numerous times. I corrected any technical problems and used various teaching styles to try and ensure understanding. We continued repetitions until I was satisfied that the majority had grasped it.

5) When certain steps were difficult to learn in the circle I used the semi- circle and line formations to help with directional difficulties. I returned to the use of the circle when necessary. Various **teaching techniques** were experimented with.

6) I divided the class into two groups to introduce performance. (In subsequent classes I continued this division into smaller groups.) This introduced informal sessions of **critique.** Students were encouraged to be **creative and unique.**

7) We all sat down for a period of **reflection** on the learning experience.

8) We concluded class with the repetition of the sequence learnt and exchanged mutual **thanks**.

As I then began reflecting on subsequent classes I began to see variations of this class structure, and I began to identify more clearly the 'knowledge' and values which were evident to me in my practice. As I reflected on my first class I observed the following:

- My introduction activity helped establish a relaxed informal atmosphere in the class. I became aware of the individuality of students by allowing free choice in dress code. I tried to encourage a positive attitude to self from students in this introductory exercise.

- My warm-up was a fun, semi-improvised activity, which encouraged focus, and participation without critique.

- In my 'times for reflection' I tried to encourage quality critique to assist learning and awareness of progress. I endeavoured to establish an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect which was grounded in the quality of communication during these 'times of reflection.' I made the distinction between criticism (which could have eroded trust) and critique (where the perspectives of others were used to provide constructive understanding of performance.)

- I introduced various teaching techniques which I continued to develop in subsequent classes. I used the circle to suggest equality of access to the subject and to position students on an equal level. It also became a place to encourage group solidarity. There was evidence of moments of 'inspiration' in my teaching response to learning difficulties. I also used the visual, audio, intellectual, physical aspects of learning and tried to find new ways of solving familiar challenges.

- I encouraged the boundaries between 'fun' and 'work' to become more fluid where I tried to allow humour to play an important role. I tried to ground this 'fun' in respect for subject self and others. I tried to encourage this respect by the 'greetings' at the commencement of the class, which I then extended into a 'bow' and 'expression of mutual thanks' at the conclusion of subsequent classes.

- I endeavoured to encourage a strong work ethic through my use of 'repetition' as well as to facilitate learning and inclusion. I began encouraging individual responsibility by introducing 'homework' which involved practice at home.

- I introduced group work as a disciplined activity aimed at supporting and developing individual skills and critique where individual success was grounded in group success. By dividing the group into two I introduced the idea of performance in order to encourage observation to assist learning.

- I introduced the idea of fluid boundaries between learning areas when I used principles of science and music theory to teach 'palmas' (clapping technique).

As I watched subsequent classes I realised that this structure was evident in various forms throughout my course and served to support any variations that arose. I realised this was evidence of the teaching space which Palmer describes as: "*Bounded and open*" (Palmer, 1998, p. 74).

By establishing a structure which was then also open to variation I had created my version of a 'bounded' yet 'open' learning space. Palmer describes boundaries as provided by the subject/topic which:

> remind us that our journey has a destination, openness reminds us that there are many ways to reach that end … where discovery may take us to the surprises that always come with real learning (Palmer, 1998, p. 75).

I try to explain my intentional use of this 'learning space' to express the qualities which I value. Whitehead speaks of enhancing the educational influence of teachers in learning through the expression and development their talents in the production of gifts (Whitehead, 2008). He identifies the talents of teachers to respond to the talents of their pupils with,

- a life-affirming and loving dynamic energy
- a passion for sustaining commitment
- a passion for collaboration
- a passion for generosity towards others
- a passion for supporting others
- a passion for the expression on strengthening of courage
- a passion for the exercise of imagination (Whitehead, 2008, p. 1)

In my analysis I identify some of the above in my unique approach to teaching. Whitehead suggests that by recognising and developing our talents as teachers, we can then offer and share them as gifts. He describes the gifts of educators as:

> their explanations of their educational influences in their own learning in the learning of their pupils, students and/or colleagues and in the learning of the sociocultural formations in which they live and work (Whitehead, 2008, p. 2).

My data analysis attempts to understand and explain my responses to the unique educational needs of each child that I interacted with as I use a "relationally dynamic awareness" to explain the educational influences in our learning (Whitehead, 2008, p. 7). As Whitehead, I use an inclusive approach and work on the assumption that everyone has a talent for something and I used flamenco to create an "educational space" conducive to the development and "production of gifts that are freely shared" (Whitehead, 2008, p. 2).

I assumed a conscious responsibility towards students and my influence in their learning (Whitehead, 2008) but I also tried to encourage them to assume a conscious responsibility towards their own learning as well.

My analysis reveals my classes as holograms where my "core" value love, informed my teaching techniques, which in turn formed "patterned" relationships with one another in every class (Palmer, 1998, p. 122). I identified the following areas of focus which cannot be 'boxed' and labelled, but are "relationally-dynamic" (Whitehead, 2009b, p. 1) informed by my core value love. My areas of focus are:

Respect, trust, authenticity, joy, reflection, critique, holistic experience, empathy, inclusivity, group and individual work

I understand my analysis to be holistic and informed by the theory of inclusionality of Rayner (Rayner, 2004) and the theory of holism of Smuts (Smuts, 1927). It includes the recognition of my talents by others, as expressed by me in my classes, which I then use to explain my educational influence as I come to understand these talents more fully. Whitehead associates research with knowledge creation where personal and social validation are "distinguishing qualities of a living theory methodology" (Whitehead, 2009a, p. line 485). I therefore use the validation of my students and others in my analysis for a more holistic understanding of my values and their "embodied expression" in my practice (Whitehead, 2009a, p. line 533). My holistic analysis also includes "a narrative form that integrates insights from … theories of the day" (Whitehead, 2009a, pp. lines 766-769). This study does not allow me to analyse all the examples I identified in my data but I have chosen those which I feel may resonate beyond my own experience as my gift to others.

