

Out the Box: Flamenco as Educational

A Living Theory Study of Dance in Primary Education

By

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ABSTRACT

“Out the box: Flamenco dance as educational.” A Living Theory study of dance in primary education

This study arises out of my experiences of conducting flamenco dance workshops in a number of schools. During my visits I became concerned by what I observed happening in dance education at these schools. In discussion with the teachers I began to identify various challenges and constraints that had the effect of ‘boxing’ dance in the formal education curriculum. I became concerned with the effect these ‘boxes’ were having on dance education and I felt compelled to try and address some of the issues and challenges I observed. The diversity of cultures found in many urban schools that I visited, presents a tremendous challenge for educators wishing to include dance into their learning programmes. As a result dance is either not being offered at these schools or is approached in a tokenistic way. In many instances the teachers I spoke to were inadequately trained or ignorant of the requirements for dance in the formal curriculum. This study seeks to offer a way to address these issues.

In my research, I have reflected on some of the educational and social factors that I believe are challenging dance education in these schools. I have conducted a Qualitative Action Research with an Auto Ethnographic, Self Study approach using the Living Theory Methodology as a point of departure. I have used my knowledge of flamenco and dance education to open the ‘flamenco box’ in order to introduce it to mainstream dance education in South Africa. I have come to term my approach ‘flamenco as educational’. In accordance with the Living Theory Methodology I include personal and educational aims and values and through rhythm and flamenco dance reflect on the interconnectedness of existence. I use critical reflection to engage with the issues I observed influencing dance education in a multicultural learning environment.

DECLARATION

I affirm that this entire thesis is my original work.

LYNN FERNANDEZ

As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this thesis for submission.

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02 February 2010

Mrs. L P Fernandez
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Dear Mrs. Fernandez

PROTOCOL: " Out the box: A journey beyond the boundaries in dance education"
ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0056/10M

In response to your application dated 27 January 2010, Student Number: **208529373** the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL**.

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I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my parents. To my mother whose creativity and artistry inspired me and my father whose intellectualism always challenged my own.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

- 1) Alegria: Flamenco rhythm
- 2) Buleria: Flamenco rhythm
- 3) Cante Jondo: Flamenco Deep Song
- 4) Duende: Expression of profound emotion in Flamenco
- 5) Hip-hop: a modern dance form originating in America
- 6) Gitanos: Gypsies
- 7) Jaleo: Vocalisations in Flamenco
- 8) Alianza Flamenca: Society for promotion of Flamenco
- 9) Krumping: Urban dance style originating in America
- 10) Siguiriya: Flamenco rhythm
- 11) RNCS: Revised National Curriculum Statement (South African Department of Education)
- 12) OBE: Outcomes Based Education

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INTRODUCTION

In South Africa the Department of Education continues to seek solutions for the challenges it faces in trying to improve education for all. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) attempted to do that (Department of Education, 2002) but Outcomes Based Education (OBE) (Schalock, 2001) has met with much opposition and the Department of Education is once more searching for alternatives as the curriculum continues to be revised.

Africa faces many challenges in education.

Against a backdrop of declining educational performance, at both the systemic level and that of learner performance, ... no one will deny that Africa faces many challenges ... the general picture of African educational systems is bleak ... schools are not functioning, children are not performing adequately and teachers appear to be failing. (Soudien, 2007, p. 7)

Soudien suggests that “for better or worse, Africa is deep inside the global system” (Soudien, 2007, p. 11) and is engaged in a two-way process of globalisation where “Africanization or indigenous knowledge systems are *already* engaged in articulation with the global world” (Soudien, 2007, p. 10). He suggests that those who endeavour to reform the educational curriculum, and those who seek to implement its ideals are often misaligned, “where the school is being held to standards that the system is not *geared* to achieving” (Soudien, 2007, p. 16).

When a curriculum attempts to embrace the diversity and complexities of a multicultural society, I believe challenges emerge. I use the term multicultural very broadly to include racial and gender diversity as well as diversity in belief systems and religion. In my experience the South African classroom is reflective of South African society, and attempts to devise an educational curriculum which satisfies its complexities and diversity may prove to be very challenging if not illusive. I would suggest that systemic and social issues have an enormous influence in the classroom and that ‘solutions’ may lie beyond the parameters of the curriculum. If a two-way engagement of Africa and the global community is already operational (Soudien, 2007), then this too, will surely influence classroom activity.

I am a flamenco dancer, teacher and international examiner. I began my dance studies with classical ballet, and have performed and taught dance for over thirty five years. I was introduced to flamenco (a style of music and dance which originated in southern

Spain) when I attended a professional performance of flamenco at the age of fourteen. I felt compelled to study flamenco. As a third generation, white, South African girl, of European descent, I gradually became aware of the fact that identity is complex and that my inherited culture did not fully resonate with my inner personal being. Sen's theory of what he calls "the illusion of a singular identity" (Sen, 2007, p. 8) highlights the importance of recognising the individual's ability to reason and choose aspects of their identity, as opposed to "unquestioning acceptance of received beliefs," (Sen, 2007, p. 9). I felt fortunate in that I 'stumbled' across flamenco which has allowed me to express myself in a way that transcended my inherited culture.

Sen suggests that individual identity has many aspects which should not be regarded as fixed but that one can and does choose much of our individual identity, including the order of priority that we give these identities. One person can be a South African citizen, of French origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a man, a dancer, a school teacher, a feminist, and a heterosexual, a supporter of gay rights, a tennis fan, a pianist, and an environmentalist (Sen, 2007). For Sen these affiliations may not all have equal priority for the individual, and in fact may change in order of priority in different circumstances. He suggests that while some aspects of identity may not be changed some affiliations are in fact a matter of choice. From my personal experience, I believe this to be so.

When I was introduced to flamenco it became the lens through which I viewed the world: an opportunity to experience life beyond the culture into which I was born. My exposure to flamenco has enriched my understanding of myself and others, and this has extended me beyond my given culture. Palmer suggests that we are

drawn to a body of knowledge because it sheds light on our identity as well as on the world ... we did not merely find a subject to teach - the subject also found us (Palmer, 1998, p. 25).

Palmer quotes Kaplan a French language teacher who questioned why people would want to adopt another culture. Kaplan then gives the following response, "Because there's something in their own which they don't like, that doesn't name them" (Palmer, 1998, p. 25).

I have studied flamenco for over thirty eight years and have come to understand it as a dance form of non-conformity. It emerged out of the struggle of the social 'outcast' to

resist hegemony: to resist 'boxing' (Leblon, 1995; T. Mitchell, 1994; Thiel-Cramer, 1990; Totton, 2003; Washabaugh, 1998; Webster, 2003). It was and, I believe, still is the dance of protest, with its roots in the expression of those who resisted conformity during the Spanish Inquisition. I believe it is a dance form which is grounded in the authentic expression of individual emotion which flourishes in a community of support. Flamenco resonated with my own personal struggles to resist conforming to my inherited beliefs and culture. It gave me a way of expressing my individual authenticity through movement and empowered and liberated my sense of self: it developed a powerful 'body language' evidencing my confidence in my own knowledge and identity.

South Africa has emerged out of a divided past where we were 'boxed' and labelled during apartheid and where thinking and culture was colonised by the colonisers leading to a "society in cultural disarray" (Maqoma, 2001, p. 75). Maqoma notes that "many South African dance forms were created to protest against the government of the day while vividly pronouncing integration in the form of cultural diversity" (Maqoma, 2001, p. 75). Dance was used to protest against segregation and became one of the ways in which cultural integration was sought. Artists like Maqoma soon realised that "South Africa has a diverse culture ... and we cannot afford to remain in our little squares; it just doesn't work. We are a world as we are ..." (Maqoma, 2001, p. 79).

As an artist I agree with this: we are indeed the 'world as we are', but I have observed how disrespect for diversity and other 'ways of being' still remains in many individuals and social formations in South African society. We cannot afford to remain 'in our little squares' but should look for ways to soften 'boundaries' in order to communicate. By this I do not imply that I believe in the 'colonising' of another's thinking in whatever form, but rather the embodied knowledge of the individual and their authenticity should be respected and individual creativity encouraged. As we in South Africa now seek a way forward in nation building, I would suggest that we examine closely and critically, what it is that we, in a multicultural society, do share, and how the boundaries between us can be respected but simultaneously remain permeable.

My own experience of the complexities of individual identity have led me to believe that all children can benefit from discovering what 'names' them (Palmer, 1998, p. 25). I have come to realise that this is perhaps one of the advantages of growing up in

diverse society where everyday interaction with other cultures, races or beliefs may provide such possibility. I feel privileged to have benefitted from a dance education, and have come to realise the educational and personal value of dance and flamenco. I was fortunate in that I had parents who could afford to pay for private dance tuition and therefore I was given the opportunity to explore more fully what 'named' me. I am saddened by the fact that this opportunity may not be available to all children.

In a new democracy like that of South Africa, nation building is regarded as vital to growth and prosperity. Soudien suggests that in addition to its educational challenges South Africa has the task of trying "to build the nation" (Soudien, 2007, p. 8). This leads me to question how this 'nation building' should occur.

I believe imposing or substituting one way of thinking with another is not the solution: this would be colonisation once more. Colonisation of another's thinking engages us in a vertical power struggle evaluating one way over another. I believe the answer resides not in an 'either-or', hierarchical approach but an 'inclusional' one (Rayner, 2004). In such an approach, respect for individual authenticity and self determination becomes the 'common border' between ways of thinking: across this boundary lies opportunity for individual and social transformation.

As a performer and dance educator, I have been invited to many schools over a number of years to give workshops and performances. In the schools that I visited I observed how classes have become a reflection of the diversity of South African society and opportunities for meaningful interchange between different cultures, races and belief systems were highly sought after. Although our classes are changing, I wonder whether our teachers are equally transforming to adjust their teaching to accommodate the complexities, possibilities and challenges of a multicultural class.

While giving my workshops, I became concerned with the way in which dance was being taught at the schools which I visited. Even though dance has been included in the education curriculum, I discovered that it was facing many challenges. I tried to imagine possible new ways of teaching flamenco that would address some of my concerns. Currently primary school learners have dance included in the Arts and Culture or 'life-skills' learning areas or as part of the Drama syllabus. Thereafter they have the option of choosing dance as an elective subject for grades 10-12. During my

research (2009-2010) the South African Department of Education began to engage in major revisions to the educational curriculum and I found myself positioned between curriculum 'boxes'. As the OBE Curriculum exits and the new curriculum (The Curriculum and Assessment Policy) is yet to make an entrance I am left wondering if dance will be even further marginalised as the new Creative Arts curriculum falls under the Life Skills learning area in the intermediate phase. With teachers under pressure to cover so many components and teach so many skills, there is every likelihood that dance may slip under the radar.

As my point of departure I decided examine some of the current educational aims of the South African Education Department together with other government policy documents. I discovered that one of the operational principles of the Arts and Culture policy in education is that of "nation building" where "mutual respect and tolerance ... facilitate the emergence of a shared cultural identity constituted by diversity" (Department of Arts, 1996, p. 7). Education which redresses the "past cultural biases and stereotypes" (Department of Arts, 1996, p. 11) is one of the goals of education in South Africa. "Dynamic interaction" of cultures is seen as possibly leading to "subtle cross pollination of ideas, words, customs, and art-forms, culinary and religious practices"(Department of Arts, 1996, p. 5).

I began to wonder if flamenco dance could assist these endeavours in education.

Dance scholars van Papendorp and Friedman regard movement as "common to all people, heedless of language and cultural barriers"(van Papendorp & Friedman, 1997, p. 5), and therefore highly suited to social interaction and healing. I reasoned that if flamenco was to be used for such purposes, it would require 'new' perspectives of flamenco and dance education. I gradually became more convinced that dance specialists in conjunction with educationists, should endeavour to investigate new ways of teaching dance, if it was to make any meaningful contribution in education. This may prove to be more challenging than it appears. I decided to begin with myself.

In my teaching, I have observed how in dance (as well as sport) the body is intrinsic to this 'common ground' (van Papendorp & Friedman, 1997, p. 5). But dance moves one step further than sport and explores the 'common ground' of emotions as well. While the universality of emotions may be debated, dance offers wonderful opportunities to

explore the emotional worlds of different cultures or ways of being. During many years of teaching and performing, I have observed how the body is a powerful medium of expression and I believe that as human beings we share a common ability to respond to rhythm and express our emotions through the body. I believe dance provides wonderful opportunities for individuals to 'connect' at a fundamental level. In many ways this is also true of sport, but, unlike sport, which often encourages a spirit of competitiveness, I have realised that dance can penetrate to where the emotions provide opportunities for synergy.

All people dance: whether it is for celebration, recreation, tradition, or religion. From the moment we are able to stand on our two legs and 'bob' up and down, I have observed how many mothers or families encourage the child's innate ability to 'dance' by encouraging them to clap their hands as well. During many years of teaching, I have noticed that this innate capacity is not developed further in many children and by adulthood may completely disappear. Not only is this a personal capacity that is neglected and often lost, but I would suggest that it can also have social implications which extend beyond the individual. I believe that encouraging children to dance together, can lead to a shared joy which can form the foundation of mutual respect and tolerance by finding 'common ground' through shared experience. While sport is able to encourage the breaking down of barriers in similar ways, dance often penetrates to levels of identity and commonalities.

I began to envision teaching flamenco in a new way. Some may ask why flamenco in Africa? Why choose to dance in a way that is not related to one's inherited culture? Flamenco has encouraged me to embrace broader perspectives of other cultures which extend beyond my immediate one and to shape an identity and a 'voice' that I could not find from the culture into which I was born. Kaplan in Palmer reflects:

... speaking a foreign language ... is a chance for growth, for freedom, for liberation from the ugliness of our received ideas and mentalities (Palmer, 1998, p. 26).

I realise this may not be true for all, but it is for me and may be so for others. I reasoned that those who felt that their inherited culture did 'name' them may still perhaps benefit from becoming aware of how 'others' dance and another way of being. I reasoned further that if this was so, then flamenco in education may provide opportunities to explore identity in a way that helps to transcend cultural, racial and gender divisions.

My experience of flamenco with its multicultural origins, gender inclusivity, and physical accessibility all suggested to me the possibility of a unique opportunity to break down the barriers of 'boxes' of racial categorisation.

I believe flamenco is concerned essentially with individual emotional experience and that this individual experience is intrinsically linked to the social experience. It is significant that this is exactly what happened in the origins of flamenco where people came together from various cultural and religious backgrounds to dance and to share and support one another in their mutual suffering and search for emotional release. In its origins, flamenco developed out of a multicultural interchange (Edwards, 2000; Junta de Andalucía Tourism Trade and Sport Council, 2004; Leblon, 1995; T. Mitchell, 1994; Pohren, 1980; Schreiner, 1996; Thiel-Cramer, 1990; Totton, 2003; Washabaugh, 1998; Webster, 2003). The marginalised or excluded in Spanish society expressed their individual emotional pains and joys in a community of empathetic 'sharing' which evolved into an oral tradition of song and dance called flamenco. The multicultural origins of flamenco (Jewish, Islamic, Protestant, Gypsy, Catholic, Greek, Indian etc) suggested to me the possibility of shared experience amongst a diversity of individuals.

As I began to envision a possible new way forward for flamenco in mainstream education, I started to question whether perhaps the challenges facing dance in education were related to the educational curriculum, or the scholarship of teaching (Pan, 2009). By mainstream education I am referring to dance education as a compulsory learning area for all learners as set out in the GET phase for the Arts and Culture Learning Area. I began to reflect on my own teaching of flamenco and to examine it in light of the diversity I was encountering during my workshops at schools. I began to realise, that if I wished to embrace this diversity, that perhaps not only my teaching practice needed to transform, but also my pedagogical content. This transformation would require searching for new vantage points from which to examine 'what was', 'what is', and 'what could be'.

... I wish to emphasise how important it is, not merely to continue the acquisition of knowledge, but also to develop new view-points from which to envisage all our vast accumulated material of knowledge (Smuts, 1927, p. 6).

During my workshops at schools, I was led to enquire of the teachers that I spoke to how they were including dance into their classes. I discovered that for many of them

dance education was more often than not undervalued or misunderstood, and there was a general reluctance to include dance into their learning programmes. On further investigation I discovered that few of the schools that I visited are able to employ specialist dance teachers to assist them, and so many generalist school teachers found themselves trying to include basic dance movements into the school play or avoiding dance altogether. Some of the teachers that I interacted with were even asking learners to teach one another while others invited guest dance companies to perform or give a workshop.

While many of these activities are valuable, I believe they lack the continuity that dance requires for it to be able to play a meaningful role in shaping and influencing individual growth as well as physical, emotional, and psychological development. In the schools which I visited, I observed how dance was often left in the hands of the generalist teacher with limited or no training in dance. Many teachers did not have the knowledge, time or inclination to study dance in order to teach it at even a basic level. Many of the teachers I spoke to, also had their own personal perceptions of dance ability (lack of talent, co-ordination, confidence, cultural perspectives etc.) which often prevented them from even trying to include dance into their general learning programmes. It is perhaps for these reasons that they chose to include music, drama and art, while dance was either ignored or poorly taught.

I wondered if the lack of teacher training, experience and knowledge that I was encountering, may be an indication that dance education may not have appropriate direction or overall 'vision' in order to maximise its educational potential in South African schools. The shortage of adequately qualified dance educators also concerns Sharon Friedman, (Friedman, 2006) dance educator at UCT (University of Cape Town). She identifies the need for dance educators who have been trained in all aspects of dance as well as child learning and development in education. She points out that this does not necessarily mean dance studio teachers.

Maree in her examination of dance education in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) found that dance in Primary education was often the subject given to the class teacher which led to random lessons with very little shape, context or connection to dance educational outcomes (Maree, 2004). This lack of teacher expertise she attributes to the fact that there is no guiding encouragement taking place to assist teachers and to address the

issues facing dance education in KZN. Her findings resonated with my own experience. She found the educational outcomes for dance being fairly well approximated in the privately owned Crawford Schools in KZN. From my personal experience, I would suggest that perhaps this is due to their specialist teacher expertise.