I have used extracts from my reflective journal as well as comments from the class teacher to reflect upon and where appropriate, related my reflections to the literature I was reading, in order to improve my learning.

2.2 Respect Trust

Respect, Authenticity

I believe that the roots of authenticity are nourished by an environment of respect and that trust is fundamental to the development of this respect. Whitehead suggests that affirmation is necessary in order to overcome obstacles in life. He sees this as arising

from two sources: the cosmos and relationships with others (Whitehead, 2009c). I understand myself and the cosmos as inseparable. I believe affirmation is an expression of love and I understand love to be the common ground that nourishes all. I believe that in an atmosphere of love and respect, trust and authenticity can flourish. I used various means to do this in the first lesson. I then developed these throughout my classes.

I strive for authenticity and I therefore encouraged uniqueness of expression through individual style of dress. I asked the children to change out of school uniform into clothing of their choice. This helped me to get to know the students from the manner in which they chose to dress and to become aware of them as individuals. I extended this into my 'getting to know you exercise'. We exchanged greetings and I asked the children using one word to describe themselves. Later I reflected on my choice to be addressed as 'Linda'. My artistic name is Linda Vargas but I feel more relaxed as 'Linda'. Being addressed as Ms. Vargas only seems to enhance my position of power and I wanted them to feel that we could all share the learning space as fellow companions. I hoped to reduce my perceived position of power that being a teacher affords me by being 'Linda'.

> *"I do not view myself as more important by virtue of my role as teacher and prefer to be seen as a fellow traveller. This helps me feel more relaxed and hopefully allows the same for the students. I value each individual equally and do not want to be perceived of as any more important by virtue of how I am addressed." (Appendix 2, class1)*

As I reflected on these sentiments I began to realise that even though I wanted to view myself as an 'equal' in my classes that in actual fact that would be doing my students a disservice. I reasoned that I cannot be an 'equal' and neither should I try. I can however, choose to provide opportunities for students to express their individuality while choosing to express mine. My choice to be addressed as 'Linda' was just that: my choice. Perhaps it is my fear of being 'boxed' by a name. All surnames link me to my social and ancestral community: my maiden name reflects my inherited culture, my married name reflects my husband's heritage and my artistic name reflects the heritage I chose to associate myself with professionally and artistically. All provide connections with my social contexts. 'Linda', comes closest to the freedom from 'labels' that I

yearn for. The opportunity to define myself from moment to moment in childlike manner is fundamental to my choice.

My lack of 'title' has respect and power implications. Palmer believes that inequalities of power cannot be eliminated in the learning environment and that the teacher as leader should guard the boundaries of the learning experience and uphold the values of that community (Palmer, 1998). I wondered if this depended on how I was addressed. I reflected on my understanding of leadership as teacher and began to question my intended and actual 'function' in the classroom. I realised that I as teacher should be able to establish and maintain the boundaries and values of the learning experience with good leadership, but that I should also be able to provide opportunities for others to exercise their leadership when I assumed group membership. I realised that by asking the children to address me as 'Linda' I was hoping that our relationship would become mutually interdependent.

Palmer does not view power and status differences as the problem in the classroom but rather the "lack of interdependence" between teacher and students (Palmer, 1998, p. 139). He suggests that while students may be dependant on teachers for marks, teachers should strive to be dependant on students for the degree of success and quality of their teaching in the classroom. This mutual interdependence he sees as the fine balance which all should seek in the classroom. I realised that by being addressed as 'Linda' I felt reliant on my student's participation for any sense of my own success in the classroom and that this depended on if students did in fact dance with authenticity. By not feeling 'more or less than,' but rather 'together with', I hoped to make students feel relaxed and able to define themselves momentarily as well.

> Values of domination and control are the kind that devalue the planet and rob children of their inheritance. They are the kind that lead to the alienation of people (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 25).

I realised that I inherently resisted situations in which I felt 'controlled'. Being addressed as 'Linda' helped me to feel that I was avoiding dominating or controlling my students and helped me to feel 'included' in the learning process.

> The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thoughts on them. Authentic

thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication (Freire, 1970, p. 58).

I avoided being alienated or isolated in an 'ivory tower' because I wanted to share in this search for authenticity. I realised that I valued authentic communication where I as well as students were given the opportunity to 'learn' and 'teach' simultaneously.

> Through dialogue … the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow … here, no-one teaches another, nor is anyone self taught. People teach each other, mediated by the world (Freire, 1970, p. 61).

This is not the choice of all teachers but it is mine. I may not be able to prove any connection between freedom of dress, names, introductions and the quality of the communication that arose in my classes, but I do know that it helped me to feel more relaxed and aware of myself and students as individuals.

My introduction activity worked very well for me. It was short enough not to take too much time and yet effective enough to 'break the ice.' Palmer suggests that the learning space be "hospitable" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75).

> Hospitality in the classroom requires not only that we treat our students with civility and compassion but also that we invite our students and their insights into the conversation. The good host is not merely polite to the guest- the good host assumes that the guest has stories to tell (Palmer, 1998, p. 79).

I realised that my introduction activity was my attempt to be 'hospitable' and to welcome my 'guests.' I assumed they had a story to tell and I was inviting them to begin telling it by describing themselves to me.