I began to reflect on some of the enormous challenges facing dance in education in many of the schools that I visited. I believe dance training requires specialist technical expertise and that there are very few dancers or teachers who are able to master more than one or two dance styles to any degree of excellence. If taught by someone with limited passion, knowledge or expertise, each dance style will be dishonoured to some extent. It is only in the hands of experts that each style can inspire and flourish. This raises further issues. Who are these experts? How can they be integrated into mainstream dance education? Should their expertise and knowledge be used to guide dance education curricula? What is the nature of the additional training they may require? How will they need to adapt their teaching techniques and pedagogy in order to embrace the diversity found in many classrooms?

I began to imagine how dance specialists could be encouraged to contribute their expertise to dance education and to examine not only 'what' is taught but 'how' it is taught. I believe the 'what' and 'how' of dance education should be examined in the light of the social transformation which continues to challenge all aspects of daily life in South Africa. Perhaps varied approaches to dance education should be reflected upon in light of the current diversity in many classrooms if it is to have educational value in mainstream education.

I do not believe that dance in mainstream education should be approached in the same way that dance is taught to willing volunteers. As an elective subject or extra mural activity it attracts students who are willing to learn to dance whereas dance in mainstream education needs to engage many unwilling participants often from diverse backgrounds. This is where I believe modification of teaching techniques and pedagogy is required. The challenges which I observed in the schools that I visited are not unique but they are comprehensive. Friedman asks the all important question: "whose dance should be taught? To what end?" (Friedman, 2008a, p. 131)

During my workshops at schools, I discovered that due to the sensitivity of cultural differences which are associated with many dance forms, the introduction of dance at an educational level were often challenging. At the schools I visited, I realised that dance is often viewed by teachers and students as a collection of ‘boxes’ which are perceived to have limited or restricted access. These ‘boxes’ are often placed into further ‘boxes’ of classification as either ‘art’, ‘cultural’, ‘urban’, ‘educational’ or ‘professional’ dance. I observed that there are also the racial, cultural and gender ‘boxes’ which seem to constrain. In the classes I taught, I came to realise that classical ballet is often regarded as elitist and predominantly suitable for females of European descent, African traditional dance as belonging to certain tribes and cultures, Indian classical dance as belonging to Indian culture, and hip-hop, contemporary dance, jazz dance as basically reflecting American and youth sub-cultures. I wondered whether other teachers wishing to introduce dance styles into their learning programmes encountered rejection from certain learners based on cultural, racial, and gender preconceptions.

Sen’s view of multiculturalism asks whether human beings

Should be categorised in terms of inherited traditions, particularly the inherited religion of the community in which they happen to be born, taking that un-chosen identity to have automatic priority over the affiliations involving politics profession, class, gender, language, literature, social involvements and many other connections? Or should they be understood as a person with many affiliations and associations the priorities over which they must themselves choose ...? (Sen, 2007, p. 150)

Sen regards the neglect of the plurality of affiliations, and the need for freedom of choice to decide on the priorities of these affiliations, as helping to sustain the illusion of a unique and choice-less identity imprisoning people into ‘boxes.’ He suggests that an important goal of multiculturalism should be to “enhance the capabilities of children to live ‘examined lives’ as they grow up in an integrated country” (Sen, 2007, p. 160). To this end, he highlights the importance of providing children with opportunities to learn about the diversity of world cultures and to learn to reason and understand about the choices that human beings can and do make.

I believe this to be true and that dance education provides wonderful opportunities to explore world culture, while simultaneously allowing children to discover what may ‘name’ them. It seems to me that Sen is suggesting that sharing is inherent to individual

growth. I believe as I 'share' who I am with another, both of us potentially become open to change and transformation. I would argue that it is this mutual interchange which informs individual and collective growth and learning.

During my workshops, I also encountered the gender stereotypes that certain cultures often instil. The perception was often that boys don't dance, that dance is effeminate, or that certain dances are restricted for males or females only. I observed how this can, and often does, leave some boys at a further disadvantage as they struggle to overcome these misconceptions. I observed how perceptions of dance were often related to perceptions of race, culture and gender with the effects of being 'boxed' into categories still in evidence.

South African dance educator, Lliane Loots, has explored some of the gender 'gaps' or 'boxes' that came to be associated with dance in the past, and how many of these issues are still evident in South Africa (Loots, 1995). She suggests that assumptions regarding what is appropriate feminine behaviour and what is not appropriate masculine behaviour are heavily embedded in the stereotyping involved with classical ballet training and appear to have infiltrated other dance forms as well. In my experience this is often very evident when teaching dance in mainstream education. The teachers I interacted with mentioned that many boys were often reluctant to have their masculinity challenged by what they perceived to be a feminine activity.

In dance education, there are those who believe dance education should aim for and achieve professional standards and there are those who believe it should embrace educational values (Smith-Autard, 1994). I believe this division continues to incapacitate the progress and successful implementation of dance into mainstream education and that dance can embrace both simultaneously. Smith-Autard suggests that new models for dance education should be sought which go beyond the professional and educational aims. I reasoned that rather than continuing to examine the problems facing dance education that perhaps I should seek my own new solutions to new challenges. I decided to take action and enrol for a master's degree to research how I could teach flamenco to a diversity of learners of mixed ability.

I examined the requirements for dance education (Department of Education, 2002), and I began to wonder if it would be possible for me to teach flamenco in a way that was

inclusive, skills-orientated, educationally relevant as well as accessible and enjoyable for a diversity of learners. In order to envisage a way forward, I critically reflected on my experience as a language and drama educator as well as my dance experience as teacher, performer and examiner. I decided to try and design a course of flamenco for primary school learners which endeavoured to embrace the skills development of professionals as well as the values of educationalists (Smith-Autard, 1994). My challenge: how to respect diversity and embrace educational and professional standards? I realised that my understanding of flamenco in education needed to be carefully considered as I did not want to encourage misperceptions of dance or culture.

I know from my own experience as a dancer that neither words nor technology can begin to 'explain' what I have come to 'know' through dance. As a child and later as a teenager I found my need to dance as important as my need to breathe. Without either, I believed I could not continue to live. Laban suggests that "Man moves in order to satisfy a need" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 1). I have danced and continue to dance, because of an overwhelming 'need' to commune with my 'whole being' and to understand that whole being more fully. In my early years I found great difficulty in learning to perform for an audience. I danced because I needed to, not because I wanted to share it or show others. For many years I had to consciously force myself to feel comfortable dancing for an audience. I have had to become aware of what they wanted and enjoyed in order to try and align my needs with theirs.

For many years I resisted giving the audience 'commercial' entertainment and danced purely as I wanted to. I preferred dancing alone because it felt amazing! But when I danced for an audience that feeling of 'amazing' took a new form: it became shared and therefore different. By sharing my 'private' experience I had to become aware of what lies beyond me. For many years, I battled to do this because it felt so much better to dance alone, in the studio, by myself. I would often dance for hours alone, and often without musical accompaniment. I almost didn't need more, as this was when I felt in communion with all that was within me and beyond me, in that moment. Learning to share my experience through extending my awareness to an audience took many years, and to this day, dancing for an audience cannot replace how I feel when I dance alone. They are similar and yet completely different experiences.

In my early years of flamenco, I only wanted to dance the ‘Siguiría’ which explores deep and melancholic fears and struggles. Its themes of death and imprisonment helped me to express a profound personal need to ‘know’ and understand my own ‘dark’ and secret struggles. I did not feel that I needed an audience to do this. But as the years went by I learnt to share these and other feelings, with others through teaching and performance. When I became a mother, the joy which I experienced with the birth of my son, Ramon, took natural expression in my dance. I no longer felt the need to express my pain- I ‘needed’ to express my joy. I immediately switched from dancing the ‘Siguiría’ to dancing ‘Alegría’ (a dance which explores feelings of joy and happiness). For the remainder of my performing career, these two dances became my outlet for what ever I want to express.

Throughout my life flamenco has allowed me to explore a profound intimacy with who I am. I have come to realise that who I am is not constant, and flamenco has given me opportunity to know and understand myself in the moment, continually transforming. I have found no other experience to compare with it. To this day, when I am able to dance in a way that allows me to go to the deepest levels of who I am, the experience defies any written description or video recording thereof.

My son Ramon is an avid tennis player and a wonderful flamenco dancer. He is 14 years of age and has been dancing since the age of six and playing tennis since the age of 9. He has played in numerous tennis tournaments and performed in many shows. I asked him if he could describe if there was any difference in how he felt when he played tennis to when he danced. These were his responses:

When I dance I feel part of a family. I don’t feel I have to take on everything on my own. Dancing allows me to express my feelings ... it makes me feel good about myself ... on stage I feel something inside me taking over and filling my body with happiness. When I am angry I can express it through the way I hit the ball...but its more a rush of adrenalin ... I feel great when I hit a good shot ... but you can’t show it as much in tennis ... it’s a different kind of feeling in dance ... in tennis I need to feel tense and tough ... I’m there to win ... fight ... dance is not a fight ... its becoming one with yourself ... dance is being the best you can be ... tennis is trying to be better than the other ... (Fernandez, Appendix 4)

I was astounded at his in-depth perception and ability to express verbally the distinction between the feelings he experienced in tennis and dance. I have watched him do both,

and my own experience resonates with so much of what he says. I have always relied on the wisdom of children to remind me of how simply truth can be expressed and I continue to use the reflections and wisdom of children to guide my own reflections.

For me, flamenco is about communing with one's own authenticity: something to be celebrated alone and with others. As Ramon suggests, not only is it about feeling "part of a family" it's about "becoming one with your self ..." it is about deep introspection. I believe I cannot begin to 'understand' and respect another without beginning with myself. I believe dance is not like music or art where notes and paint can be removed and separated from the individual. With dance there can be no separation.

I have come to understand and express my 'whole being' through flamenco and I use critical and responsible introspection to support this. Other arts and writing and speaking can encourage this as well, but I believe dance does it in a completely unique way, which until personally experienced, cannot be fully understood. I love to dance and I love to watch others dancing: When I express my love through flamenco the 'boundaries' of my 'box' dissolve.

This study is my attempt to extend beyond a 'boxed' understanding of 'being' in order to understand more fully the challenges that I observed in dance education. I critically reflected upon my practice within the context in which I found myself, in my attempt to understand more fully, the values which informed my practice as I searched for 'new' ways for me to teach flamenco in education. While I realise that there may be other dance practitioners adapting their practice in order to address the challenges facing dance in education I am unaware of any who are using flamenco as I have done.

"I felt a passion to help" (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 107). I used Whitehead's approach to action reflection cycles, where I chose to combine my experience and my imagination to offer possibilities which I then acted on and evaluated in terms of its effectiveness

What emerged is my transformed understanding of self and of flamenco into flamenco as *educational* which I believe includes and transcends many of the aims of the Arts and Culture, life-skills or drama/dance learning areas. Therefore I move out of any 'box' of grades and phases and offer this work for what it can achieve for teachers (of dance or of life-skills), dancers and most of all for learners of all ages.

CHAPTER 1

Methodology: the 'why' 'what' and 'how' of things.

1.1 Methodology : The 'why'

In my study I have conducted a Qualitative Action Research with an Auto Ethnographic, Self Study approach using the Living Theory Methodology of Jack Whitehead as a point of departure (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009; Whitehead, 1993, 2004, 2008, 2009b, 2009c; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). I have read and engaged with the educational ideas as well as the Qualitative, Action Research, Self-study, Auto Ethnographic research approaches of many including (Aaronsohn, 2003; Anderson, 2006; Bochner, 2000; Bullough Jr & Pinnegar, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Denzin, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Gallahue, Werner, & Luedke, 1975; Giroux & Giroux, 2008; Hargreaves, 1994; Hendricks, 2009; Jaramillo & McLaren, 2008; Kelley, 1951; J Kincheloe, 1991; J Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Koshy, 2005; Krog, Mpolweni-Zantzi, & Ratele, 2008; LaBoskey, 2004; Laurillard, 1993; Loughran, 2004; Meyer, 2008; Mills, 2000; C. Mitchell & Weber, 1998; L. Murray & Lawrence, 2000; Pereira & Taylor, 2005; Taylor, 2004; Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006; Tomaselli, Dyll, & Francis, 2008), but have chosen to follow the Living Theory Methodology of Action Research, refining my methodology as it emerged and developed as my study progressed. I used a process of Critical Reflection “in” and “on” my action in order to refine and improve it (Schon, 1983, pp. 54-55). I have included personal and educational aims and values in order to develop and expand my awareness of the interconnectedness of self and others. I have also used Visual Methodology (C. Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002; C. Mitchell & Weber, 1999) by way of video recordings in order to assist me to critically reflect upon my practice.

I understand that

“A methodology is not only a collection of the methods used in the research. It is distinguished by a philosophical understanding of the principles that organise the ‘how’ of the enquiry. A living theory methodology explains how the enquiry was carried out in the generation of a living theory” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 107).

The philosophical understanding which informs this study emerged before and during this research. It transformed my understanding of self, flamenco and dance education. My living theory methodology is informed by the values and beliefs I expressed in my practice as I tried to “...exercise a sense of personal responsibility in validating for myself my claim for what I believe to be true” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 108).

During my research I became aware that much of my ‘knowing’ is evident in my practice, and that I sometimes am unaware of ‘why’ I do what I do. Scholarly, critical reflection and writing has made me aware of many of the ‘why’s’ in my practice. I have become aware of why I do ‘what’ I do through the ‘doing’ of research and have come to realise that my beliefs and values are woven into the very fabric of my practice. In this chapter I attempt to unpick these ‘threads’ in order to try and explain ‘what’ I did and ‘how’ I discovered that,

Although we sometimes think before acting, it is also true that in much of the spontaneous behaviour of skilful practice we reveal a kind of knowing which does not stem from prior intellectual operation (Schon, 1983, p. 51).

I began reflecting upon my ‘knowing’ and practice as a flamenco dance teacher. Jousse suggests that “... we think with our whole ‘miming’ being ...” (Jousse, Sienaert, Conolly, & University of Natal. Centre for Oral Studies, 1997, p. 346) and that “True human expression is not language, reduced to the geste of the *langue*: it is the expression of the entire being ...” (Jousse, et al., 1997, p. 658) This ‘entire being’ mirrors the universe: “The universe plays man, and man plays the universe ...” where “the Creator creates as in a mirror” (Jousse, et al., 1997, p. 669).

As I reflected on these ideas as a teacher and performer, I came to understand that my ‘knowing’ was manifested throughout my entire being and was not limited to my head or brain, and that my teaching practice mirrors my ‘knowing’ and the creative ‘knowing’ of the Creator. Often this knowing is intuitive where the seeming boundaries between what lies beyond me and within me become permeable. As a dancer I understand this whole being experience as holistic, where mind body and spirit commune with all that is within and without me. This whole being experience is difficult to translate to written text, “When a practitioner displays artistry, his intuitive knowing is always richer in information than any description of it” (Schon, 1983, p. 276).

Critical reflection has assisted me in this endeavour. Schon uses the examples of the impromptu action of professional baseball players and jazz musicians who adjust their performance according to their opponents or fellow musician's performance (Schon, 1983, p. 55). He describes the ability to modify one's performance while in the midst of it as "*reflecting-in-action*" (Schon, 1983, p. 54) and when performance is later further reflected upon as reflecting "*on*" action (Schon, 1983, p. 55). My experiences as a performer and teacher have involved many years of critical reflection "*in*" and "*on*" performance. I have come to realise that at times I also reflect 'before' and 'after' action as well. New choreographies or performance/teaching contexts require new inspiration which I then reflect on once completed.

Schon explains how "... each new experience of reflection-in-action enriches ..." the practitioners "repertoire" (Schon, 1983, p. 140). As a teacher and performer I understand this "repertoire" of experience of Schon to be intrinsic to my practice. He explains it as our ability to see unfamiliar situations as familiar, which in turn indicate a broad repertoire of experiences which we draw on when confronted with the unfamiliar. This "allows us to have a feel for problems that do not fit existing rules ... Reflection-in-action in a unique case may be generalised to other cases, not by giving rise to general principles, but by contributing to the practitioner's repertoire of exemplary themes from which, in the subsequent cases of his practice, he may compose new variations" (Schon, 1983, p. 140). This helped me to understand how 'new variations' emerge from and include elements of previous experience, but did not seem sufficient to me to explain that which comes from inspiration, and has no seeming resemblance to what went before. Here inspiration, and intuition, helped me to account for the unaccountable: when ideas 'came' to me that seemingly had no resemblance to anything that I had previously experienced.

I soon became aware of the complexities, of trying to describe my 'knowing', as a flamenco dance teacher, in order to record them on the written page. I believe this process of trying to write about action inevitably involves a process of 'translation' and inevitable 'mistranslation' or diminution. It felt much like trying to describe an African sunset to someone who is blind or the voice of Maria Callas to someone who can not hear. Whitehead offered me some form of solution when he suggested that some researchers "continue to present their theories in a words-only propositional form, but

others are now finding new creative ways of presenting their theories using multi-sensory forms of communication, such as pictures and graphics, and video and other technology. Newer forms of technology are often able to communicate living experience more effectively than only linguistic forms” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 32).

I therefore decided to use video recordings to see if they could assist my endeavours to describe and reflect upon my practice. However, after many years as a professional dancer, I have also come to realise that ‘performance’ often ‘feels’ better/worse than it ‘looks’/‘sounds’. I have used video recordings throughout my career in order to reflect upon my performance and what I ‘felt’ during performance is often far removed from what I ‘see’ on video, or from what others ‘see’ in my performance/video. In similar manner I believe that my experience of my research may have ‘felt’ different from how my report ‘reads’ and my “living experience”(Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 32) ‘felt’ different to how it may ‘look’ on video.

These challenges of translation are fully explained by Conolly who identifies the problems of using written texts to record oral tradition or performance text: “the holistic, dynamic three-dimensional nature of the performed mnemonic Oral-style presents particular challenges to the processes of recording and analysis in research” (Conolly, 2002, p. 2). Conolly further insists that “the page as used in literary and linguistic analysis and historical recording simply does not accommodate gestual-visual/oral-aural performance, which presents the researcher with most particular challenges ... video and audio recordings capture the gestual-visual/oral-aural modes of performance of oral traditions, but this medium only partially captures the elements of context that impact upon the performance of oral tradition, and with which the performer interacts. The limitations of video- and audio-recordings of gestual-visual/oral-aural modes of performance are numerous” (Conolly, 2002, pp. 7-8).

These insights into the difficulties of recording three dimensional dynamic data helped explain my predicament. I became aware of the complexities of describing my multi-dimensional experience as a dancer and teacher, and the almost impossible task of ‘translating’ or recording it on the written page, without introducing some sort of ‘mistranslation’. Laban suggests that “Pure dancing has no describable story. It is frequently impossible to outline the content of a dance in words, although one can

always describe the movement” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 4). Laban identifies the challenges of using the body as communicator where movement is so inextricably linked to the inner emotional and thinking being as well. What he does suggest is that “Man moves in order to satisfy a need” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 1). For me dance satisfies my need to commune with my ‘whole being’. Challenges arise when I try to communicate this to the ‘whole being’ of others. I believe this ‘whole being’ experience defies technological replication, so while I have chosen to use video recordings to assist my critical reflections on my practice, I do not regard them as a reliable, accurate or comprehensive record of my ‘whole being’ experience.

When drawing on the ideas or writings of others in my report, I have frequently quoted directly rather than paraphrased. I did this because I believe individuals use words in a way that is unique in much the same way as a choreographer uses steps in a way that is unique. I believe paraphrasing (or re-choreographing) brings in my own perspectives, and I prefer the reader to refer to the ‘original’ rather than my ‘translation’ or ‘interpretation’. For this reason I have only paraphrased where I felt what the origin was saying, was not what I wanted it to say, so paraphrase became necessary.

I follow the lead of Bruce with regard to referring to what is recorded in the literature: “It is usual for students to have to write a literature review as part of their thesis. This is normally a chapter appearing early in the thesis, but in some styles of thesis, may appear throughout the work” (Bruce, 1994, p. 144). I have therefore not included a separate literature review chapter as I have chosen to ‘weave’ my values and beliefs together with the ideas and theories of others throughout my report and evidence in practice. Throughout my research process, my reading has continually informed and transformed my thinking, ‘knowing’ and actions. My research experience became influenced by the ideas I was engaging with in the literature I was reading. These became ‘new threads’ woven into my thinking, my practice and consequently my Living Theory which continues to transform.

When I began this study I ironically began searching for a clearly labelled methodology ‘box’ into which I could place my research. This created an inner tension as I tried to no avail to find the perfect fit. My practice and my ideas seemed to transcend so many educational ‘boundaries’ that my search for the perfect ‘box’ seemed futile. I then discovered that in Living Theory Methodology there is no ‘box’ and that if I wish to, I

can make my own ‘boxes’, which I can continually remake if I so choose to. For this reason I have used Living Theory Methodology as my methodology is continually emerging and transforming, along with my practice, throughout the research process.

The Living Theory Methodology of Jack Whitehead which he further developed with Jean McNiff is an approach to Action Research which explores the “living experience” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 32) of individuals, where “Practitioner researchers investigate their own practice ... and produce their own explanations for what they are doing and why they are doing it” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 13). These become their living theories which they constantly test for validity. They establish validity by articulating “the standards of judgement they use, that is, the way they make judgements, in evaluating whether the theories they generate actually reflect the values that inform their practices”(Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 13). Whitehead defines it thus:

A living theory is an explanation produced by an individual for their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formation in which they love and work” (Whitehead, 2009b, p. 104).

This approach to Action Research is “a form of self-reflective practice” (Mc Niff, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p. 6). In accordance with this and what Schon explains as critical reflection “in” and “on” action, I reflected on my practice in order to understand and improve it (Schon, 1983, pp. 54-55). In order to refine and improve my practice as a dancer, individual critical reflection is essential for progress. It felt natural for me to transfer this practice of critical reflection on my practice as a dancer to my practice as a teacher. Throughout my report I explain my understanding of my epistemology and ontology as observed in my practice and how they are continually influenced by my experience and the theoretical ideas of others with which I find resonance. My ‘cycles’ of reflection are not orderly; sometimes they appear to be a spiral process, while other times they appear haphazard. They none-the-less continually inform my ‘new’ action and further reflections where my “... description of intuitive knowing feeds reflection” (Schon, 1983, p. 276).

In Living Theory, the methodology of an individual emerges during the enquiry and is as unique as the individual’s ability to be inventive (Whitehead, 2009a). In this way my methodology emerged during my research and what I did, and why I did it became a

reflection of my inventiveness as well as a reflection of my embodied values and beliefs: my living theory. Living Theory Methodology uses a “disciplined process of problem-forming and solving” which is “an action reflection method” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 107). I used this process of reflective action cycles to further understand the challenges I encountered in dance education, and the implications thereof for my own practice, as well as others in my social and professional context. Since “all theories can be understood as knowledge claims” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 29), my research approach uses a process of critical reflection to understand and test my claims to ‘know’.

Whitehead distinguishes between the dominant approach to theory in education of the disciplines of sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, economics, management etc. and the approach of ‘*educational*’ theory (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 17). He suggests that the traditional disciplines of education are not able to “explain adequately an individual’s educational influence in their own learning and in the learning of others” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 104). For Whitehead “the disciplines approach” to research and theory regards each discipline as a “freestanding body of knowledge” which “create neat boxes of practice and thinking”. He describes ‘*educational*’ research and theory as including “the imaginative creation of possible new futures and the values base of educational practitioners” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 17).

These ideas of *educational* research resonated with my own experience, and my difficulty in locating a traditional theoretical ‘box’ into which I could ‘place’ my research. I inherently resisted the ‘spectator’ approach to research where my ‘objective’ observations were supposed to align with specific ‘boxes of knowledge’. Whitehead cautions that “locating oneself within a secure and given structure can be comforting, because we are not required to move out of the box or exercise our own creativity or acknowledge responsibility ...” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 37). I value freedom to be creative and this has propelled me beyond the ‘box’. Whitehead suggests that each individual teacher’s learning has been and continues to be influenced in a way that is unique to them and that this in turn influences how they teach others. “*Educational*” theory and knowledge explains “the educational influences of individuals in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the social formations in which we live and work” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 105). This report then identifies and explains the educational influences in my learning and the learning of those I ‘teach’.

Whitehead argues that the position of educational theory in the profession of education is ambiguous. He suggests that while it is required to guide and support the skills and techniques of the profession, it also often finds itself in dissonance with the practice and skills of individual teachers (Whitehead, 2009a). In my enquiry I continually explore across the 'boundaries' of various theoretical disciplines in which I am interested. I do not however wish to engage in an "orgy of theoretical violence" (Wilber, 2001, p. 120) but rather search for resonance between other people's theory and my own personal values and beliefs. While I have found resonance in some of the dominant theories in education, I have also used my own experience and knowledge to counter-balance these throughout my enquiry.

I have reflected upon other people's established and current theory, as well as my personal experiences in the classroom. I have tried to understand my educational influence, as explained by Whitehead, to reflect upon my praxis. I understand that my practice is unique and I therefore do not see it being generalised or transferred in a neat 'box' to all contexts. I have come to understand my living theory and my practice as reflecting my past, my future and my present, where all dance in my choreography of endless possibility.

I have come to realise that "In a living theory methodology the individual includes the unique constellation of values that are used to give meaning and purpose to their existence. In the course of the enquiry these values are expressed, clarified and evolved as explanatory principles in the explanations of educational influence in learning" (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 112). Therefore, while exercising my creativity I explored across the 'boundaries' of what I knew, and engaged with literature and the ideas of others as well as my values and beliefs thereby adopting the educational approach of Whitehead.

For Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead, (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005) there are two main reasons why teachers should do Action Research, firstly to improve practice, and secondly to generate new theory. They suggest that teachers rather than external researchers are best placed to evaluate and improve their own work and that teachers should be able to improve practice as well as generate new theory and knowledge. They also suggest that sometimes research is inspired by the fact that something is working well and explanations and descriptions of what you did and why you did it may help

others see how you evaluated your work and they too can learn from it (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005). My research has been inspired by my desire to see what was working well in my practice and my desire to understand it more fully in order to transform for a new context.

Living Theory Methodology insists on the use of 'I' and I have therefore done so throughout the research process. Living Theory Methodology also uses action reflection cycles of the practitioner researcher and personal and social validation where action is held up for critique. I, as practitioner researcher, have therefore used action cycles of reflection to critique my practice and thereby sought personal and social validation of what I believe to be true. I include my values, beliefs and principles which I use as standards of judgement to explain my educational influence (Whitehead, 2009a). I have come to understand teaching and learning as "a relationship of influence not one of cause and effect" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, p. 22) and became fascinated by the relationships that emerged during my research which influenced personal learning.

I had been experimenting with flamenco classes in education for some time prior to this study. My research became my intentional intervention and action, aimed at improving my understanding of my practice through critical reflection, in order to modify it. I understand my practice is unique, but the process of critical reflection soon illuminated educational issues beyond its boundaries. I do not consider my observations and reflections as 'solutions' as this would suggest further 'boxing' which I resist. This relates to Mc Niff and Whitehead who describe Action Research as "... a form of enquiry that resists closure and celebrates life in all its uncertainty and insistence on new beginnings. You are unique and so is your practice" (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, p. 60).

I include some of the ideas of 'inclusionality' as explained by Rayner (Rayner, 2004) but found the Theory of Holism and Evolution as explained by Smuts helped me understand more fully the transformation which can take place when new knowledge emerges from existing knowledge (Smuts, 1927). As a dancer I have come to realise that often 'new' insights may appear to be like previous ones but in actual fact the 'old' often becomes transformed by the introduction of the 'new' and what emerges is 'another new'. In this progression, what emerges may or may not entirely resemble

what ‘was’ before, but there may be evidence of what was ‘before’. I used my creativity to ‘think out of the box’ in order to find new ways of teaching and dancing.

As I began to envision a possible new way forward for flamenco as educational in mainstream education, I started to question whether perhaps the challenges that I had observed in dance education were related to the education curriculum or teaching praxis. I began to reflect on my own teaching of flamenco and to examine it in light of the diversity I was encountering during my workshops at schools. I reasoned that if I wished to embrace the diversity I had observed, that perhaps not only my teaching practice needed to transform, but also my pedagogical content. This transformation would require searching for new vantage points from which to examine ‘what was’, ‘what is’, and ‘what could be’.

... I wish to emphasise how important it is, not merely to continue the acquisition of knowledge, but also to develop new view-points from which to envisage all our vast accumulated material of knowledge (Smuts, 1927, p. 6).

In my understanding of educational research everyone and everything is changing including me. As I became my own policeman, my awareness extended beyond my ‘box’ and I began looking at myself and all holistically. Even the writing of this report has involved externalising in text my inner being where the barrier of my ‘box’ was removed and my practice is held up to public scrutiny. I invite the critique of others who understand that teachers need to “regard themselves as intellectual and social activists ... and be prepared to stand up for their own knowledge” and that “They need to find ways of letting their voices be heard, on behalf of themselves and also on behalf of those who are not able to speak for themselves”(McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, p. 97). Margaret Farren suggests that there is a need for individuals to have a space in education “to develop their own voices” (Farren, 2008, p. 65). This report is therefore a form of intellectual social activism, where I attempt to let my literal ‘voice’ be heard, in order to make my contribution to the challenges facing dance in education. Here my ontology and epistemology merge.

What is my epistemology/ontology and action plan?

Whitehead and McNiff explain epistemology as:

a theory of knowledge which involves two parts:

- a theory of knowledge (what is known);
- a theory of knowledge acquisition (how it comes to be known)

(Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 23)

I believe that what I 'know' and how I come to 'know' emerges from my experience, and interactions with others, and inspiration. For Whitehead and McNiff (2006), knowledge and understanding is something we create in an interactive relationship with others. As I reflected on what I 'knew' I allowed my 'past' a place in my 'present' in order to evaluate its continued place in my 'future' and I allowed it to transform into something more suited to the situation. This required me to try and understand what was being judged, as well as the validity of my standards of judgement (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

I believe that the 'boundaries' between myself and others are permeable and I understand myself and all around me in holistic, inclusional relationship. (Rayner, 2004; Smuts, 1927) Just like Whitehead and McNiff I believe my axiology (what I value), is influenced by who I am (ontology) which in turn is influenced by what I know (epistemology) in symbiotic relationship (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006).

I understand my study to be Auto Ethnographic in that I came to understand my practice and learning more fully through my interaction with my surrounding community. I used my understanding of the Auto Ethnographic approach of Ellis which is concerned with the alignment of culture and self (Ellis, 2004) and Bochner who suggests that Auto Ethnography is concerned with finding meaning within an experience rather than trying to merely depict what took place (Bochner, 2000). Auto Ethnography has helped me "engage(e) in dialogue ... beyond the self" (Anderson, 2006, p. 375) and for me it became a way of "seeing and being" that challenges hegemony (Denzin, 2006, p. 422). I believe too that "(a)ll theories are hypotheses created by people" (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992, p. 57) and that my Living Theory Methodology remains a unique expression of my creativity and inventiveness (Whitehead, 2009a).

How do I relate Self Study and Social Action?

I have also used my understanding of the Self Study approach of Pithouse who suggests that “part of the strength of many self-studies is a holistic approach that acknowledges the intersection of the personal and the professional. Perhaps because studying the self almost inevitably leads to reflective critique, there is a certain dissatisfaction with the *status quo* and a concern about change, social justice and professional action”(K. J. Pithouse, Mitchell, & Weber, 2009, p. 58). This dissatisfaction with the ‘*status quo*’ led me to seek alternatives where my concerns transformed into social action. While I understand that “Self-study points to a simple truth, that to study a practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self-in-relation to other” (Bullough Jr & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 14). I also reasoned that Self Study has social implications beyond the self and that “Social purpose refers to what we want to achieve in the social world, and why” (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006, p. 23). While I believe my study may have social purpose, it has also helped transform my understanding self, others, my environment and flamenco.

In 1989, Whitehead began to see an action plan being shaped by the individual’s educational values which then become guiding principles in the research. According to Whitehead we often find ourselves in situations where we may not be able to live our lives in accordance with our values, either through denying our own principles ourselves or through them being denied by others. He describes this as living in contradiction to one’s values. He regards our action plan as a means to try and resolve this tension and to try and live our lives in a way that embraces our values more fully(McNiff & Whitehead, 2005). In this report, I reflect on my own experience of living in contradiction with my values in order to try and resolve this tension where it is evident.

Whitehead outlines an action plan, which he, McNiff, and Lomax transformed still further in 2003. It is based on the following:

- I experience a concern when some of my educational values are denied in my practice;
- I imagine a solution to that concern;
- I act in the direction of the imagined solution;
- I evaluate the outcome of the solution;
- I modify my practice, plans and ideas in the light of the evaluation (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, p. 28)

My action plan was loosely based on this outline. I became concerned by the challenges I observed facing dance education in the schools I visited. I tried to imagine how I could find a possible solution and then acted in the direction of my ideas. I reflected on my practice and the outcome of my action in order to modify my ideas and practice and improve my learning. My cycles of reflection continually overlapped with one another in a complex process of reflexive critique.

Together with Mc Niff, Whitehead developed this plan still further and they show how an action plan is related to our values:

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What kind of evidence do I produce to show why I am concerned?
- What can I do about it?
- What will I do about it?
- What kind of evidence do I produce to show that what I am doing is having an influence?
- How do I evaluate that influence?
- How do I ensure that any judgements I make are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How do I modify my practice in the light of my evaluation? (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, p. 29).

McNiff and Whitehead regard this action plan as generic and that one can and should modify it to suite one's own circumstances. I did just that in using these questions throughout my research to reflect upon my actions and learning in order to make modifications where I felt necessary. They were not necessarily used in systematic order but rather when the need arose.

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?

For much of my dance career I have been fascinated with the 'boundaries' between personal and social experience: my research enquiry is no different. It is a confluence of numerous values: my own, students', teachers' and the theory of others. In my enquiry I attempt to find alignment and resonance.

According to Whitehead central to the analysis of data in Living Theory research is the "life-affirming energy" (Whitehead, 2009a line 413) together with the values which I

use to explain my educational influence in my own learning as well as that of others. Whitehead believes cultural and historical contexts influence our lives and the analysis of the data in living theory should therefore include the insights gained from other theorists. He suggests that traditional theory cannot explain the uniqueness of educational influence in any living theory but rather produce explanations from sets of propositional relationships which are abstract and general whereas living theories are grounded in the individual's conscious lived experience and are therefore unique. Whitehead suggests that because education is value-laden one must try to establish if what one does is mediated in the others' learning with one's own values. I therefore cannot say that I have educated anyone other than myself. I can only forward that I may have influenced the learning of others (Whitehead, 2009a).

Through this enquiry I have come to understand that my practice is influenced by my value of love. In my reflections I became aware of how I expressed love in my practice: love of self, love of dance, love of flamenco, love of children, love of education, love of knowledge, love of life. I have come to realise that I am passionate about love in all its variety of expression. My understanding of flamenco as educational is grounded in my desire to express and experience love. I have used various approaches and teaching techniques designed to do so. I have looked for and found evidence of my value of respect, trust, authenticity, joy, integrated experience, and passion which I now regard as variations of love.

I believe authenticity and love nourish one another. In my experience I have observed many who reject or fear authenticity, seeking 'safety' in conformity or homogeneity. I believe authenticity is the momentary expression of sincere individuality and originality. It often takes courage and effort to develop and express authenticity and I believe love can liberate in such circumstances. Authenticity should be respected and loved and not used as a wedge to divide. I believe it is in our capacity to love and be loved that we find 'common ground' and in our love of individual authenticity we approximate this. I believe in a loving, respectful environment, authenticity flourishes.

I have spent much of my childhood and most of my adult life engaging with the body as a means of communication and I have come to believe that the body is one of the most 'honest' forms of communication. I believe the spoken and written word may deceive, but the body reveals the truth. A person may better understand who they are through

reflecting on how they dance, where the truth of the individual and the momentary experience become communicated by the body. I believe all children can benefit from developing an understanding of their body as communicator and gaining control and awareness of this ability. The lifelong scholarship of Marcel Jousse (1886-1961), focused on the “original language” of man being “corporeal” (Sienaert, 1990, p. 96). He identified the “corporeal – manual” expression of the body and concluded that the whole body communicating the thoughts and emotions of the individual was “the most faithful form of human communication” (Conolly, 2002, p. 3).

In my understanding of flamenco as educational I have sought this environment of respect and trust in order to encourage and develop authenticity. I have used various teaching approaches to support this as I believe an atmosphere of fear encourages homogeneity. I sought to provide a loving, fun, respectful, safe ‘space’ for children to become aware of and develop their authenticity through flamenco. I hoped that this awareness would nourish their confidence to share with “life affirming energy” (Whitehead, 2009a) and authenticity ‘who’ they are, and can be, in all they do.