> *"I do not want anyone to feel uncomfortable or excluded but rather to feel that each one is to be valued and respected for who they are in that moment." (Appendix 2, class1)*

I wanted to feel like a generous host enjoying the company of new guests. My need to hear their story also had another purpose: to introduce a process of critical reflection.

(Appendix 5, Video 1- class 1)

I later reflected,

> *"The descriptions of self were varied: some were vague generalisations some related to mood or to physique and some to perceptions of others. I was so thrilled when I heard them describe themselves in a positive terms such as "confident, crazy, fabulous, enthusiastic, active, the best, fun, no problems, excited, explosive, romantic, energetic, happy, friendly" etc. A few described themselves as "serious, shy, hyper, alien, guilty, moody" while others chose to describe themselves physically as "tall, short, blonde." I used these descriptions of self as a fun way of identifying how they perceived themselves at that moment and where we were able to laugh together." (Appendix 2, class1)*

These descriptions of self were so varied and confirmed my belief that the class was a collection of individuals each uniquely focused. This was the second time I had used this activity (the first was during my pilot study.) I realised I should never approach a class in a homogenous way, but should attempt to be aware of how each student responded individually to the learning experience.

In my introduction exercise I did not feel it was my place to make any value judgement on how an individual may have been feeling. I tried merely to repeat what had been said by each student in order that the whole class could hear. By not evaluating what was said, I tried to convey the message that it was completely acceptable to be honest even if their description had a negative connotation. I did not regard "explosive, moody, and alien" in a negative way. It was their momentary truth and I wanted to respect that.

Their spontaneous responses surprised me and I felt encouraged to get to know them better. My 'disrespectful' reactions to their descriptions of self which had negative connotations were therefore unexpected. Yes I did try to be accepting of all descriptions until certain ones compelled me to pass comment. I did not realise until later the extent to which I value a positive self image. I saw myself in that moment as a "living contradiction" (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 32).

I observed myself respecting certain expressions and excluding 'negative' descriptions of self. When two students described themselves as 'guilty' and 'hyper' I asked them to

consider an alternative description. I instinctively felt that these may not have been own, but 'adopted' perceptions. As a dancer and teacher I have come to consider perceptions of self as well as perceptions of others as essential to arrive at a more balanced 'truth', but I realise my effort to make the distinction favoured 'positive' descriptions of self. Perhaps I could have drawn their attention to this distinction without my own value judgements.

I had favoured a positive self image because I believe it is fundamental to motivation in dance: when perceptions of self are 'negative' they influence motivation and participation. I believe this also affects emotional expression. Without authentic emotion, dance loses that ingredient which distinguishes it from mere physical motion and I believe negative perceptions of self discourage full emotional engagement. So I found myself favouring those perceptions of self which I considered to be more conducive to positive engagement.

The student who described himself as 'guilty' came in late (possibly after having been found guilty of an offence). I tried to encourage him to see it as possibly a description of self given by another person and to think of another description. He immediately replied 'innocent'. I realise that while I am not as accepting of all descriptions of self as I wish to be, I do value the development of the critical self. I realised that my value of the individual's ability to distinguish between perceptions of self and perceptions of others which they may have 'adopted' overrode my desire to be 'neutral'.

At the time I felt that the student who described them self as 'hyper' was more than likely using a description that had been 'assigned' to him by another, and I was thrilled when he promptly changed his description of self to 'fun'. Yet again my value of the critical self in that moment seemed to override my neutrality, but I had at least tried to draw their attention to the consideration of whether he had perceived himself according to his own or someone else's truth. I feel this distinction is fundamental to a more balanced perception of self. When perceptions are gained from multiple sources it gives the individual opportunity to understand, and critically reflects upon the differences. I realise that my desire for authentic communication with self and others is grounded in my value for self respect.

> Self-depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalisation of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything- that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive- that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness (Freire, 1970, p. 45).

My desire to distinguish the different 'voices' in their heads was grounded in what Freire is suggesting here. I believe many students are exposed daily to descriptions of self which are imposed on them. They become 'boxed' and labelled to the point, where often the voice of others eventually becomes own. While I tried to avoid 'boxing' and labelling children with my own perceptions, I also tried to encourage self respect and self knowledge irrespective of external labelling.

I included several 'times of reflection' in each class where I introduced respectful critique. I encouraged positive attitudes to self, which was reliant on self critique and the trusted critique of others. My introduction activity was the first 'time of reflection' and laid the foundation for subsequent ones.

The teacher observed the following during my 'getting to know you' exercise:

> The 'getting to know you exercise' in the beginning certainly eased any fears if there were any amongst the children! This was the ideal start to the programme for when the serious business got under way the children were relaxed and ready for action. (Appendix 3, week 1)

I felt time spent on introductions was time well spent.

In class 2, I developed authenticity by focusing on emotions in movement to express the inner world. It seems to me that dance transcends the boundaries of physical and emotional reality with effortless ease and is "not only body mastery and discipline" but the "expressive and imaginative" use of the body (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 7).

I reflected on how important it was

> *"... to introduce this aspect as early as possible in the course. Learning to consciously express ones emotion through movement and dance is often a slow process and ... often takes time to develop" and that an "atmosphere of trust needs to be established from the outset."(Appendix 2, class 2)*

By introducing early focus on emotive movement I may have compromised our newly created space of trust and respect, but I believe it was fundamental to the authenticity of expression that became evident later in the course. It was a calculated risk I was willing to take. In order to introduce it without compromising trust, I decided to begin with myself. I played a piece of flamenco music and then danced to it asking for comments.