1.2 Methodology: The ‘what’ and ‘how’

The educational influences which shaped my thinking, led me to take action, as I began to reflect on ‘what’ I could do to adapt flamenco for the classroom and ‘how’ I would teach it. As I reflected further, I began to design a course of flamenco for primary learners. As I did so I became more aware of my challenge: “How can /do I simultaneously respect diversity and embrace educational and professional standards?” I realised that my introduction of flamenco to mainstream education needed to be carefully considered as I did not want to instil misperceptions of dance or culture.

I reflected deeper and began by asking myself “Why flamenco?” I reasoned that perhaps it was not so much which dance ‘box’ I chose but rather ‘how’ I taught it. I began imagining ‘how’ to open the flamenco ‘box’. I reasoned that if Outcome Based Education (OBE) in South Africa encourages cross-curricular learning, surely this allows for the myriad of dance forms available to be explored. Perhaps then teachers could choose from a ‘buffet’ and provide learners with exposure to as many dance styles as possible without entering into the endless debates of which dance form is worthier than any other. I have observed how the pitting of the perceived value of one style of dance against another only continues to divide the world of dance education

from within, and how this is often perpetuated by dance practitioners themselves. My question ‘Why flamenco?’ transformed into ‘why NOT flamenco?’

This is where I began to envision the possible value of teaching a specifically designed course of flamenco as one of many possible options. I began to imagine how studying numerous dance styles could encourage a deeper understanding of a wide variety of cultures leading to further understanding of self and diversity. I reasoned that the challenge facing dance in education is how to open the ‘boxes’ of dance styles available in South Africa, in a way that encourages learners’ respect for these differences, while simultaneously searching for ‘common ground’ and that the contents of each ‘box’ may need careful examination and adaption to suit a diversity of learners. I reasoned that the successful introduction of any dance form would require respect for diversity as well as for the dance form being introduced. Dance has many ‘flavours’ and I believe young learners should be encouraged to ‘taste’ as many as possible in the primary phase in order to decide if they would like to choose any as a ‘main course.’ This introduction of the various dance styles to the ‘unaccustomed palate’ is where I felt vision and skill would be required. This is where I believed understanding of culture, depth of knowledge of dance and teaching techniques as well as educational values was required.

I reasoned that just as the human voice speaks in many languages so the human body uses many ‘languages’ to communicate. Learning to ‘speak’ or dance in different ‘tongues’, helps to open the lid of many ‘boxes’ and reveal wonderful new opportunities for learning. I began to reflect on the educational potential of intercultural awareness which dance education could encourage and how it could possibly help to encourage respect for diversity. I reasoned that perhaps young children in a multicultural society should be introduced to a wide variety of dance styles in order to allow them to choose which, if any, they are drawn to.

I reflected more critically on the critical outcomes of the Revised National Curriculum Statement and other government policy documents. I discovered that they aim to “develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a democratic South Africa.”(Department of Education, 2002, p. 2) and that “humans are holistic beings” who require opportunities to develop and nurture their “psychological, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual expression” to realise their full potential (Department of Arts,

1996, p. 5). I began to wonder if I would be able to design a course of flamenco dance that would embrace these educational aims.

I learnt too that the Arts and Culture learning programmes endeavour to create opportunities for learners to develop a “healthy self-concept” and to work “collaboratively as individuals” to develop “practical skills” and “respect human value and dignity,” (Department of Education, 2002, p. 5) as well as to “work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community”. (Department of Education, 2002, p. 1) I began to reflect on how these educational aims related to what I have experienced during thirty five years of dancing and teaching flamenco. I began to imagine how I could teach flamenco in a way that would embrace the learning outcomes of the Arts and Culture learning area through creation, reflection, participation and expression.

The flamenco ‘box’

It was at this point that I decided to further reflect on the origins and evolution of flamenco. I wanted to understand it more fully, using the literature that was available to me, in order to try and position my understanding of flamenco within a larger context. I discovered that there is very little scholarly literature available in English on flamenco and I was unable to find anything on flamenco in education in English. I discovered that the flamenco scholar Timothy Mitchell (T. Mitchell, 1994) identifies three types of experts of flamenco: performers, outsiders who have lived alongside performers, and intellectuals. He points to flamenco’s lengthy oral-tradition and highlights the problem of documentation where much of what has been written about flamenco has been written by aficionados (people who live alongside flamenco performers) and not historians, hence the many instances of disagreement, and where little if anything has been written by the dancers themselves. This general lack of concurrence in flamenco literature tends to leave much of what is available up to individual interpretation. I discovered that flamenco literature is limited, difficult to find, and often mere subjective opinion rather than scholarly. I found nothing written on flamenco in education in the South African context.

Mitchell describes flamenco as a folk song style that has “undergone a peculiar, intense evolution” (T. Mitchell, 1994, p. 1). He describes it as a paradoxical expression of outcasts propelled into popularity by the elite and argues that although it originated

with the ‘wrong’ people, it was these elite who gave it the status of art. Thus began my questioning of why folk style dance forms like flamenco seem to have to prove their worth in order for ‘those who count’ to accord them the status of art.

During my years of performing and teaching I have encountered many who regard flamenco as exclusive to Spaniards and even more exclusive to Gypsies. Many of my conversations with others have revealed perceptions of flamenco as belonging to a select few. I reasoned that while it may indeed have its roots in Southern Spain, it has become an international form of expression performed and enjoyed by many people all over the world and as such can no longer be perceived of in such an exclusive manner. I began to imagine challenging these perceptions of exclusivity.

Mitchell suggests that theories attributing the origins of flamenco to one specific group are simplistic, and that the gypsies helped to stylize a sub-cultural otherness with roots in several ethnic or quasi-ethnic groups. “Examined responsibly flamenco cannot be traced to one source only” (T. Mitchell, 1994, p. 96). I reasoned that if flamenco could not be traced to only one source, it could not justifiably be argued that it ‘belonged’ exclusively to one group. I reasoned that if flamenco emerged from the interaction of several cultures and contained elements of several ethnic groups, it could not be regarded as belonging to any one culture specifically. Mitchell regards the idea of focusing on the suffering of one group only and ignoring that of so many others as no longer acceptable. I realised that so profound is my respect for the art of flamenco, that I was seeking justification for what I was about to do. I began to reason that I did not have to limit the ways in which flamenco is performed, and by whom it should be performed.

There is an adage amongst flamencos that “everything changes and yet nothing changes.” I reasoned that while flamenco may appear to remain unchanged that this may in fact be wishful thinking. I began to reflect on the transformations of flamenco that I have witnessed in the last thirty five years and how it may continue to transform.

Flamenco in its origin became the expression of the marginalised, and Mitchell contends that while gitanos (gypsies) may have regarded themselves as separate from the poor community at large and the originators of flamenco, they did not have a monopoly on the emotions of “love, jealousy, poverty, sickness, death, loneliness, and

pain,” all themes found in *cante jonde* of flamenco (T. Mitchell, 1994, p. 96) . Don Antonio Chacon often considered to be the father of flamenco singing is quoted by Mitchell as having asked “Do you think that each race has the heart in a different place?” (T. Mitchell, 1994, p. 159) I reasoned that perhaps the common ground of human emotions could be used as my point of departure. I began to reason that perhaps only when flamenco is grounded in profound emotions, does it appear to remain unchanged and that therein resides individual authenticity. I believe authentic emotional expression to be available to all and that flamenco as educational could embrace this.

I began to question further what flamenco was, is and could be. I have come to realise that if any number of people were asked the question, “What is flamenco?” it would probably yield numerous different answers. From my observations all have unique perceptions of what they consider flamenco to be. I did however begin to identify two fundamental approaches to flamenco. I refer to them as the ‘purists’ and the ‘pioneers’. I believe the ‘purists’ are those who want flamenco to remain frozen in time untainted by the influence of the ‘modern’ or ‘foreign’ world, while the ‘pioneers’ are those who use flamenco to express individuality within their contemporary society. I believe that the ‘purists’ subscribe to the view that art forms can and should be ‘boxed’ in order to retain them in untainted form whereas the ‘pioneers’ subscribe to the view that artistic expression cannot be ‘boxed’ and they continue to search for ‘new’ ways.

Initially, I regarded myself as a ‘pioneer’. I have however come to realise that I am a ‘pioneer’ in that I want flamenco to be removed from its ‘box’ and explored beyond its traditional approaches, but I am also a ‘purist’ who does not want to dishonour an art form for which I have profound respect. By ‘traditional’, I am referring to the stylistic constraints which many ‘purists’ impose on a performer. I began to consider how I could find ‘new’ ways of teaching using the contents of the ‘flamenco box’ and sharing this with children who may never have had any experience of dance training or flamenco. I began to imagine flamenco being experienced in a way that resisted stylistic ‘boxing’ and I began reflecting on how this and other issues might influence the learning experience.

Dance ‘boxes’ in Education

Dance theorist Jacqueline Smith-Autard suggests that:

Models for teaching should always be dynamic and constantly changing, so to define and promote any one model for teaching may seem over-prescriptive. Processes of change, however, often occur in practice well before any model can be defined, and indeed, new practice has to develop before it is possible to reflect on its nature. When the new practice has been tried and tested by teachers and students it becomes necessary to define and promulgate the practice and theories which underpin it that it becomes known and developed as a valued model for teaching (Smith-Autard, 1994, p. 3).

She identifies two ‘boxes’ into which dance education is placed: the dance as education ‘box’ and the dance as profession ‘box’. She suggests that these two should become more dynamic and embracing of change and that a midway model approach may be more appropriate in the educational context (Smith-Autard, 1994). Friedman suggests that dance as education emphasising experience and dance as performance emphasising performance skills are often perceived to have two distinct destinations (Friedman, 2008b) and the two cannot be embraced simultaneously. It was at this point that I began to question if I could teach flamenco in a way that pursued technical skills, and embraced educational values? From the schools I had visited, the multicultural nature of many classrooms suggested to me that I should try to go beyond existing models of dance, and to possibly devise a ‘new’ approach.

I then reflected on some of the basic theoretical principles of dance education which I felt have influenced many ‘Western’ dance curriculums, as well as literature available on dance research in South Africa. As I did so I also began to identify numerous ‘boxes’ in dance education which resonated with what I had been observing in the schools I had visited.

I began by reflecting on the work of dance theorist Rudolf Laban who developed his ideas for what later formed the basis of many ‘Western’ educational models of dance education (Laban, 1948). According to Smith-Autard this approach to dance emphasised the importance of process rather than product where “the process of dancing and its affective/ experiential contribution to the participant’s overall development as a moving feeling being” became the goal of dance education (Smith-Autard, 1994, p. 4). Laban devised a theoretical framework for dance that still informs the approach to much dance education in the western world.

Laban's descriptive analysis of movement enabled movement to be classified according to four principles: action, effort, relationships and space. He analysed and described all movement according to what part of the body was doing the action, how this action could be described according to its use of time and force, where this action took place in space and in what way it was related to a person or an object. His aim was to free dancers and to allow them to experience the full range of movement untainted by the prescription of styles, viz. ballet, flamenco, modern, tap, etc. His work provided an excellent system of analysis and I believe it should remain available to those who wish to analyse movement according to these principles.

I believe Laban's analysis of movement has, however, been used by many to teach dance in a way that reduces it to an analysis of its components/ingredients, and as any good cook will tell you it's that dash of salt that brings out the flavour of the ingredients. I realised that the 'flavour' of dance is not brought to the fore when it is stripped of its style or authenticity. Laban's insights remain highly influential in many dance curriculums but I believe that he did not intend his principles to be used by others to teach dance in a prescriptive way. I have observed how this prescriptive use of Laban's principles in the teaching of dance in a rather dry and cerebral way can result in one wondering what is 'missing'. I believe that when dance is taught in a way where movement is 'dissected' and analysed it can rip out its very 'heart', and defeat its object.

I tried to imagine the experience of flamenco as enjoyable as I have observed that children are more likely to engage more fully in an activity which they perceive as 'fun'. I wanted my opening of the 'flamenco box' to have 'heart' revealing a 'surprise' that was enjoyed. I reflected further on the "professional" model in dance education, (Smith-Autard, 1994, p. 6) which gained prominence in dance education in Western society during the 1960's and 1970's. As Smith-Autard points out, this highly specialised approach to dance education has been avoided by many primary educators. I began to think that perhaps this was due to the fact that it may not always be suited to the majority of learners. The professional model approach to dance education includes many personally devised dance techniques including 'Graham', 'Cecchetti', 'Vaganova', 'Cunningham' etc. I believe these, together with many other styles of

dance have become 'boxed' and clearly labelled leaving teachers with the unenviable task of trying to decide which one was worthy of a place in their curriculum.

I also reflected on the suitability of this approach for a diversity of learners as technical excellence in many dance styles is not always achievable for various body types. I began to consider ways to transform or adapt flamenco techniques to enable maximum participation, while simultaneously developing an acceptable standard of technical skill. Postmodern dancers like Yvonne Rainer (Rainer, 1977) attempted to show the dancer as an ordinary human being and not a semi 'divine' being by virtue of their technical skill. She attempted to break down previous perceptions of what forms dance should take and to redefine it as something that all can access. I reasoned that I would attempt to do the same and to devise a course of flamenco in such a way that as many as possible could access its techniques.

I further reflected on the ideas of Rainer who challenged previous notions of the power of attention. Rainer observed that the very process of being watched influences the dancer. "The very act of being in front of people transforms you ... I am transformed simply by virtue of being focused upon" (Rainer, 1977, p. 2). I began to reflect upon this notion of 'performance' being influential in individual transformation and it helped me shape my approach to performance in the course.

My many years as a flamenco performer have made me acutely aware of the two-way process of performance and the vulnerability of that performance in a context which is perceived of as threatening. For this reason when I introduced learners to performance I tried to remain sensitive to individual progress and levels of confidence in order to avoid a mis-educative experience (Dewey, 1938). I tried to be aware of different rates of progress and only encourage learners to perform when they felt ready.

I and many of my students have learnt to control the anxiety in performance and examinations with 'self-talk' which allows one "to control emotion and stay calm under pressure" (van Staden, Myburgh, & Poggenpoel, 2004, p. 125). I also believe that dancers can learn to

assume responsibility for their own performance and decisions...Taking responsibility for being on time, being conscientious.....and balance their drive, ambition with self-control (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 126).

I believe dance encourages responsibility for own performance which is a valuable life skill. I do however realise that the skill of ‘performance under stress’ like any skill, is one which needs time to develop. I did not feel that eight hours of experience in my course was necessarily sufficient for everyone to have felt ready for such stress. I decided to introduce the idea of ‘private performance’ to assist this.

I do however realise that the skill of learning to perform under stress is worth pursuing: “satisfaction comes from accomplishment, from knowing how to work hard and handle stress” (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 127). But I also believe, “process is as important as the product”(van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 133). I introduced learners gradually to performance, by dividing the class up into ever increasingly smaller groups, until finally those that felt ready were encouraged to perform solo. I did not want to force anyone to perform until they felt personally confident enough to do so.

The transformative power of flamenco has always fascinated me. My experience of flamenco had given me numerous opportunities to ponder its transformative power and I began to reflect on how this could become woven into my course in a way that encouraged the development of individual self esteem. I reflected on the idea of identity in motion and how identity can be transformed by movement as well as by an audience.

Barbour suggests that “through dance we can express and embody our lived experience” (Barbour, 2004, p. 31) This began to resonate with what I had read about the Living Theory Method of Action Research of Jack Whitehead (Whitehead, 1993). I also began to realise how inseparable my ontology and praxis were, who I am, is ‘woven’ into what and how I teach. I reasoned that my course would be an externalisation of what I perceived to have value. As I began to unpack the ‘flamenco box’ and use its contents for something ‘new’ I felt a deep sense of responsibility to ensure that what I used and how I used it was grounded in the values of other theorists with whom I found resonance as well as my own values.

I reflected further on the notion of performance. Much traditional dance is essentially a communal experience where the boundaries between performer and audience become less defined whereas many Western dance forms often focus primarily on performance.

As noted by Jonette Lancos, “Dance reflects the philosophy of an era” which can’t be reduced to a formula but is “basically an approach to art in its relation to living, a point of view” (Lancos, 2004, p. 142). Lancos describes the impetus of all (Western) modern dance as “democratic philosophy” (Lancos, 2004, p. 142) which nurtures individualism. I began to reason that if flamenco had its roots in communal experience, but also embraced individualism, perhaps flamenco as educational could accommodate both ideas.

I have observed how the focus on individualism is suited to the individualistic majority of Western society and often informs approaches to dance education. I do not however believe that this is the perspective of all cultures or dance educators. As I continued to reflect on these ideas I decided that I wanted my course to embrace the communal experience of many traditional dance forms as well as focus on individual performance and to embrace individual as well as communal identity. I therefore tried to devise a course which was more ‘non-mainstream other’ and more in line with the ‘midway model’ of Autard (Smith-Autard, 1994).

I began to distance myself from the ‘either-or’ approach to education and began aligning with the paradoxical approach of ‘both-and’ (Palmer, 1998). Palmer suggests that it is fear and Western “thinking in polarities” (Palmer, 1998, p. 61) that destroys connectedness as we learn to “think the world apart” by our use of binary logic: “either-or thinking” (Palmer, 1998, p. 62). I reasoned that as Palmer suggests I would endeavour to think the world together and embrace not only a ‘both-and’ logic but a holistic approach. I believe that the essential difference between postmodern perspectives and oral traditions perspectives is that post modernism posits itself on the binary divide, and oral tradition posits itself on binary complementarity, where post modernism focuses on how ‘difference competes’, and the oral tradition focuses on how ‘difference completes’.

Palmer describes the paradox of our human need for both community and solitude. Without relationships (connection with others) and without solitude (time to connect with self) human existence becomes imbalanced or unhealthy. Personality “types” also place us in “either-or boxes” where we ignore the “paradoxical nature of the human self” (Palmer, 1998, p. 66). Palmer suggests that education is often filled with broken paradoxes which separate head from heart, fact from feeling, theory from practice,

teaching from learning resulting in partial views of the world. “Paradoxical thinking requires that we embrace a view of the world in which opposites are joined, so that we see the world clearly and see it whole” (Palmer, 1998, p. 66). I began to imagine flamenco as educational where the boundaries within self as well as between self and others become more fluid. I reasoned that if the arts teach that “The either-or approach leaves little room for dialogue, little space to operate” (J Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p. 143) then a holistic approach to flamenco may assist individuals to commune in their social context. I reasoned that I could not hope to teach flamenco in education with any degree of success without trying to understand this interconnectedness.