When I asked them to describe what they thought the singer was possibly feeling their responses were amazingly perceptive: *"he was in pain ... he was into what he was doing"* (Appendix 2, class 2). I then demonstrated how I would use their steps to dance to that music. I then asked them what I had done to their steps. Their observations were very accurate: *"you made them slower ... you used 'base' claps (knowledge from the previous lesson) ... depressing ... like you were in pain""* (Appendix 2, class 2).

I noted how my demonstration of 'their' dance using emotional expression was in fact only observed by some of them. Others observed how I had modified the technical execution of the steps: "... *you made them slower ... you used 'base claps'*" (Appendix 2, class 2). This indicated to me that the technical focus of class one had allowed them to offer excellent critique of my technical performance but only some had managed to observe the expressive nature of my movements. I realised I had to develop this more by drawing on personal experience.

I drew their attention to the fact that in flamenco the same steps could be transformed by the emotions that inspired them. I asked if they had any personal experience of depression to which they responded: *"no use for life ... no reason for anything ... what's the point of being here ... angry ... fed up ... the whole world is against you and life sucks"* (Appendix 2, class 2). This gave me a good indication that many had a sufficient understanding of the nature of depression which I could then draw on.

Later when I danced their dance to a happy and fun rhythm (Bulerias) there was spontaneous laughter and applause. I asked them to tell me what they had observed and their responses were equally accurate: *"faster ... exciting ... you put yourself into it ... you enjoyed it"* (Appendix 2, class 2).

They seemed better able to recognise 'happy' than 'sad'. Later when I wanted them to express 'sad' and 'happy' in their dance I noticed how they found it difficult to dance slowly expressing 'sadness'. When it came to 'fast' and 'happy' most seemed to feel more comfortable. We reflected on how they felt moving 'slowly' and 'sadly' responses included:

> *bored ... no feeling .... lazy ... no energy ... taking your anger out on the ground ... tired ... time went slowly". Their comments on 'fast' and 'happy' included: "fantastic .... nice ... excited ... fun ... time was moving so fast ... like to do it again and again ... enthusiastic ... very ... very fast ... your soul was empowered .... energetic .... hyperactive .... When I asked what they found difficult about the 'slow' and 'sad' they replied: 'keeping the pace slow' and for 'fast' and 'happy': 'the 'fire' step .... trying to keep up'* (Appendix 2, class 2).

(Appendix 5, Video 2- class 2)

In my previous teaching I have found that happy, well children usually enjoy moving 'fast' and 'happy' and often do not enjoy 'slow' and 'sad'. Their response influenced my decision to focus on 'fast and happy' because I love to see happy children dancing. I personally, have always been drawn to the 'jondo' (deep and melancholic) in flamenco but have come to realise that the majority of children I have worked with do not enjoy this. If I had had opportunity to extend my course, perhaps I would have experimented with what most did not enjoy, but with the limited time I had available I chose not to. I do feel though that my demonstration of both 'happy' and 'sad' suggested the possibility of expressing either if the individual chose to.

2.3 Respect, Trust, Critique

After the first lesson I began to reflect the possibility that perhaps the children were fearful of what they may have been expected to do. I knew that I was nervous of how the class was going to develop, but as I read the teachers report I began to realise that perhaps I was not alone. If the children were indeed fearful then I was relieved that the introduction exercise appeared to have helped to alleviate at least some of their fears. In class 2 one girl admitted having let go of her fear of dancing. I came to call her Ms. Differently-Abled, as she was dyslexic. Here is a clip of her confessing to me that she had let go of her fear of dancing.

(Appendix 5, Video 3- class 2)

Palmer speaks of the "culture of fear" (Palmer, 1998, p. 35) that exists in many classrooms. He identifies the fears of students: fear of failing, not understanding, exposure in front of their peers, or doing something that would rather not do. It had not occurred to me that perhaps some of them were fearful of what I would expect of them. This resonated with my own fears,

> When a class that has gone badly comes to a merciful end, I am fearful long after it is over - fearful that I am not just a bad teacher but a bad person, so closely is my sense of self tied to the work I do (Palmer, 1998, p. 36).

I live with this fear continually. Palmer suggests that teachers often fear being judged by the young as well, questioning the relevance of what we are teaching, as well as our personal value, as each year brings younger and younger students to our classes. We are then given the choice of either engaging with each new young generation or simply barricading ourselves behind position and subject. Palmer suggests that this is when teachers should rather make every effort to turn to students with the following attitude:

> There are great gaps between us. But no matter how wide and perilous they may be, I am committed to bridging them – not only because you need me to help you on your way but also because I need your insight and energy to help renew my life (Palmer, 1998, p. 49).

Here 'teacher box' and 'student box' become mutually interdependent. I realised that I love meaningful communication with children: it is what nourishes me. I felt as dependant on their engagement as they were on mine. I saw us all in a position of vulnerability where trust became fundamental. Trust is fragile especially when critique is encouraged and I know fear can exacerbate this. For this reason I introduced critique and observational learning gradually and used my own example to guide.

> *"I then decided to divide the class into two groups. I did this because I believe a tremendous amount of learning takes place while watching others. Having the time to rest and observe seems to help fill in many of the gaps in personal learning. I also use it as an opportunity to develop the individual's ability to think critically. I value the ability to be able to observe others and see what is 'working' and what is not. I value being able then to cross reflect and apply this knowledge to self. Engaging in mental dialogue with self where we ponder the relevance to our own performance is a skill I try to develop in all my students.*

I did not at this point allow students to pass comment on one another's performance as I felt it may have been a bit too soon for them to withstand the harsh remarks that may have been given. I decided to rather lay the ground work and to introduce them slowly to the idea of being watched. I only allowed myself opportunity to comment on their efforts. I chose to praise rather than criticise at this point as I knew that those who were watching would see the flaws. I hoped to lead by example and chose to praise their effort rather than their performance. I hoped that those who were watching would possibly feel less intimidated to try when it was their turn. Seeing that I regarded a less than perfect performance as (a) 'fantastic' (effort) may have helped ease the anxiety that being 'watched' often induces .... Dance offers wonderful opportunities for the individual to develop the ability to think critically about own as well as others performance. For this reason later in the course I encouraged comments from those who were watching as well as those who were dancing. I tried to do so in a way that the individual was offered an opportunity to step back from their performance and engage in a process of critical analysis of the performance which would hopefully facilitate leaning and self knowledge. Being able to take and give constructive criticism is a skill I value enormously. For this reason I stressed the importance of not laughing AT one another. I tried rather to draw attention to the value of critical thinking as a means of improving performance as well as seeing it as an opportunity to 'help' ones peers by offering them a different perspective of their own performance.

I value the perspective of self that is available to me when I balance it with the perspectives of others. However I believe the perspective of others can only be of value though when criticism is given with the motivation of 'helping' rather than 'hurting'. I tried to encourage this from the early stages as it can and did provide wonderful opportunities for more balanced perspectives of self while developing abilities to think critically" (Appendix 2, class 2).

In the following clips I observed myself setting the standard by encouraging positive praise for first attempts to dance. In class 1 I did not allow students to critique and allowed very little in class two. I tried to establish a safe place to 'try' before introducing critique where I encouraged self confidence.

(Appendix 5, Video 4, 5, 6 – class 1)

In class 2 I introduced self praise in addition to my praise. I hoped to build trust and self esteem before introducing peer critique. Here I encourage them to 'pat themselves on the back' for their efforts.

(Appendix 5, Video 7 - class 2)

I believe the early introduction of my class rule, 'no laughing at; only laughing with,' was central to establishing a safe learning space where critique could be trusted. Previous experience has taught me that with the introduction of peer critique, there is the risk of humiliation. I therefore introduced the idea of critique gradually. Initially I did not allow peer critique: students were merely asked to watch one another as I introduced performance. I realised that some of those who were watching would probably have been making mental reflections, but by not allowing them 'early voice' I hoped to alleviate initial fears of performance. I feel my rule was fundamental to the quality of critique that emerged. Its establishment at the outset of the course set the tone of 'times of reflection' where critique enriched the learning experience. I later introduced the second part of my rule which allowed laughing 'with' another, when I felt mutual respect to be more established. I used "the voice of the individual and the voice of the group" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75) to enhance self knowledge and critique.

Palmer describes this optimal learning space where students are invited to
"find their authentic voices" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75) and suggests that education can only happen when students are able to "speak their minds" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75) and where the groups voice is "gathered and amplified" to "question, challenge, and correct the voice of the individual" (Palmer, 1998, p. 75). Here students learn
"to speak their own thoughts about that subject and to listen for an emergent collective wisdom that may influence their ideas and beliefs"(Palmer, 1998, p. 76).
I used the voice of the individual and group for such purposes.

I felt that not only was it important that students felt that they could trust one another but that they also felt that they could trust me. By not allowing students to critique one another in this first lesson, and only allowing myself to do so I could set the tone of the

critique but this placed me in a position of enormous responsibility. In this first class I became aware of how I chose to avoid individual evaluation and gave general comments for the group. I adopted the approach: if the shoe fits wear it. I chose to praise effort more than performance. Even though my dance and teaching career has been driven by my personal pursuit of excellence I did not apply the same standards in this situation. In this first class I observed my desire to establish an atmosphere of trust as more powerful than my desire for excellence because I felt trust was fundamental to the pursuit of excellence.

In class 2 I developed my idea of critique. I reminded them that they were not to think of sitting and 'sleeping' but that I required them to focus and observe in order for them to then offer helpful advice to those they had been watching. I emphasised 'constructive' as I anticipated that there may be some individuals who at this stage were not able to do all I was requiring them to do. Those watching may have been tempted to be harsh with their criticism.

> *"I reminded them that there was to be 'no laughing' because 'everyone was trying' …. I attempted to create an environment of respect for learners where they could feel free to 'experiment', to risk not looking 'right', to find ways of moving that may be unique to them, to find their physical 'voice'… all were trying their best and that no-one had the right to 'silence' another while they were still learning to 'speak'."*(Appendix 2, class 2)

Laughing WITH others was acceptable but was however not to be at someone else's expense. Here I introduce the foundations for respectful critique of others.

(Appendix 5, Video 8 - class 2)

I also continually encouraged the respect for self during my classes when I asked them to *"stand tall"; "take your place in the universe"; "be proud of who you are".* (Appendix 2, class 2)

Here I emphasised respect for self through strong body posture and I continued to do this in all classes because I believe "In everyday life it is possible to see in a person's carriage as well as in his movements the way his thinking and feeling goes" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 121). I used the 'proud' body to encourage a confident state of mind

and spirit. I believe asking children to feel confident without supporting this in body carriage is merely focusing on part of their 'whole being'. I would reason that if motivation in scholastic achievement is directly related to a positive and balanced sense of self in children (Hoppe) then body language needs to support this.

I realised later that individual confidence is vulnerable to humiliation. Understanding of critique became vital.