I reflected on what van Pappendorp and Friedman observed during apartheid, where South Africans grew up culturally stereotyped in Black, White, Coloured and Indian moulds, creating stereotype barriers which prevented people from understanding one another and producing a prejudiced society. They suggest that dance used for healing and transformation helps to revitalise and empower learners and encourages participation unique from any other field of learning. They suggest that dance provides opportunities to understand cultures beyond one’s own which may lead to new forms of creativity (van Pappendorp & Friedman, 1997). I reasoned that while in theory the idea of children being able to dance together in the classroom may seem achievable, from my experience I had observed many challenges which seem to limit the meaningful participation of many learners in a dance experience. Cultural racial gender and social issues together with teacher expertise and curriculum requirements all seemed to me to contribute directly and indirectly to dance generally remaining at the back of the line in arts education as well as general education.

I also reflected on some of the negative cultural influences of the past, where the ‘boxes’ of dance in South Africa often carry negative connotations because of their links to its historical past. Loots, examines the “hierarchy of acceptable art forms, articulated by Western traditions” in South Africa, (Loots, 1995, p. 51) where dance is placed near the bottom of this hierarchy. She suggests that dance (especially classical ballet) became regarded as a luxury easily dispensed with and, in my experience, in many ways has remained in residue form in the South African classroom. Loots notes that classical ballet is only one of the many dance forms available in South Africa and it is regrettable that so many come to view dance training only in terms of classical ballet and all the negativity that it came to be associated with during apartheid South Africa

(Loots, 1995). I reasoned that perhaps dance had suffered from a mis-educative process (Dewey, 1938) during the apartheid era and observed how this legacy still remains in many of the schools I visited.

As I continued to engage with more dance literature, I identified the on-going battle between dance styles for greater status. Friedman observes the structured and competitive nature of contemporary youth dance and that it is claiming equal theatrical status with dance viewed as art (Friedman, 2008b). Perhaps continual classification of dance into 'boxes' where one is perceived to have more importance or status than the other continues to divide the dance world from within. Friedman describes the post-apartheid dance studies curriculum being conceived in an attempt to redress the cultural imbalances of the past, where an increasingly Afro-centric approach has tried to accommodate the multi-cultural nature of South Africa in an attempt to develop a unique South African cultural expression (Friedman, 2008b). This may indeed be so, but developing a new 'cultural expression' would require shared experience. I joined Friedman in asking for answers to difficult questions. She questions what dance styles should be taught to learners and to what end dance education is dedicated in South Africa. I in turn began asking who should decide what is taught and how it is taught? What are the criteria for these decisions? Who should be teaching dance in education? What approach would embrace a multicultural society? What should teacher training for this understanding of dance include? In essence 'how' should dance be approached in mainstream education?

I realised that many of these questions were beyond the scope of this enquiry, but perhaps at primary school level a more inclusive approach should be adopted, where as many dance styles as possible could be made available to learners. I reasoned that learners may benefit from an approach to dance, where they were encouraged to discover more about self and others through dance. If dance is to be pursued as profession, then early exposure to a variety of dance styles might encourage serious training to begin at an early stage helping to raise the technical standards. I have observed that children in their primary school years often exhibit interest in a wide range of areas and that only later depth of interest tends to develop. Therefore "... many and varied excursions into movement of all sorts should constitute the structure of movement experiences for the child ..." (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 36).

Cultural and gender ‘boxes’

Why do some choose to dance in a way that is not related to inherited culture? To answer this I reflected on the ideas of Sen, who resists ‘boxing’ identities into cultural, racial, social and gender classifications (Sen, 2007). I simultaneously reflected on what “names” us (Palmer, 1998, p. 25). Then I began to realise that flamenco had helped me shape an identity and integrity that I could not find from the culture into which I was born. Kaplan in Palmer reflects: “... speaking a foreign language ... is a chance for growth, for freedom, for liberation from the ugliness of our received ideas and mentalities” (Palmer, 1998, p. 25). Flamenco gave me an opportunity to identify with something beyond my inherited culture and I reasoned that if my exposure to flamenco had enriched my understanding of self and others, then it might do the same for children growing up in a multicultural environment.

I also reflected how gender influences our sense of identity in dance. Dance pioneer Ruth St. Denis perceived humans as spiritual beings “... reflecting the masculine and feminine qualities which are truth and love” (St Denis & Miller, 1997, p. 23). Dance educator Murray proposes that masculine and feminine movements are enjoyed by both sexes in the modern generation (R. L. Murray, 1963). I see many contemporary dance styles such as ‘hip-hop’ and ‘krumping’ having emerged in contemporary society with strong powerful movements and energies, reflecting the “philosophy of an era” (Lancos, 2004, p. 142), they have perhaps enabled many males to dance without feeling that their masculinity was being compromised, while also allowing females to explore overt strength. I reasoned that perhaps the anger and aggression expressed in these dance styles which express powerful movements, may be reflective of a generation’s frustrations in contemporary society which are expressed through these powerful physical movements.

I imagined how I could embrace the energies of a new generation which seemed to want to explore beyond gender barriers or ‘boxes’. In my experience flamenco has the potential to encourage the individual to explore equally, what I term ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ energy and to open and explore the gender ‘boxes’. I began to imagine how I could teach flamenco in a way that didn’t compromise either energy.

Assessment ‘boxes’

Shapiro suggests that dance education should embrace the cultural social and ethnic narratives that shape learners’ worlds, and that one should introduce the moral discourses that she feels dance education should embrace. She talks of “body knowledge” (Shapiro, 2004, p. 11) involving a critical understanding of the way our deepest feelings have been structured by the culture in which we live, where knowledge is taken in and contained at deep substratum levels and that this embodied knowledge, is distinct from any other form of knowing. She rejects scientific traditions that objectify knowledge and draw us away from coming to know through our bodies where our deepest passions, prejudices and loyalties have become shaped by the culture in which we live. She sees this critical pedagogy of the body accounting for suffering and pain where energy is used to reshape the individual’s situation into one that is more in line with compassion justice and care. This is a vision of dance education which Shapiro sees going beyond test scores and job requirements. I began to align my thinking with these ideas.

I became aware of my own inherent resistance to evaluating dance, and flamenco in particular, with a mark or test score. I believe ‘body knowledge’ is a way of ‘knowing’ unique from any other, and dance affords opportunities to come to ‘know’ through the body. I reflected on the difficulties of trying to evaluate or quantify this knowing with a mark? I decided to devise my course in such a way where effort, authenticity and ability to reflect critically, became my criteria for evaluation and where coming to ‘know’ through the body became valued in its own right.

I am one of the founder members of the organisation, Alianza Flamenca (Alianza Flamenca) which is devoted to the world-wide development of flamenco and which originated in South Africa in 1994. We adopted the policy that flamenco performance cannot be equated with a numerical mark and devised a system of assessments. An external assessor is invited to assess students’ progress and provide a comprehensive report on what was observed on that particular day. Because of the subjective nature of such opinion, it was decided that performance should not be given a ‘mark’, but that technical and stylistic comments of a third party may assist student progress. This approach of not evaluating performance with a ‘mark’ has encouraged a spirit of individual authenticity in interpretation and has consequently included many dancers who feared performance being labelled and ‘boxed’ numerically.

As one of the founders of this system, I believe this approach to have tremendous benefits for flamenco dancers. Authenticity is encouraged without the fear of being given a mark. Consequently in devising my course for the educational system where the spirit of numerical evaluation prevails, I found myself once again confronting this notion of, ‘a dance performance = a number’. I decided to use a process of immediate feedback through critical reflection to assist progress and to eliminate any numerical evaluation of performance.

I then began to reflect upon the ideas of Frege who suggests that Western thought values individual rights, where the self as opposed to the group is central, whereas in Africa (and many other oral traditional societies throughout the world) the needs and desires of the group take precedence over the individual (Frege, 2004). She sees Western values as having shaped how contemporary dance has developed in South Africa and suggests that we as dance educators should find a new more “African paradigm” (Frege, 2004, p. 73). I began to question this assertion: Why did it have to be ‘either-or’? Perhaps I could find a way where I could embrace both Western and African values where the individual and the group are equally valued. I believe like Ickstadt that to teach as our teachers taught us, may not always be appropriate (Ickstadt, 2004). I began to question whether teaching dance, as it had been taught to me, or is taught elsewhere in the world, was appropriate in the context in which I found myself.

Unpacking the ‘box’...

I began to ‘unpack’ the ‘flamenco box’. I had decided on the ‘what’: the challenge now became, the ‘how’. What emanated was a combination of my own ideas and the ideas with which I resonated in the literature I was reading. I began conceptualising my understanding of flamenco as *educational*. I realise that “a theoretical position is always open to further development through reflection, testing against experience and criticism” (Pring, 2000, p. 127), and that:

... individual teachers ... have a great deal of theory implicit within their practice. They come to teaching with a range of beliefs about what motivates young people, what they might profitably learn, how their behaviour in the classroom might be managed, what are the key ideas and concepts in the subject matter which they should teach” (Pring, 2000, p. 128).

In my thirty seven years of teaching and performing I too had gathered a number of beliefs with regard to ‘what works’. I reasoned that these beliefs required continual re-evaluation in every new context.

According to Zull teachers should refrain from thinking that their ideas are gifts which they give to their students: they should rather be concerned with designing and providing opportunities for students to experience for themselves, in order to develop their own ideas, which in turn generates own theories (Zull, 2006). I reasoned that my idea of flamenco as educational was not ‘custom made’ for mass consumption but perhaps “... action research in one classroom or school can *illuminate* or be suggestive of practice elsewhere” (Pring, 2000, p. 133). I agreed with Foucault who suggests that intellectuals should not consider themselves as needed by the masses to pass on knowledge and that in fact the masses “know” and are capable of expressing that knowing without the aid of the “intellectual” (Foucault, 1977, p. 207). I found myself balanced on the edge of a finely sharpened sword between taking action and imposing my ideas and beliefs on others, but I reasoned that my idea of flamenco as educational would continue to evolve as my ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ were constantly open to revision.

I began by devising a course of eight lessons of flamenco dance for grade five learners at a girls’ primary school in Durban. This was the grade I was asked to work with. I engaged in a process of critical reflection before during and after this pilot course. This involved critical reflection with self, learners, teacher and the literature I was reading. My reflections then informed the changes I subsequently made when I later modified my course for grade seven learners at a co-educational school in Durban, which was also the grade I was asked to work with. In both schools, the learners were from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds including African, Asian, and European origins and my enquiry during my research with the grade seven learners included both genders.

I will now give a description of how my approach became modified during my pilot study.

My learning moments during the pilot study

My pilot study was conducted for grade five learners (ten to eleven years of age) at an all girls primary school in Durban. During, and after my pilot study I asked the children as well as the teacher for feedback and for their perceptions of the course. I asked the teacher for written observations and gave her no indication of area of focus. I merely asked for her impressions. During the course, I often sat the children down for an informal ‘chat’ session where we reflected on what we were experiencing. I also asked the children to write a one page journal in which they could express whatever they felt about the course. I found this feedback from teachers and children extremely useful and began making notes for possible amendments to my course and practice. I also continued to engage with the ideas of other dance educators (Russell, 1987; Sherborne, 1990; Slater, 1974).

The journal activities of the children were very pleasing to receive. I realised that much of what I had gained from their informal reflections during the course was evident in their journals as well. There seemed to be an overwhelming sense of enjoyment and engagement which I found encouraging. They did not however, identify educational issues in a way that gave me further guidance. Perhaps this was due to their age and level of maturity. It was the teacher’s reflections that I found the most useful in terms of relevance to educational aims and which I then reflected upon.

Prior to the course the teacher began by observing her difficulties in introducing dance into the curriculum.

As a Drama teacher from a school that provides excellent support for the Arts- Music Art and Drama- I find Dance is an area that needs to be addressed. More and more children are becoming less able to involve themselves physically in ‘playing out’ or Role-Play. Even in a warm-up routine in Drama Class it is very difficult to get them to activate the trunk of the body.
(Appendix 1)

She identified that the use of the body as means of communication and expression was lacking in many of her students and saw the need to focus on the body as expressive. I resonated with these sentiments. I had decided to approach a school with “excellent support for the Arts” because I reasoned, if I discovered what I had come to suspect (that dance is often marginalised in terms of timetable allocation and perceived educational relevance), then perhaps I could find validation for my concerns.

“Because of lack of lesson time allotted to the Arts I earmarked Grade 5 as a year in which, for two terms (8-9 lessons) we would experience Dance Drama. But it became more Drama and less Dance, as the lessons progressed.” (Appendix1)

The fact that she could only allocate 8 lessons a year to dance made me very aware of the time constraints on a subject like Dance and that the most should be made of the little time given: hence my decision to devise an 8 lesson course.

Because of timetable constraints my classes were held every two weeks. At the conclusion both she and I felt that it would have been better if the classes had been held weekly.

“It would also be preferable for children to attend classes once a week rather than once a fortnight.” (Appendix 1)

I felt the two week ‘break’ slowed the memorisation process and skills development as well. I know from my own experience that in order to develop technical skills it requires the body to experience regular training at closer intervals. My belief that long breaks also do not facilitate memory retention was confirmed. For this reason I decided to use weekly intervals for classes in my field work.

I was very pleased to see what skills she identified as outcomes of the course.

The growth in self-esteem was a joy to watch. Listening and memory skills, control, focus, accuracy, rhythm, beat, pace, co-ordination, and expressions were just part of the skills they managed to acquire. (Appendix 1)

Previous teaching experience had revealed to me that these skills can be developed in flamenco and that they can give educational value to the classes. This was now confirmed by the teacher. I became more aware of the importance of the development of technical skills and reflected on how I could improve that in my fieldwork.

Learners were able to experience the bonding power of teamwork as they joined in the stamping and clapping to the rhythm ... the more the child was swept along by the beat the more the beat became the *heartbeat* of the role she began to assume. I saw her slip into another skin as her posture and attitude took on a different shape. All this even before she began to play out the story in a range of expression. Here was the achievement of physical involvement that I had been longing to see. (Appendix 1)

The teacher's observations of the successful integration of the physical and emotional in learners as well as her acknowledgement of the 'bonding power of teamwork' were indications that I had achieved some degree of success in these areas. I had come to realise the potential of flamenco to do this, and I reflected on ways of developing these aspects.

She also confirmed my belief that the intellectual and concentration capacities are challenged in flamenco, but that my use of repetition, however "served as a continual affirmation of what they had and could achieve," as they continued to "build on what they already knew." I believe that dance provides wonderful opportunities to develop the awareness of the value of repetition in the learning process, and flamenco is particularly suited in this regard. It requires rhythmical accuracy and I believe repetition facilitates memorisation and such accuracy. I reflected on how to develop my use of repetition as a core concept.

My intention had been to devise a course that students from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds could access. My previous experience had shown me how many students often resisted learning 'someone else's dance' because of the strong links that dance has to culture. I reflected on how to teach flamenco in such a way that was inclusive. The teacher's observations resonated with my idea that flamenco could be taught in such a way as to 'soften' cultural boundaries:

I watched each little person start, naturally and without prompting to colour their dance with their own style. I began to understand and appreciate the universality of this dance form. It allows for a freedom of expression that unites yet enables each culture to feel at home.
(Appendix 1)

During the course I began to reflect on how to use flamenco to provide opportunities for profound connections with the 'other' and with the 'self'. I began to teach the movements in a way where I tried to avoid 'prompting' or influencing individual interpretation. I tried to allow students to 'interpret' the movements or choreography in a way that they chose to. I began to realise that this 'freedom' was central to creativity authenticity and participation.

I reflected on the idea of using movement to share who one is with others as a means of connection. I reasoned that mutual interchange forms the foundation of individual and collective learning and possible transformation and that fundamental to sharing is

the opportunity to participate. My desire to include as many children as possible in this sharing process became the basis for two core concepts in my course: 'inclusivity' and 'communication'.

I reasoned that being able to participate, and feeling included, was fundamental to communication. This was confirmed when the teacher remarked that she:

... particularly enjoyed the caring pace at which she [Linda] taught, somehow managing to scoop all levels to a point where everyone could understand. Steps and sequences were regularly revised and work consolidated with great care so that no-one felt out of their depth ... the vast majority did involve themselves physically socially and emotionally in the activity.

(Appendix 1)

As I reflected on connection within self and beyond self I became fascinated by the idea of sharing self with others through flamenco. I reasoned that I needed to lead by example, and that I also needed to share who I was with the children and the teacher, thereby encouraging them to share who they were with me and others. I reflected on how the 'boundaries' between individuals could be perceived of as more permeable.

At the conclusion of the pilot study I reflected on what I had learnt and so did the teacher:

I think a life lesson I have learnt was when Linda said to the children that they should count the beat for themselves - that she was not going to think for them! (Paradigm shift for me!) It made me realise that I do far too much thinking (setting up) on behalf of the learners- not allowing them to think for themselves. (Appendix 1)

It was at this point that I reflected on the importance of not only *allowing* students to think for themselves but *encouraging* them to do so. I believe flamenco develops 'speed thinking' and that this requires students to take responsibility for their learning and not rely on others to think for them. There comes a point when the teacher has to step back, for the student to take ownership of learning and performance. I began to reflect on how this could be developed. I also reflected on how easy it is as an 'all knowing' dance specialist to be tempted to merely 'transfer' this 'knowledge' to others. My ability to remain 'open' to learning from others seemed intrinsic to providing opportunities for students to think for themselves. I reasoned that this did not mean that what I had come to know as a specialist was of little or no value. It merely meant that my *knowing* is in *open* relationship with others *knowing* and that I should encourage and respect this in my classes.

Whitehead suggests that in educational relationships teachers should express "... a responsibility toward the other in a way that is intended to express a respect for the responsibility of the other for themselves"(Whitehead, 2008, p. 14). I reflected on how I perhaps felt responsible *for* students, and that this involves an imbalanced ego-centric attitude, whereas, being responsible *towards* them implied a more balanced mutual flow of energy. I became instinctively drawn to the idea of the latter.