> *"When I asked if they had 'got it', one boy offered to show me that he had. As is often the case with learning flamenco he was not able to demonstrate it correctly doing it on his own. Some of the class began to laugh at him and I immediately silenced them. I allowed him to continue trying and then praised him for his effort." (p28) ... I then praised their efforts before asking the group that was watching to pass comment."(p31) ... I reminded them that I did not want comments for specific individuals but rather general observations."(p32) "Some of their responses included: "some people were too fast ... awesome!!(to which the rest of the class responded with applause and shrieks of approval) ... not thinking ahead" (Appendix 2, class 2).*

I think by initially not singling out the individual and rather giving general observations individuals could decide whether the comments applied to self or others. In this way I encouraged personal responsibility for learning. I believe this is fundamental to the development of confidence and skill.

In their research van Staden, Myburgh and Poggenpoel identified that principle dancers "have confidence in themselves" and "self knowledge which they gain through self-evaluation, self reflection and feed back from others " (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 120). They observed how principle dancers "assess and accept themselves through their reflections of themselves and their experiences, they have perspective over themselves and admit mistakes and learn to deal with themselves in different situations." They "… think about their own thinking they possess a meta-cognitive thinking style." They "also evaluate themselves in accordance with the feed back from others" and "take feedback from others as constructive, they see it as valuable information in order to evaluate their performance." They revealed that "accurate self evaluation is a hall mark of the top performer and something that the poorer performer lacks." This did not imply that "star performers have no limits on their abilities, but that they are aware of their

limits and they know where they need to improve. Knowing their strengths and weaknesses and approaching their work accordingly is a competence of every star performer." They observed that "Because principle dancers have self-knowledge, they have self confidence. There is a tight link between self knowledge and confidence" (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 121).

I am fascinated by this link between self knowledge and confidence. I believe self knowledge relies on a balance between praise and critique in an atmosphere of mutual respect. I used group work in specific ways to support this. I agree with Murray that a child should not continually seek praise from the adult world and that they should learn to feel a sense of achievement and personal satisfaction independent of adult reassurance however, "Ridicule, sarcasm, scolding or laughing … may cause an emotional blocking that may result in tense movements and awkwardness throughout the child's life" (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 20). I believe self confidence relies on a balance between praise and critique. This is a tight rope which I continually walk and I used my class rule to encourage the children to be aware of it too.

2.4 Self Respect, Praise, Humour

In 'times of reflection' I often used praise before critique. I began to consider the deeper implications of such a choice.

> *"As we completed the learning of the first section I praised their efforts with as much enthusiasm as I could without sounding insincere. I did this because I value positive attitudes to self to contribute towards perseverance when learning may be perceived of as difficult. My praise of the group may not be an indication that they all knew the sequence well enough to do it solo but my use of repetition helped to ensure that the majority eventually "got it". This then allowed me to praise their efforts as a group even though some may not have been able to do it on the own yet. The confidence established while dancing in a group usually develops into confidence to dance in smaller and smaller groups and eventually solo. By praising the group I hoped to encourage self confidence and thereby to motivate further learning. This helped me to try and create a space where effort was acknowledged even before skill was achieved."(Appendix 2, class 1)*

My choice to develop self confidence rather than focus on skill was supported by my praising group effort rather than singling out individuals for correction. I knew that learning was progressing at different rates so I decided to delay (in the hope of avoiding) exposure of the inequality of learning and ability. I used repetition to support this. By praising group effort I had perhaps given individuals opportunity to decide for themselves if they were worthy of that praise. I know self confidence can be very fragile in the early stages of learning flamenco and I used praise to support its development. I delayed solo work until I saw signs of individual readiness for the same reasons.

To ease 'tension' and protect confidence I often made intentional use of humour. I began by asking them in class 1 if they knew how to count to six.

> *"I concluded my introduction activity by asking them if they all knew how to count to six. I do this in order to introduce the intellectual demands I will be making on them during the course of the lesson. I presumed that most of them would be able to count to six but I asked the question merely to be able to remind them later, when they may be struggling to learn the rhythms that they had told me at the beginning that they could count to six. This is a humorous way to draw attention to the intellectual capacities that are being engaged."(Appendix 2, class 1)*

(Appendix 5, Video 9, 10- class 1)

As I now reflect on this I realise that by asking if a class of grade 7's was able to count to six, I could have offended them. I also now realise that my remark may have been far from humorous if there had in fact been a student who was numerically challenged in the class. I am relieved now to know that that was not the case as I really only intended using it to encourage the attitude: of course I can count to six you silly woman! I had hoped that this would encourage them to 'prove' to me that they indeed could count to six, only to realise later that the co-ordination skills combined with the intellectual activity of counting may be more than they had anticipated. This proved to be the case later in the class.

> *"When learners were not able to count to seven I tried to introduce humour again as I reminded them that they had assured me at the beginning that they could count to six. I often find that young people do not want to be thought of as*

not being able to count to six so they endeavour to prove me incorrect. This often encourages their perseverance. I tried to do this in a humorous way as I value laughter as a means of releasing anxiety."(Appendix 2, class 1)

While some of them may not have found this humorous at the time, later in their journals they referred to how they knew how to count to six and seven (see Chapter 6 "The Journals").