More 'boxes'

At the conclusion of the pilot study I felt that the *emotional* expression through movement could have been more fully explored. I felt that the 'creativity' of individuals could also have been more developed. I began to reflect on how to develop them in my field work and decided to make 'emotion' and 'creativity' another two areas of focus. I reasoned that perhaps the time allocations for creativity should be extended and perhaps smaller groups could be encouraged. I began to reflect on how I would encourage more 'emotional' expression through movement through a more holistic teaching approach.

I began to reflect on the literature I was reading and on how 'boxed' emotions are a danger to the health of the individual as well as society. Murray feels that a child who is forced to resist its natural impulse to express emotions "will often explode or retreat in less desirable directions"(R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 12). She suggests that children naturally express their inner emotional life through movement, and perhaps often more freely than adults do, who may have learnt to minimise or even eliminate the expression of their inner life. Murray insists that this free expression should be encouraged as much as possible in a child's life. I began reflecting on the many social challenges in South African society, where aggression and violence often play a prominent role in many children's lives. I reasoned that perhaps finding a "safe outlet" for emotions in dance could benefit some children (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 5). I began to reflect on how to encourage and provide an emotional outlet which was 'safe' for learners.

Belling suggests that creative outlets for anger and other emotions provide release and can promote improved emotional health, thereby contributing to the overall health (Belling, 2004). Belling suggests body awareness is key to maintaining one's health and that movement with awareness, (which is what I see dance as), provides

opportunities for emotions to move through the body. In this way they find release instead of getting ‘stuck’ in the body. I began to reflect the origins of flamenco which emerged out of the need to ‘release’ emotional suffering and helped social outcasts to deal with intolerable social conditions (T. Mitchell, 1994) and I began making connections.

Belling sees dance as holistic allowing for explorations into the mind-body relationship which encompasses the physical mental and emotional aspects of health (Belling, 2004). I too resist another set of ‘boxes’ that attempt to divide my being. I do not believe that I am a combination of distinct ‘boxes’ of mind, body and soul. I discovered that this view is supported by health practitioners such as Belling and scientists such as Pert (Pert, 1998). Pert discovered in her research that:

... virtually all illnesses, if not psychosomatic in foundation, has a definite psychosomatic component. Recent technological innovations have allowed us to examine the molecular basis of the emotions, and to begin to understand how the molecules of our emotions share intimate connections with, and indeed are inseparable from, our physiology. It is the emotions, I have come to see, that link mind and body. This more holistic approach compliments the reductionist view, expanding it rather than replacing it, and offers a new way to think about health and disease- not just for scientists but for the lay person also (Pert, 1998, pp. 18-19).

In the findings of Pert I found scientific proof of what I had come to believe: the mind, body and emotions are connected and mutually influenced. I intuitively ‘felt’ that this interconnected approach to ‘being’ would find more prominence in my future classes. I began to reflect upon the educational relevance of such a holistic approach.

I reasoned that if emotional well being could influence physical and mental well being then perhaps I should reflect on its possible educational benefits.

According to Goleman learning how to control emotional release may be even more important in determining success than the IQ of an individual (Goleman, 1995, p. ix). Boler also recognises the importance of being able to recognise and interpret emotions correctly (Boler, 1999). According to Boler, broadening ones range of emotional expression, as well as recognition of emotions that make one feel good is essential to emotional intelligence. I reflected on her insistence on learning to verbally appreciate ones peers’ qualities, and to control the expression of emotions in certain circumstances, as well as learning tolerance and respect when faced with cultural differences. These, Boler describes as strong indications of emotional intelligence. Here

I began to reflect on how I could encourage and nurture the development of emotional intelligence in my flamenco class.

I reasoned that perhaps recognition of emotions which have become 'boxed' and knowledge of how to allow for their release in a way that doesn't harm others, places the individual in the role of master rather than slave. I began to reflect on flamenco being particularly suited to this end, as I believe it embraces the expression and exploration of the full spectrum of human emotions and does not restrict the individual to only those emotions which may be socially acceptable. In its origins flamenco served that exact purpose where the 'darker' emotions of anger and depression found 'release' through song and dance. I began to reflect on my challenge: to create an environment of trust which would be conducive to the release of any emotion. I reasoned that this could only take place in a 'safe' environment where this release is anticipated and respected. I began to reason that perhaps the answer lay in how I developed and encouraged group work in relation to individual expression. I began to consider 'group/individual work' as another core concept in my teaching.

The teacher's responses during the pilot study also made me aware of the extent of my personal influence on her and on the students. She spoke of the fact that I had made a learning space which was appreciated by all who participated.

Classes were conducted with professional ease, passion and great warmth. I never once heard Linda raise her voice and yet the children followed instructions respectfully and with great joy. It was a very special place- and time. (Appendix 1)

I realised with greater intensity the profound influence I have over the quality of experience in my classes and that this endowed me with great responsibility to provide and protect that "special place –time". I reflected on my own experience as a dancer and how I had come to appreciate and value the 'sacredness' of the learning environment. Respect for this 'space' became woven into the fabric of my classes.

In order to do this I assumed a role of co-ordinator and guide rather than the 'all knowing dance instructor' in the class. I reasoned that I wanted to 'reduce' my perceived position as an authority figure and to become more nurturing and protective of the 'sacred space' conducive for individual emotional expression. I likened my approach to that of a 'gardener' preparing the 'soil' for healthy growth.

I reflected on what Palmer suggests, that teachers should endeavour to explore a more subject-centred approach to teaching where neither teacher nor student are at the centre of attention, but rather the subject is (Palmer, 1998). I began to envision flamenco in the centre of a circle around and in which I and learners explored together. This was the perspective which I endeavoured to adopt in my field work: a subject-centred approach which anticipated new perspectives or interpretations of the ‘subject’ as we opened the ‘flamenco box’ together.

Aaronsohn suggests that teachers should develop the courage and freedom to “colour outside the lines” (Aaronsohn, 2003, p. 14). With childlike anticipation I began to reflect on how the students and I could explore the boundaries beyond many ‘boxes’ or ‘lines’. I believe that flamenco is constantly inviting one to go beyond the given and that a step is a step is a step ... I believe what matters is what the individual does with the step and if it reveals something of the individual. Palmer suggests that all that is required is the teacher’s passion for the learning process (Palmer, 1998). I reflected further on my practice as a flamenco ‘purist’ and ‘pioneer’. I realised that while the ‘box’ may be comfortable, I was also passionately drawn to the ‘unknown’ beyond the ‘box’: to explore beyond the boundaries of flamenco as entertainment, as cathartic experience and the exclusive property of a few and to explore its potential in education.

The teacher also observed in the pilot study, the unique relationship that flamenco ‘audience’ has with its performers and how it differs from that of Music and Drama. She observed the interdependent nature of the relationship of audience and performer where:

... the audience not only clap along in time, but become so totally involved in *matching* the pace and the mood that they become part of the performance. (Appendix 1)

I began to reflect on how this interrelated connection of audience and performers could provide opportunities for individuals to connect and develop sensitivity towards one another’s performance. I felt drawn to explore developing this empathetic relationship of audience and performer further.

The teacher also observed the enjoyment which was experienced by the children:

Enthusiasm was rife with children bubbling over with excitement as I led them to each class ... as soon as the music started and the exercises began, an infectious smile spread over the face of each child ... I loved seeing the joy and sense of achievement in each learner. I loved the way they responded ... I know they thoroughly enjoyed this deeply enriching learning experience.
(Appendix 1)

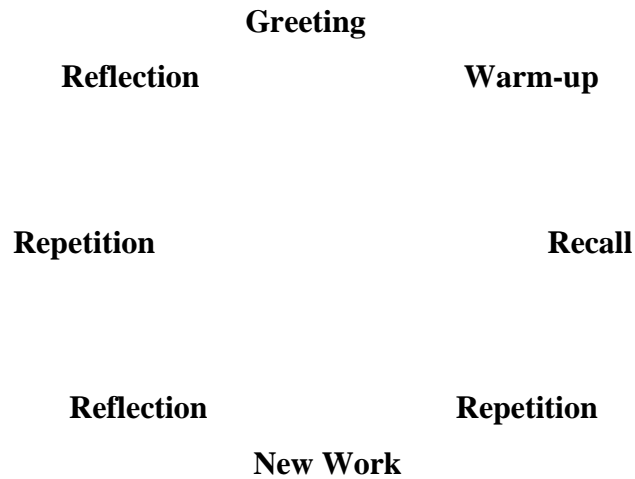
This was confirmed in the journal activities which children gave to me at the conclusion of the course where their enjoyment was very evident. This reaffirmed my belief that children engage more fully, when they perceive the activity, as fun or enjoyable. I reflected on how fundamental this was to motivation in the learning process and that I would make 'fun' another 'thread' woven into classes.

My reflections before, during and after my pilot study, together with reflection on the literature I was reading, transformed into many of the core concepts and values which I then endeavoured to develop and weave into the fabric of my classes. What emerged was my idea of flamenco as *educational*.

Flamenco as educational

I conducted my research with grade seven learners at a co-educational primary school in Durban to which I had been invited. I decided to use a combination of informal conversations, and written reflections together with video recordings in order to provide a variety of perspectives of the learning experience. I then used these to reflect and meta-reflect upon using personal and existing theory to inform my analysis.

I taught two one hour classes per week over a period of one month. I gave each class a basic structure.



In my reflections and analysis of the data I give explanations of why I chose this structure and what happened. This structure emerged as a combination of what had ‘worked’ previously in my teaching and pilot study, as well as what I felt was necessary in each specific class. I used this to provide the framework around which I allowed creativity to flow. Each of the eight classes had a specific focus which I introduced where appropriate and which then became woven into each subsequent class in varying degrees thereafter.

- 1) Intellectual and physical skill.
- 2) Emotional expression.
- 3) Group work.
- 4) Partner work.
- 5) Creativity.
- 6) Communication.
- 7) Skills development.
- 8) Performance.

I endeavoured to make the pedagogical content of each class as physically and stylistically accessible as possible and to explore the possibilities of dancing flamenco without a singer or guitarist. I did this because in the early stages of learning flamenco I do not believe music or songs are mandatory and in South Africa many classrooms don’t have access to them. I also believe that while the singer and musician are an added bonus, they are not essential to experience emotion through movement. I also wanted to use the power of the group as an incentive to achieve accuracy in rhythm.

As the course progressed and the levels of individual ability became more evident, I modified my approach. I did not impose traditional flamenco style through demonstration, but allowed learners to express their own individual style through their movements as they interpreted the choreography. I focused on developing sound through stamping and clapping techniques while endeavouring to give the learners a good physical work out. I included time for individual creativity, where I encouraged students to create their own dance/ rhythmic improvisations. I then encouraged them to perform them for the rest of the class to enjoy and give constructive critique. I allowed learners to choose to work alone, or in groupings of their choice, in order to allow maximum participation and enjoyment.

I used recordings of flamenco music as means to reflect on and explore emotional expression through the body. I used simple combinations of stamping and clapping, as I had realised from previous experience that they were often accessible to learners who had had little or no exposure to dance, and often found great appeal amongst the boys. I tried to engage those with previous dance experience in the complexities of the timing and musical phrasing in flamenco by drawing their attention to the ‘counting’ of rhythmic combinations. I choreographed a dance aimed to challenge and stimulate learners of various abilities and to engage their emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual abilities. I then taught this to learners during the eight hour course.

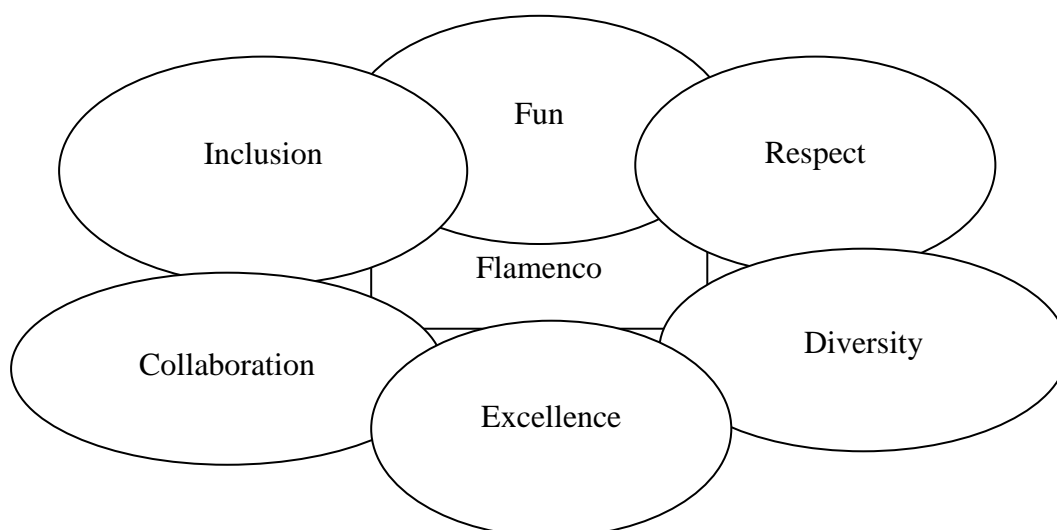
I tried to encourage respect for individual difference as well as mutual collaboration. I did this by dividing the class up into smaller groups to allow students to reflect on their own and others’ progress. I encouraged them to clap the rhythm for one another and to develop sensitivity to the performers’ needs and skills. I also encouraged them to give constructive critique rather than destructive criticism in order to reduce the fear of peer ridicule when students took emotional and physical ‘risks’.

Because I believe flamenco dancers do not have to conform to a physical, racial or gender ideal that some may not see as achievable or even desirable, I tried to remain sensitive to this and encouraged all to participate. I encouraged learners to respect individual difference and engage with one another with sensitivity. I encouraged respect for the sacredness of the private experience within the group as well as a sense of community in the class. I encouraged them to find their ‘voice’ and to ‘speak’ as

well as provide others with support as they allowed them to ‘speak’ and find their ‘voice’. This ‘voice’ was the physical voice as opposed to the vocal or literal voice.

I linked the individual experience to the social experience in order to develop awareness of common ground and individual authenticity. I did this by incorporating many times of reflection where before, after and during action I gathered the class together and we sat down as a group to reflect individually and collectively on our experiences. I tried to create “a safe space where reason, understanding, dialogue and critical engagement are available to all ...”(Giroux & Giroux, 2008, p. 188). I encouraged “critical dialogue” resulting in “horizontal rather than vertical relations of power” (Jaramillo & McLaren, 2008, p. 206) because “how I experience the world is different from how you experience the world, and both our interpretations matter” (Meyer, 2008, p. 218). Therefore, all interpretations of the choreography ‘mattered’. During our times of reflection, I encouraged awareness of the uncertainty of knowledge and how it is relative to context (Frame, 2003).

I encouraged work that was fun in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. I encouraged discipline and ‘personal best’ and wove these values into each class. While I submit a diagram of these values I feel that this only serves to assist identification. They should not to be viewed in isolation or as ‘boxed’ but rather as continually merging and informing and transforming one another.



Flamenco as educational is my ‘new’ understanding/knowledge which emerged from my intervention. My personal interpretation of flamenco as educational helped me to

transform many aspects of flamenco into something 'new' while simultaneously transforming me and others. Many purists may reject my approach fearing the 'contamination' of flamenco and its consequential transformation into something unrecognisable. I cannot help but reflect upon the fact that transformation is inevitable in any dance form whenever it interacts with new social influences. This is the organic nature of dance: it is continually influencing and being influenced. I believe flamenco is no exception.

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)

(Appendix 5, 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.’

CHAPTER 3

Teaching Techniques

3.1 Warm-up, Circle

I used the circle formation to ensure that all could see clearly. My warm-ups were improvised and it was essential that each dancer had unobstructed vision. I emphasised that I did not require perfection merely participation. My warm-ups were designed to be as inclusive as possible and I chose movements that I felt virtually anyone could do. I used basic movements that warm the muscles in a gentle yet fun way.

The circle shape supported my epistemological values of equal visibility as well as my ontological value of equal opportunity to participate. It enabled me to position myself alongside students giving the ‘visual message’ that all of us had equal access to new learning and all were valued equally, including me. This supported my subject centred approach where teacher and student place the subject at the centre of the circle (Palmer, 1998, p. 89). I also used the circle as a ‘leveller’ for those who may have had previous dance experience (including myself). By positioning everyone equally in the circle, I hoped those with dance experience were less likely to ‘dominate’ the class with their expertise and less likely to intimidate those with no dance experience.

(Appendix 5, Video 22 - class 5)

Lancos describes the impetus of all modern dance as nurturing the individualism of a “democratic philosophy”(Lancos, 2004, p. 142).

This focus on individualism in modern dance often forms the basis of Western educational approaches to dance where modern dance is perceived as more accessible, and suited to the individualistic majority. This is not however the perspective of all cultures or dance educators. From my experience of indigenous dance, the circle is often the heartbeat of the dance, playing a significant role in unification and bonding within the group. In the origins of flamenco the individual was part of a group and the circle or semi-circle intrinsic to performance. I chose the circle and rejected the linear formations of many Western dance classes because lines all too easily form ‘boxes’ which exclude and separate whereas the circle supports my values of equal participation, inclusion and group solidarity.

In Action Research workshops, Kelley sees opportunity for individuals to work together towards a common goal as a means to achieve commonality and to reduce the basic loneliness of individuals (Kelley, 1951). Dancing in the circle helped me to include those who may have felt excluded from the group. “Moving with others helps to give ... a sense of belonging, of security” in the group (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 19). By placing us all on the circumference, we were able to embrace the ‘emptiness’ of the centre, where none of us were able to ‘see’ the outcome of the lesson at its inception. Here ‘surprise’ and unexpected discovery learning became possible and a sense of comfort was gained by standing shoulder to shoulder, as we began to ‘bond’.

During the first classes I did at times place myself in the centre of the circle when I wanted to draw everyone’s focus. The improvised nature of my warm-up also required that all could see clearly. By sometimes placing myself in the centre I gave a visual focal point, but as learning progressed I was able to join in the circle leaving the centre open to possibility.

I began each warm-up by focusing on the breath, because physical movements without the support of the breath tend to become tiring. The drawing of the breath into my body became my ‘inhalation’ of inspiration. The boundaries between ‘mind-body’ seemed to become less defined. “... the human heart and the capacity to breathe are indivisible, and it is the oxygenated heart that energises the performance of the living ...”(Conolly, 2002, p. 12). By focusing on the breath I was energising my ‘whole being’.