I adopted this light hearted approach as it has been very useful to me in the past when I saw students feeling discouraged. I was aware of the difficulties and slow progress of some and a light hearted approach proved to be a very useful antidote to anxiety. Later in this lesson when they found it difficult to travel in one direction while looking in the opposite I reminded them not to do that when they were driving a car. Later when they were working as a group and I expected them to all stamp *like one person,* I introduced the idea of *not getting caught out* (Appendix 2, class 1) as the activity took on the character of a game. I encouraged laughter but moderated it with my *no laughing AT* rule (Appendix 2, class 2). I later reflected,

> *"A learning experience without the element of fun makes the experience similar to the experience of eating dry bread: yes it can be done but one may well prefer something that helps lubricate the process of ingestion. I try to encourage 'work' where it is disguised as 'fun' in order to engage the individual's maximal effort. Young people are especially more inclined to fully engage in an activity if they perceive it as enjoyable or 'fun'."(Appendix 2, class 1)*

Sometimes the fun just happened. One such example was when the children were trying to memorise directional changes and began shouting them out loud. I encouraged this 'fun' and used the 'vocals' to assist learning. Diana Jordan suggests that:

> If the enjoyment is only for superficial and meretricious forms of expression it may well be valueless …. the best guide … is the absorption of the children, and if they are doing their best, and showing creative effort, above all if every member of the class is becoming a confident contributor, something good is certainly being achieved (Jordan, 1966, p. 72).

I felt this is exactly what was happening.

The teacher observed the same.

> "The children were really excited to learn the new steps and clearly showed their joy and self satisfaction when they had mastered them." (Appendix 3. Week 3)

Here are clips of the children working very hard but still enjoying the process.

(Appendix 5, Video 11- class 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 12 - class 5)

(Appendix5, Video 13 - class 6)

According to Jousse "The true way to educate a child is to let him 'play'… " (Jousse, et al., 1997, p. 676). Sometimes they enjoyed shouting as they learnt and I allowed this: if 'play' meant 'shouting out' to learn, that was fine by me.

2.5 Respect, Trust, Individual Ability

At the beginning of each class we chatted while waiting for latecomers. After class 2 I reflected on how this gave me opportunity to become aware of individuals feelings.

> *"When emotional issues are brought to the class I prefer to know how to work with them and to be sensitive to them." I know that dance offers release from emotional blockages and if I am aware of them I try to provide opportunities for their positive expression and release. I found their comments very helpful to provide a guide for my focus in the lesson. If there were problems that I was unaware of I tried to address them and if there was positive feedback I used it to build on.*

> *This particular lesson I was well rewarded for taking the time to find out how they were feeling. The first comment came from a girl who I had not realised was dyslexic. I refer to her as Ms. Differently Able.*

> *"I think I actually enjoyed it …. I actually learnt something"*

> *I was about to leave it at that and then decided to ask her what she thought she had learnt. She replied:*

> *"I learnt … as a dyslexic … to let go of my fear of dancing".*

I had designed my course to enable as many children as possible to participate. The importance of this would have eluded me if I had not chosen to follow up on the response given by this girl. Not only did I feel that she had made a significant personal breakthrough, but she had felt comfortable enough to tell me and the whole class. I was overwhelmed by her shift in her perspective of self, and this after only one lesson. The next comment came from one of the boys who admitted:

"I didn't actually care much about dancing but I actually enjoyed it".

And the next comment from a girl who said:

"I thought I was good at dancing but I realised I have to think".

I found all these comments very valuable as they showed me that at least three students had had a personal shift in perspective and that what I was doing was having a positive effect for them. Even though time was always a factor and I attempted to hear everyone's comments in my 'greeting' time I realised that I should at times ask learners to elaborate on their initial response. Here my intuition to enquire further proved very enlightening.

I thanked them for their honesty and asked them to continue to share their comments in this manner in the future. I reminded them that flamenco is an art form that required them to be honest and authentic. I asked them to continue to share their thoughts and feelings with the same honesty even if they thought it was something I may not like to hear (Appendix 2, class 2).

I later reflected on my power to influence perceptions of self. My informal greeting aimed at gaining information on how individuals were feeling in order to gauge my approach in the class revealed much more than I had anticipated. Being a stranger to this class implied responsibilities of respect which until this point I was unaware of. I had assumed that the abilities of students would be representative of the average found in most contemporary classrooms. I never anticipated teaching students who may be physically challenged beyond the normal. When I decided to go beyond my usual

response I was not only rewarded but profoundly humbled. I realised once more the importance respecting my position of influence and of never approaching a class as homogenous. As a stranger I had the advantage of a new beginning but I also should respect that I did not have knowledge of individual student's challenges.

I began to consider the implications of being a stranger. Yes I could and in fact enjoyed being able to view and be viewed as 'new'. This afforded me the opportunity of establishing a relationship which was free from the prejudice that often seems to prevail when a teacher or a class come with a reputation. This however did not relieve me of the responsibility of being aware of possibilities which could affect individual learning. I realised that as guest teacher I needed to remain alert and respectfully sensitive to all such possibilities.

Gerard Samuel who has worked extensively in dance with people who are physically challenged suggests that "… people defined as disabled" are often "positioned as weak and value-less"(Samuel, 2008, p. 138). This is not a definition I wished to perpetuate and am grateful that this young girl had been able to shift her own fears and my perceptions. If she felt after one lesson that she could dance without fear, I pondered the impact that such a shift may have had on her self esteem. Had my approach influenced or supported that shift?

I include this video for the reader to try and spot Ms. Differently-Abled in the first class for them self.

(Appendix 5, Video 14- class 1)
(Appendix 5, Video 15 – class 1)

I began to consider the value of 'not knowing' student backgrounds and whether that enabled me to offer them an opportunity to be free from limiting personal and teacher perceptions. I reflected on how my approach, expecting all to be able to participate, may have influenced participation, and shifted perceptions. Here after one lesson, one learner remarked that they thought they wouldn't enjoy dancing but in fact did. Another commented on the fact that they had thought they were good at dancing but realised that they 'had to think'. These comments of changed perceptions had enormous influence on how I continued to approach the classes: I realised the value of allowing

time for such comments and the responsibility I had to ensure that classes continued to support such shifts in perception. Not knowing their 'history' forced me to trust the process rather than rely on past information.

2.6 Trust, Group Work

I used group work for learning and to build confidence. I began using big groups but gradually reduced the sizes of groups as confidence levels grew. By delaying the 'moment of truth' where individual learning became exposed through smaller and smaller groups I hoped to avoid an embarrassing experience. I also made every effort to ensure that each individual was making an effort and working at their maximum in order to avoid humiliation later. From my experience, the group can conceal individual ability often resulting in a false and inflated sense of ability. In my experience children often over estimate their capability in their enthusiasm to participate. The same self esteem which the group encourages and develops can be annihilated at a later stage when solo performance is expected. I avoided individual humiliation through sufficient repetition in the group in order to protect our 'atmosphere of trust'.

In order to protect self esteem I often praised a less than perfect performance.

> *"I reminded the second group to not worry if they got it wrong and I praised the previous groups clapping. The fourth group were "fantastic" and the fifth group were "perfect". While I gave such enthusiastic praise I was fully aware that I had perhaps been too generous with my praise, but I feel I would rather give too much praise than too little." (Appendix 2, class 7)*

In these two clips I encourage and praise even when performance is weak and use my personal experience of memory 'blanks' to empathise with their attempts to remember.

(Appendix 5, Video 16 - class 4)
(Appendix 5, Video 17 – class 4)

I used my intuition to decide when to praise and when to critique but often 'erred' on the side of praise. I questioned how truthful my comments were? As I reflected I remembered a wonderful dance teacher in my youth who taught me a valuable lesson: always 'give the bouquet' first; then take it away. While in conversation with my mentor she suggested that perhaps it would be better not to take the bouquet away but

merely to adjust one of the flowers. I believe that 'giving the bouquet' first is essential as criticism without praise can be de-motivating. Praise is the 'bouquet' and I realise I tended to be generous with its size in my attempt to encourage motivation and self esteem. Yes I was often 'dishonest', and may have compromised my value of trust, but I had a hidden agenda: self esteem. I did however progressively encourage more and more critique, especially when I observed self esteem more established.

2.7 Respect, Trust, Private Performance

For Laban "(t)he theatre is the forum wherein the striving within the world for human values is represented in art form" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 103). I believe this to be so, but I also believe that in the educational environment, some children benefit from a careful introduction to the idea of performance. I tried to encourage respect by insisting on no "background noise" (annoying chit-chat) while they were watching another's performance. This also ensured focus and concentration. I believe much is learnt while observing others and that this only happens with respectful attention.

Here I encourage that respectful attention.

(Appendix 5, Video18 – class 6)

I did remind them when necessary and often did so before each performance.

> *"The first group was a group of four girls and the next group of four girls went to clap for them. The rest of the class were allowed to watch and 'jaleo'(words of encouragement).. I reminded them that there was to be no "background noise" as it was "unfair". I did this to encourage an atmosphere of mutual respect for one another and the act of performance."(Appendix 2. class 8)*

Here I saw respectful attention from audience and 'backing' which led to more meaningful critique.

(Appendix 5, Video 19 - class 8)

I believe my insistence on respectful focus helped develop observational skills for clapping and much was learnt from watching others. It also encouraged empathetic responses. Here the audience is seen supporting when a performance was going out of control.

(Appendix 5, Video 20 – class 8)

Performance opens into the inner life of an individual and any vulnerability should be respected. "The study of human striving reaches beyond psychological analysis. Performance in movement is a synthesis, i.e. a unifying process, culminating in the understanding of personality caught up in the ever-changing flow of life" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 107). Because of the very private nature of the inner world of an individual I insisted on no 'background noise' and respectful focus. I used 'private performance' to introduce connection between 'inner' and 'outer' world.

By 'private performance' I mean performance which takes place within the group for the group. 'Public performance' is when outsiders are invited to come and watch. 'Private performance' supports a safe learning environment. Feedback from those who have shared the experience is more informed of the difficulties and challenges involved. It often encourages an empathetic response grounded in personal experience. It also enhances the safe space for solo work.

I tried to encourage solo performance because I believe it gives the individual opportunity to develop skills which do not necessarily develop when performing in a group. Solo performance in flamenco requires higher levels of confidence and skill and qualities of leadership are necessary. The undivided focus in solo work intensifies the pressure to succeed. In solo work there is no one to blame and nowhere to hide if performance fails. I reflected,

> *"From a positive perspective the feedback given is exclusive to the individual and the self realisation of gaps in learning is also specific to them. Often when performing in a group the individual is unaware of these gaps in learning until required to 'think for them self'. Sometimes it is not that there are gaps in learning but rather that the 'pressure' of performing solo affects memory. I understand these 'pressures' from my own personal experience and therefore try to allow every possible opportunity for students to 'succeed' and continue to be motivated."(Appendix 2, class 8)*

Here is Mr. Einstein (the student regarded as clever) struggling to perform as a soloist under pressure.

(Appendix 5, Video 21 – class 8)

While I encouraged as many students as possible to perform solo, there were only a few who volunteered to do so. I did not insist that everyone did so because I did not want to compromise the trust and self confidence levels that had developed. My course had been designed to include the whole class and I did not feel I had the right to demand something that I knew induces high levels of stress if the individual was not ready for it: that would have been counter productive.

With more time, I may have encouraged more to go solo as confidence levels rose, but for the moment I was content with those who volunteered. My value of trust and self esteem had influenced this decision and I hoped that those who did learn from the solo experience would share enough with the others to enable them to learn by 'symbiosis.'