I began crouching into a ‘foetal’ position in order to draw the mental focus ‘into’ the body and into a ‘ball’ allowing me to almost ‘rebirth’ myself in that moment. It helped my body and mind to align, and facilitate their communion. The boundaries between the ‘mind box’ and ‘body box’ seemed to dissolve with the narrowing of my focus from the external world to my internal world. I may have encouraged the same in students but it did help me to ‘centre’ the mental and physical energy of the class.

“Thus my warm up attempted to draw the awareness out of the head into the body and to prepare the muscles for work as well as to engage sufficient focus to ensure greater concentration for when the real learning began.”(Appendix 2, class 1)

I tried to remain receptive to ideas using what came to mind to inspire.

“I did not intend introducing stamps into the warm-up but it came to mind and seemed to help activate the cardio vascular activity. This is always a good thing as fast flowing circulation helps with quick thinking and movement. My inclusion of stamps and claps also introduced a sense of fun and laughter and laid the groundwork for the skills I would be developing later.” (Appendix 2, class 1)

As I reflected I began to realise how important that first five minute warm-up in my class was. It gave latecomers easy access to the class and allowed all to prepare for work. I gave students the choice to engage at their own pace by not giving ‘corrections’ during the warm-up. If some chose to do the movements ‘half heartedly’ I allowed that to happen. I noticed that individual ‘disengagement’ was not constant and that those who showed enthusiasm seemed to ‘draw’ in, those who showed less. Perhaps by not ‘correcting’ or expecting full and equal participation from each student, I gave them the choice to participate at whatever level they wished to. I did not ‘force’ participation: I wanted voluntary participation. My warm-up sought to entice the majority in unity of purpose with voluntary participants rather than unwilling slaves. This video shows some students as unwilling to participate and me trying to encourage their voluntary participation.

(Appendix 5, Video 23 - class 7)

3.2 Inspiration

As I watched the videos I observed how I was guided by intuition when student’s didn’t ‘get it’ and where I sensed possible exclusion. With intuition “I bring energy that flows from outside the social through the cosmos into my educational relationships” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 109). In class 1,

“When it came to teaching the step that travelled sideways I found that the majority were not able to learn it successfully in a circle so I decided to put them in two parallel lines. I did this to assist the learning of the directional changes the step required. I found this more successful as all were able to face the same direction at the same time and those who were not able to grasp the directional changes quickly were able to benefit from being able to copy others until they could.” (Appendix 2, class 1)

Here the circle had limitations. I had to come up with a solution in the ‘moment.’ The parallel lines assisted many more students to grasp the concept of a ‘half-turn’ and also gave others opportunity to ‘see’ and copy one another. The blatant, visual, obviousness of facing the ‘wrong way’ when others were facing another direction seemed to help. Later in the same class when I asked the students to extend one arm in the opposite direction to the way they were travelling I encountered further learning difficulties. Many were not able to look in the opposite direction and extend their arm while moving in another direction. Yet again the size of the class and the circle were problematic. This time I intuitively used ‘visualisation.’

“I was then ‘inspired’ to use a visual image of a ‘fire’ in the middle of the circle which I asked them to extend their arm towards as they travelled in the opposite direction. This was a great success as it gave visual focus to the step and seemed to speed up learning. It also gave me an opportunity to introduce the emotive elements of flamenco by being able to suggest that they also needed a ‘fire’ in their hearts.”(Appendix 2, class 1)

(Appendix 5, Video 24 - class 1)

I now realise that this mental image of a ‘fire’ in the centre of the circle was extremely effective on two levels. Not only did it seem to assist many with directional and co-ordination challenges but it also introduced opportunity for powerful passionate expression of emotion. I had planned on introducing the emotive elements in the second lesson but this situation called for its early introduction. When directional difficulties persisted,

“I then put them into two lines again to practice the sideways step which was still not good enough for me. In my desperation to get them to face the correct direction I had a moment of inspiration. I noticed the children’s art work on the walls of the hall and decided to draw their attention to it while they were changing direction. I then demonstrated how at one point I was facing the ‘fish’ and at the next point I was facing the ‘dolphins’. I then shouted out the rhythm using the ‘visual clues’ of ‘dolphins ... fish ... fish ... dolphins’. This proved to be a great success. They immediately started vocalising with me and we ‘drilled’ it until they had internalised the directional changes. Not only did they seem to find it fun (they got louder and louder culminating in laughter) but they

could then all do it correctly. I noticed that when they no longer needed it that the vocals reduced and finally disappeared quite naturally.”

(Appendix 2 class 3)

(Appendix 5, Video 25 – class 3)

(Appendix 5, Video 26 – class 3)

I now realise that what began as an experiment was in fact an effective way to learn directional changes. “Reflection-in-action necessarily involves experiment” (Schon, 1983, p. 141). This time it wasn’t the use of visualisation but the actual physical images of artwork on the wall which I was inspired to use. This became the final piece of the puzzle for those who were still battling to grasp the directional changes. I used parallel lines, the mental image of a fire, the physical images of artwork on the wall and ‘vocals’ in order for the majority of students to grasp the step. This suggested to me the importance of using various approaches and how I relied on momentary inspiration for this. I had not previously used ‘vocals’ to aid learning but it certainly seemed to help.

... competent practitioners usually know more than they can say ... practitioners themselves often reveal a capacity for reflection on their intuitive knowing in the midst of action and sometimes use this capacity to cope with the unique, uncertain, and conflicted situations of practice (Schon, 1983, p. preface viii).

I now realise that

When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our pattern of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is *in* our action (Schon, 1983, p. 49).

I realise my ‘knowledge’ is unique and that much of my ‘knowing’ is revealed in my action and this ‘knowledge’ continually transforms. Not only did the vocals seem to assist learning but they provided another opportunity to have fun. I had intuitively added vocals to my “repertoire” of teaching aids (Schon, 1983, p. 140) and would certainly use it again.

Reflection-in-action in a unique case may be generalised to other cases, not by giving rise to general principles, but by contributing to the practitioner’s repertoire of exemplary themes from which, in the subsequent cases of his practice, he may compose new variations (Schon, 1983, p. 140).

I have always believed in the fluid boundaries between learning areas in education but I am now more aware of the enormous importance of improving my ability to flow effortlessly from one learning style to the next in order to reach as many pupils as possible in my classes. I now feel that becoming more aware of and skilled in teaching multiple learning styles would increase opportunities for success into my lessons. Where I lack theoretical knowledge I rely on inspiration to guide me. I realised that each individual learns in unique ways and at unique paces, which are not constant.

In the first class I observed how I used various techniques to avoid student discouragement when the pace of learning seemed slow and tried to make learning fun.

“I am very aware of the challenges involved in the learning of flamenco. It can place extraordinary stress on individuals who are not anticipating it to be so complicated. The co-ordination it requires as well as the rhythmical skill combine and what appeared to be quite accessible is discovered to be just the opposite. It is for this reason I tried to ‘ease’ students over these hurdles in their learning by disguising their work as fun” (Appendix 2, class 1)

The teacher also observed the learning challenges and the importance of fun to assist these challenges:

“It was interesting to note how some children battled with the clapping of hands and at the same time tapping their feet - but they soon managed to master this skill. When they managed to master the skill, their faces broke out in huge grins. What a boost to self esteem! This indicates that this type of dancing is so beneficial to help develop coordination.

The enjoyment was clearly visible on their faces and they were soon allowing their bodies to move with the music. I was also taken aback by the sheer concentration and focus of the children - they were totally swept off their feet!

They did not realize how hard they were actually working because they were having so much fun! They all mentioned how they looked forward to their next session and this enthusiasm was clearly shown at the next session when they had remembered the steps and some had reported that they had practiced on their own! That is definite proof of enjoyment!”

(Appendix 3, week 1)

Because I know that learning flamenco is challenging I continue to seek new and fun ways to keep morale up for as many as possible.

In class 4, I intuitively introduced the children's game of 'statues'. I wanted to encourage them to count to six and be able to hold the body still for another six counts. By making it a game it introduced a sense of fun while encouraging a sense of urgency to not be 'caught out'.

(Appendix 5, Video 27 - class 4)

In class 5, I saw "doing and thinking are complimentary" (Schon, 1983, p. 280) as old problems required new solutions.

"As they were trying to learn it in the circle I realised that some were having difficulty because they were facing a different direction to me. This was especially so when I started asking them to use their right or left foot. I then was 'inspired' to get them to face the front in a big semi circle. This was a great success as all were still able to see me but all could face the same direction as me. We then did numerous repetitions in this formation.

When some were still not having success I then added the counting as well as descriptive words. When the majority were able to do it I shouted: "excellent" to which one boy responded "ole". I was thrilled: he had grasped the appropriate time for 'jaleo' and was using it accordingly."(Appendix 2, class 5)

(Appendix 5, Video 28 – class 5)

(Appendix 5, Video 29 – class 5)

(Appendix 5, Video 30 - class 5)

'Inspiration' led to a solution: the semi circle. It allowed full visibility while simultaneously enabled me to demonstrate the correct use of foot. This was a huge break through for me and resulted in the speedy learning of students. I realise I was not satisfied until everyone showed signs of mastery. I also used an 'intellectual' approach of counting the steps as well. When I sensed that this had been achieved I was not alone. One of the boys perhaps sensed it as well. His shout of "ole" not only served to indicate resonance but also that he had learnt to use 'jaleo' correctly and at the appropriate time. This encouraged me to continue using inspiration when seeking new solutions to familiar problems.

3.3 Reflection and Critique

Truth is an external conversation about things that matter; conducted with passion and discipline ... the dynamic conversation of a community that keeps testing old conclusions and coming to new ones (Palmer, 1998, p. 104).

I devised 'times of reflection' to inspire excellence and authenticity and critical thinking. Preparation for performance depends on constructive critique. I tried "... to go further than simply advocating tolerance or celebrating diversity and to involve students in critical and creative engagement" (K. Pithouse, 2007, p. 89). I sought to improve practice by using action reflection cycles and validation groups (Whitehead, 2009c) Because I believe "we are all living with the capacity to express and develop a relationally-dynamic awareness of space and boundaries with life-affirming energy and value"(Whitehead, 2009c, p. 113) I encouraged constructive critique to inspire personal best. From my own experience, I believe individual reasoning balanced with and constructive critique gained from multiple sources, can assist preparation for performance. I began encouraging reflexive critique from the first lesson.

The teacher remarked,

"I am amazed to hear their input and thoughts about the dancing - they are so open about their feelings."(Appendix 3, week 2)

In class 4 I reminded them again to engage in constructive and not destructive critique and to remain 'open' when accepting or rejecting critique. In this way I encouraged personal responsibility for performance. Professional dancers require this and I always try to remain aware that I may have future professionals in my class. I feel this 'skill' can also benefit other children. In our 'times of reflection', I tried to merely repeat what had been said and to avoid passing comment where possible. My repetition enabled the whole class to hear what had been said, as each considered for themselves, without the influence of my opinion, if they were in agreement. I also discouraged meaningless praise.

"I reminded them that as observers they were to offer 'helpful' critique. I did this because it requires more sensitivity and intellectual engagement. It is easier to just give a thoughtless emotive response to something than to consider our response in a more in depth way. The first group did the sequence very well and the first comment was: 'very good!' I however did not want to leave it there as I reminded them that there is always something that needs improving and to look

for it. This was so that my desire for constructive critique was not reduced to insubstantial meaningless praise. I believe honest work always needs improvement and that continual praise without guidance for improvement can tend to undermine progress.

More substantial comments followed: “the last step needs more practice ... poses were not too good” (Appendix 2, class 4).

In the following clips I have smaller groups being watched and the ‘pressure’ of performance is evident in some of them. I therefore encouraged a balance between my comments and praise and that of peers.

(Appendix 5, Video 31 - class 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 32 - class 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 33 - class 4)

As a professional dancer and teacher I have endured extensive and unnecessary emotional pain in coming to understand the difference between critique and criticism. I have often wished I had been guided from an early age to differentiate between the two. I believe “...inclusive and constructive group talk involves providing frequent opportunities for each member of the group to speak and be heard” (K. Pithouse, 2007, p. 81) and I encouraged individuals to think independently within the group.

“Dancers and children setting their own goals and evaluating their own progress are self regulating their efforts, meaning that the learner’s achievement and motivation is internal, valued and independent from the teacher” (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 129). I sought ‘balance’ in self knowledge through reflective practice in community.

This community can never offer us ultimate certainty-not because its process is flawed but because certainty is beyond the grasp of finite hearts and minds. Yet this community can do much to rescue us from ignorance, bias, and self-deception if we are willing to submit our assumptions, our observations, our theories-indeed ourselves- to its scrutiny (Palmer, 1998, p. 104).

I believe multiple perspectives help broaden individual perspectives thereby resisting the loneliness and perils of narcissism.

3.4 Body Language

Body language is more reliable for me than speech and I use it as a powerful teaching aid as well. In class 1, I became aware of how often I use ‘sign language’ to give instructions to students.

“... I assisted them by using visual sign language to ‘show’ how many movements have been completed. I used my hands and fingers to ‘visually count’ how many steps they had completed ... If I had tried to shout above the noise it would firstly have been very tiring for my vocal chords ...

My use of ‘sign language’ to conduct my lessons became more and more evident as my class continued.” (Appendix 2, class 1)

While watching the videos I became aware of my use of ‘visual’ instructions to quieten the class or get their attention and to prompt memory. The children seemed to become aware of my ‘body language’ and I was able to control the noise levels and focus whenever I wished without raising my voice to excessive levels. This had already been observed by the teacher in my pilot study: *“I never once heard Linda raise her voice and yet the children followed instructions respectfully and with great joy”* (Appendix 1). I used ‘sign language’ to encourage visual and audio learning.

(Appendix 5, Video 34 - class 1)

I became aware of my use of ‘body language’ during my pilot study and I continued almost subconsciously to increase my ‘vocabulary’ during my field work. I used my body and my speech almost interchangeably and I realised I could not separate and ‘box’ them.

3.5 Repetition, Enjoyment

*“We are what we repeatedly do.
Excellence, then is not an act
but a habit.” (Aristotle 384-322BC)*

I believe repetition in flamenco builds muscle strength and skill and facilitates memorisation. “Memorization that endures demands re-memorization repeated

tirelessly” (Jousse, et al., 1997, p. 665). I used repetition to encourage maximum participation and because

The student of movement may find one sort of rhythm more difficult to perform than another. He might discover that he has preference for particular rhythms or rhythmic habits. Rhythmic deficiency of any kind can be corrected by training, by accustoming oneself through repetitive exercise to produce those forms of rhythm which at first are found difficult (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 137).

I used ‘recall’ time at the beginning of class to reveal gaps in memory. I asked students to just do what they remembered without reminding them. This informed what I focused on in repetition sessions. I believe in the age old adage ‘repetition ensures learning, repetition ensures learning’ and

“I then reminded them that learning flamenco was similar to hammering a nail into a piece of wood: each time the hammer hits the nail goes in further. I likened myself to the hammer and told them that my lessons would hammer their memory until they had successfully learnt the sequence.” (Appendix 2 class 2)

I began to look for evidence of what I consider to be worth repeating and learning. I observed the following:

- I repeatedly emphasised the importance of correct technical execution and body alignment.
- I used repetition to engage the cardio vascular until students showed signs of sufficient effort to have ‘worked’ the muscles enough to deserve a ‘break’.
- Repetition often took place in the circle where all were able to be aware of the effort of others to inspire own. Group repetition supported individual motivation.

(Appendix 5, Video 35 - class 3)

In class 4, I began observing that “boys like to do anything that is vigorous and challenging, and dance can be both”(R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 11) and I saw how some boys were practicing on their own.

“As I was waiting for the class to enter one of the boys came in practicing his beats and he asked me for some help. With that others began practicing as well. I was thrilled as this indicated to me that perhaps they had been practicing

between lessons and I saw this as an indication that they were keen to get it correct. ...I then asked if they had been practicing and as I suspected the reply was a strong “yes!” I asked if their beat was fast now to which they also replied “yes!” One said: “not quite” so I reassured him that that was ok because that’s what we were there to do: “practice some more.”(Appendix 2, class 4)

The teacher later commented on their levels of enthusiasm and I began to realise that their enjoyment was fundamental to motivate them to practice (repeat) their steps.

You can see by the way the children rush to the hall that they are enjoying the lessons. When they do their dancing, I feel as though I am being drawn into their dance just by their involvement, enthusiasm and movement. (Appendix 3, Week 2)

(Appendix 5, Video 36 - class 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 37 - class 6)

Here I noted how repetition was enjoyed. I consider practice/repetition outside of the class as fundamental to progress. Here was evidence of one boy having practiced. This prompted me to enquire if others had been practicing. When there was overwhelming affirmation of ‘yes’ I use ‘recall time’ to confirm if this was true.

I “...sensed a mild uneasiness that maybe they would not be able to remember the sequence unaided. I assured them that they would be surprised at how much they would remember. I told them to put “feet together, stand strong, head up, be proud of who you are!” When we came to the new step I reminded them that we could press “pause’ on the video in order to get our thoughts and in order to slow the pace down. We shook our right foot so we were sure which it was and then began the beat slowly.” (Appendix 2, class 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 38 – class 4)

My ‘recall time’ was fundamental to guiding our repetition. Here was evidence of progress but ...

“I felt the technique was not good enough yet so I reminded them that as with all things in life there is always a ‘technique’ involved. I then asked them what they thought technique meant and a reply came: “a way to do something ... how

to do it". I agreed and said that once we know the 'how' we can do it better. I then told them in a generalised way that some of them still did not know the 'how' so we would go back to basics." (Appendix 2, class 4)

In my experience children often resist repetition and going back to the basics. I sensed this so I decided to try to make it fun.

"I told them to look and watch how I was doing the step and to spot the difference in how they might be doing it. I reminded them of a game many play as children when they examine two pictures and look for details that are different. I used this comparison as both require intense observation skills and I wanted them to realise that it is in the details that the 'how' is revealed. Many were familiar with that game and so we then set about looking for details.

Some were not bending their knees enough, some lifting the foot between the toe and heel action and some were not using enough energy. I then demonstrated some beats where I did not use any energy and showed them that a "half hearted" attempt made no sound. I then demonstrated the beat with energy and told them that what they were missing was 'power'! They responded by using wonderful energy as if to show me that they did indeed have power!"(Appendix 2, class 4)

By getting them to focus on 'spotting the difference' I tried to encourage visual focus and attention to detail and to thereby encourage correct technique and skill.

(Appendix 5, Video 39 – class 4)

My session of repetition could have ended up being a very boring and tiring activity but by introducing the idea of it being a game, it seemed to encourage participation. I realised the power of work disguised as 'fun' to motivate effort and here I used 'repetition' for improved technique and to avoid later individual humiliation. I then observed that some of them were cheating and in fact were not doing the movement correctly. This is easy to do in a big group where one can rely on others to prompt memory. I wanted them to realise that I was aware of that and that I was not going to accept any one 'riding' on the efforts of others. I wanted them to understand the value of repetition.

“I then reminded them of what repetition does and asked the question once again. One replied: “skill!” I then asked: “and what else?” there was no response. I then asked them to consider the value of repetition to a dancer or even a sportsman. And after a while one replied: “you get stronger.” I agreed ... We then did another drilling session.”(Appendix 2, class 4)

I didn't feel at this stage that they fully appreciated the value of repetition in dance or understood 'skilled performance', so I reminded them that none of us were born doing skilled dancers and that as babies we only “*bob in our nappies*” (Appendix 2, class 4). I drew their attention to the fact that skill required effort and repetition. Murray observes that children possess a “natural love for rhythmic movement” and that for a child “movement is both an organic need and a constant delight ... dancing to him is good for its own sake, often without meaning or purpose” (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 11). I realised I wanted them to realise that it takes effort to move beyond this child like approach. While I agree that dance is a “... continuation of what the children have been doing ever since they were born, namely exploring their physical powers” (Jordan, 1966, p. 8), I believe this should be developed. Jousse speaks of the need to provide children with an education which “gives the child awareness of self and a realization of his or her innate capacities” (Jousse, 2005, p. 176). I used repetition to encourage basic capacity to become more skilled.

“... when I observed poor execution, I remarked that they looked like they were in nappies and that I required them to “get skilled”. I then reminded them that unless they were sweating they were not working. When we stopped after the drilling session some of them started to “flop” with exhaustion. I asked them what had happened to their ‘power’. I did this in order to draw attention away from the tiredness and to re-focus on the next activity: the repeat of the whole sequence from the top.

I believe that the beginning of the class should focus on getting the body properly warm by ‘drilling’ technical aspects ... to develop strength and stamina

I find that if learners can really appreciate the need and reason to work hard they tend to work harder and with more focus. For this reason I tried to keep the ‘pace’ fast at the beginning and allowed no time to think or rest in an effort to

build strength and skill. By asking them what they saw as the value of repetition I hoped to see if they had worked sufficiently at this or any other similar activity to have begun to appreciate its value.”(appendix 2, class 4)

During the repetition session in class 6, I used repeated vocals to support learning.

“I then repeated the step numerous times with the class and began using vocal reinforcement of the rhythm. I was aware that many started to use their own voices as well. Perhaps it was fun or perhaps it helped them to memorise the rhythms ...

We repeated the transition from one step to the next very slowly until I felt it was understood. I used ‘vocals’ and ‘counting’ and reminded them of the skill of ‘thinking ahead’. When I felt they had understood it sufficiently I asked if they felt they had “got it”. There was a resounding “yes”. (Appendix 2, class 6)

In this clip I used repetition until they ‘got it’.

(Appendix 5, Video 40 - class 6)

I also became aware of how I was using different forms of repetition simultaneously to assist learning. The successful use of ‘vocals’ to facilitate learning is what Jousse refers to as ‘Rhythmo-vocalism’ and ‘Rhythmo- energy’ facilitating learning (Conolly, 2002). I continued testing its efficacy in class 7.

(Appendix 5, Video 41, time -5.30 to end - class 7)

“When I added the head movement to the 2 last stamps I did not draw attention to the fact that this is quite a difficult exercise in co-ordination. I merely used repetition and vocals to assist ...” I called out “Spin, down, up When they heard me vocalising the instruction many of them chose to do the same.” (Appendix 2, class 7)

I found repeated vocalisation very useful to assist learning and will continue to use it.

3.6 Assessment

Fears of assessment became evident in class 7. I reflected,

“Some of them expressed their nervousness at doing the sequence in a smaller group. The teacher then reminded them that they were not being given a mark and that they were to just enjoy themselves. Had their joy of learning been affected by the constant threat of assessment and evaluation which they had come to expect? Did her words serve as a reminder to all that while marks were a part of their lives they should not be seen as all of it? I began to question whether the rewards of individual satisfaction of participation and skill acquisition had not become lost in the continual practice of marks and assessing?” (Appendix 2, class 7)

I reflected on why I had chosen to provide opportunity for peer assessment combined with own and teacher assessment. I have observed how when assessment is the sole responsibility of teachers (who often cannot avoid being subjective) there is often fear and mistrust. This may not be the case with subjects where only one answer is required, but in dance there is always teacher subjectivity. This is where I believe peer assessment grounded in personal experience can become a compass to navigate such subjective waters.

My experience dance examinations, has led me to realise that students often modify performance according to ‘who’ the examiner will be. If the anticipated results were not achieved then it was because “the examiner didn’t like me” or “the examiner was looking for X and I did Y.” I realise that excellent critique can come from ‘expert examiners’ but ‘internal novices’ can provide wonderful insights as well. I believe the ‘truth’ lies somewhere between the observations of the ‘expert’ and the personal experience of the ‘novice’ which the individual then balances with their own knowledge. This becomes a form of triangulation to assess validity where multiple perspectives provide balance. I have much experience of damaging ‘expert’ subjective assessment and believe in a more balanced approach.

Discussing the challenges of standards in dance assessment in education, van Papendorp identifies the inequality of standards between dance styles as related to their historical contexts. “Contemporary dance and African dance have never had an examination system, so what is the standard required of these dance forms and how do

they compare to Ballet, Spanish or Indian Dance and their well defined examination systems? ... It may well be that we need to rethink what we mean by a standard” (van Papendorp, 2004, p. 141).

Only some dancers will become professional. “It should be noted that the development of dance performers is only one of many possible career options. In the same way that not everyone who studies history becomes a historian, not everyone who studies dance will necessarily end up working in the dance industry” (van Papendorp, 2004, p. 143). I would argue that mainstream dance education should not use the same assessment standards for all, nor use the assessment standards of other learning areas. Few who study dance ever become professional, but that does not mean that the standards used to measure the progress of a professional should be imposed on all children. Similarly I believe, the positivist approach to dance assessment, where a ‘number’ is equated with performance, should be avoided. “The visible patterns of dance can be described in words, but its deeper meaning is inexpressible verbally” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 25) and I would add even more inexpressible numerically. For this reason “Teachers need to be equipped to use a wide range of instructional strategies and to facilitate a range of assessment strategies in which learners can demonstrate their knowledge” (van Papendorp, 2004, p. 145).

Alianza Flamenca assessments have no mark allocation (Alianza Flamenca). A comprehensive report comments on technique, expressiveness, and rhythmic ability and suggestions for improvement are given. This system of assessment allows a student of limited ability to be assessed alongside one with exceptional ability. Progress to the next level is at the discretion of teacher and assessor who are encouraged to hold the best interests of the student in mind. This may seem to undermine the ‘standards’ of those engaged in the training of ‘professionals’, but in fact, we as assessors have found just the opposite. We are content with the standard of work that is emerging which includes and respects varied ability. I believe when dance assessment “has no dependable standard and therefore no recognisable value” (van Papendorp, 2004, p. 143) peer assessment can help to balance ‘expert’ assessment.

My assessment and critique in class was based on skill, effort and authenticity. I did not encourage or expect flamenco style. I only gave a ‘history’ lesson of flamenco in class 7, in order not to impose stylistic boundaries, or build up cultural resistance, to a dance

form that they may have perceived of as belonging to someone else. I wanted them to experience and experiment with own interpretations of movements, and I only used the 'history' lesson to traverse boundaries in learning areas. My approach to assessment was a form of triangulation which was grounded in my faith in "the teacher within" (Palmer, 1998, p. 29) which "reminds me of my truth" (Palmer, 1998, p. 31). Through critical reflection with self and others students conversed with their own 'inner teacher' in order to find validity.

If "authority is granted to people who are perceived as *authoring* their own words, their own actions their own lives rather than playing a scripted role at great remove from their own hearts" (Palmer, 1998, p. 33) then I believe being able to 'author' ones own dance supports this. Finding personal validity in assessment through critical reflection with self and others, seems to me to be fundamental to this 'authoring'

CHAPTER 4

The Group/Individual

While I love to watch an individual fearlessly expressing their inner being with authenticity, I also used group work to encourage individual confidence and technique mediated by peer critique and support. “Man is ordained by reason of his material and spiritual needs to cultivate personal relationships with his fellows” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 99). I sought a group environment where competitiveness served little purpose and authentic expression was celebrated and respected. I used group work to encourage “a merging of action and awareness” (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 131) and a ‘flow’ within and between individuals in the group through observation and critique.

4.1 Group Solidarity

From the first lesson I became aware of multiple levels of ability in the class. I realised in order not to ‘expose’ individuals too early, I would need to incorporate many sessions of disciplined repetition to support my desire for maximum participation and good self esteem. My choice to dance without music was also fundamental to group solidarity and individual discipline. I reflected on this choice,

“I chose to work with no music as I wanted them to hear the sounds they were making with greater clarity and to get a sense of working as a group. There is a powerful energy that comes from working as a group where everyone is doing the same thing at the same time at the same pace. I explained to dancers that I was not happy until they were able to ‘sound like one person’. The reason for this is that it requires discipline and sensitivity to modify ones pace to the group. There are always those who like to move fast and those who like to move slowly. Having to conform to a group pace helps to establish a moderate tempo more conducive to learning.

It also gave an opportunity to ‘sound’ much louder than one does as an individual as well as to rely on others where there were still gaps in learning. The music is paced at the ‘final product’ and is often too fast (or slow) for many in the early learning stages. Without music there is also the added incentive to accelerate learning in order not to be the one who makes a sound that is incorrect. Most students try and avoid ‘group exposure’ of their mistakes so when these mistakes are heard by all it encourages the individual to focus with

greater intensity in order not to expose their gaps in learning and to get it right as soon as possible. I anticipated these 'odd' sounds so when they did occur I tried to make light of them through laughter and encouraged them not to be 'caught out'. I hoped hereby to impose gentle peer pressure to encourage focus and learning.

I consider music as the inspiration that can be added once learning has taken place. The benefits of working without music should not be underestimated. There is tremendous intellectual engagement in flamenco and often the music can be a distraction in the early stages of internalisation. I feel dancers benefit from finding their own rhythm (as a group and then as an individual) and that the added discipline of then following the pace of the music can and should be attempted later.”(Appendix 2, class 1)

I believe this focus on the oneness of ‘group sound’ became a powerful motivation for individual learning. It seemed to act as an incentive to avoid ‘exposure’.

(Appendix 5, Video 42 – class 7)

My desire to avoid individual ‘exposure’ took on another level of importance as I came to realise later in the course that I in fact had two students who were even more challenged than most: one was dyslexic and one had speech difficulties with partial hearing ability. I believe I would have severely compromised their trust if I had unknowingly exposed and humiliated them. Group work gave me time to become more aware of individual levels of ability.

I only introduced ‘new’ work when ‘old’ work was sufficiently mastered. This seemed to allow the group to progress as a team. The teacher observed,

Firstly, I was impressed at how keen and willing they were to volunteer to dance in the small groups and then how the 'spectators' encouraged and helped the dancers by giving hand signals ~ true teamwork.

Lovely to see that all are participating fully in the lessons even if they are battling to master some of the movements! Again - their self confidence has grown! (Appendix 3, week 2)

Her awareness of the levels of confidence and self esteem that were developing resonated with my own. I observed a certain confident team spirit developing, and their

willing participation seemed unaffected by their learning challenges. I feel this group solidarity became the bedrock of many ‘organic’ relationships which later emerged.

4.2 Organic Relationships and Resonance

In class 1 I reflected:

“When I concluded the class ... I asked them for any comments. I had hoped that their comments would give me an indication of how they were feeling and how to approach the next class...

I was rewarded by their honest comments: “thank you”, “wow”, “I can’t wait for Thursday”, “can we perform this dance?” The overall impressions were of enjoyment and a sense of ‘wow’ as one student described it ...

The fact that one of them asked if they were going to be able to perform their dance for an audience was for me a clear indication that learning had taken place. Their confidence after one lesson showed me that at least one had learnt enough to want to show others what they had learnt.”(Appendix 2, class 1)

Not only did this indicate to me that learning had taken place, but also indicated confidence in that learning. While at the time I used these reactions and comments to confirm what I felt, (the learning process had been enjoyed), I also realised that these were momentary individual impressions and should not be applied to all who were in the class, but I still used them to reflect upon in order to guide me in the following lesson. The fact that their enjoyment was so evident made me reflect on its influence in learning. I resolved to ensure that the ‘work’ was ‘fun’ wherever possible. The children’s and teacher’s comments helped me to align what I valued with what they valued, and to indicate focus in learning.

In class 1 the first ‘time of reflection’ revealed difficulties in individual learning which I then used to guide group learning:

“At this point I decided to narrow the focus to what they had found easy and then what they had found difficult. While some found the stamps and claps easy, there were more who identified their difficulties. As I suspected the step that travelled sideways was a challenge for a lot of them. One mentioned that the ‘counting’ helped him learn the sequence while another identified the problem

of “remembering” the sequence. It was at this point that I decided to use a comparison to the skill of “reading ahead” required for speed reading to introduce their focus to a skill of “thinking ahead” while dancing.

... It requires tremendous mental focus to think of the next step while doing the current one. The mind is often focused on the technical as well as intellectual demands of the current step and the ability to think of the next step as well takes time to develop....Without music to rely on to be reminded of the next step tremendous emphasis can be placed on the intellectual engagement of the individual ... In order not to have to rely on the music or others to help recall, I tried to encourage and develop the skills that would lead to the individual responsibility necessary for their success.” (Appendix 2, class 1)

I assumed that the student who commented on his difficulty ‘remembering’ the sequence was not alone and that perhaps there were others, hence my decision to compare ‘speed thinking’ to ‘speed reading’. I assisted one child’s challenge by sharing his concerns with others and offering my advice to the whole class. In this way the group could benefit from the advice to the individual.

Through out the course I used the comments from the children to help balance my own perceptions.

“As I waited for the class to enter I found myself wondering if what I had put together for this course had in fact achieved what I had hoped. Those nagging doubts that often plague me: should I be doing something else with my life? Did I hurt someone through a thoughtless word or action? Were the lessons of any value to anyone other than myself? Were they “educational”? ... I also kept asking my companions how they were doing at the start of each lesson I felt an obligation to know how the lessons were being experienced and if anyone was not up to what I may have been about to demand of them.”(Appendix 2, class 7)

Here I observed how I needed to know how I was doing from knowing how they were doing. When I am not feeling well I often do not want to dance and I needed to know that I was not forcing their participation.

“When replies indicated that a learner was not feeling well I tried to be aware of this and not expect them to participate to the same extent as the rest. If they began to feel inspired as the lesson progressed that was up to them but I tried not to make the same demands on them, especially physical ones, as I did on the rest of the class.

I also needed the feedback that learners were prepared to give me on how they felt after the previous lesson. Their comments were used to guide me in how I approached the lesson. If they were not enjoying it I would try to bring more enjoyment. If they were finding it difficult I will try to find out in what way and would try to help make it easier. If there was a feeling of discouragement I would try to encourage. If there was a feeling of apathy I will try to inspire. If there was a feeling of “heaviness” due to exhaustion I will try to energise or allow time for rest.”(Appendix 2, class 7)

I continued to rely on their comments:

“When I asked for comments after this session I was not surprised to hear the following:

“It was great it felt nice”

“I liked the new steps”

“It was very difficult and confusing”

“Your arms get sore from clapping”

“You learn from watching others mistakes” (I responded that they learn from others mistakes and that’s why I encouraged them to watch one another.)

“Enlivening”

These seemed to cover a wide range of experiences. I asked if they had experienced any difficulties and they responded:

“Nothing”

“The clapping”

“Remembering the steps”

“It was hard to turn after the other steps as you are still recovering”

“The ‘up down’ is confusing”

“Remembering is hard but some people are really doing it well”

It was interesting to note how comments now included experience of technical difficulties. Had the technical aspect now become more demanding or were they now becoming more fully aware of them?” (Appendix 2, class 7)

This clip shows our reflections.

(Appendix 5, Video 43 – class 7)

I noticed how each individual was experiencing unique focus and that by sharing that focus in the group context it afforded opportunity for others to broaden their focus as well. I noted how they were learning from others mistakes as well as from what others did well. “Pure dancing has no describable story. It is frequently impossible to outline the content of a dance in words, although one can always describe the movement” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 4). For this reason, I believe verbal expressions were limited when trying to understand and ‘share’ the multi-dimensional, organic experience in dance, however they did provide opportunity for resonance.

4.3 Integrated Individual Experience and Self Esteem

If dance does not integrate the intellectual emotional and physical, I believe it becomes “*mindless physical exertion*” and an “*extravagant use of energy*” (class 3 p44). I believe confidence in dance requires self knowledge.

In order to gain self-confidence children and dancers have to gain knowledge of the self i.e. physically, psychologically and socially through self-evaluation ... Pupils should be encouraged by the teacher to a ‘self-corrective’ strategic and thereby producing a creative learning environment. The teacher becomes more a guide and by asking the right questions, giving reinforcement the teacher becomes a facilitator. The atmosphere then changes from one of constant correction to a process of self-knowledge (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 123).

I observed how some children found it difficult to integrate the mind body and soul creatively. The teacher confirmed this,

It has been so apparent that some learners have seldom been involved in an exercise/routine where free movement of their body is encouraged, and therefore are very stiff in their execution of the dance steps. Creative thought in some learners has just not been developed. They are in a rut!! No deviation from a set path.

Whereas some of the children thoroughly enjoyed the chance to break free and experiment with their own ideas. Lovely to see how they encouraged one another. (Appendix 3, week 3)

The integration of mind body and soul in dance is challenging and I observed how it took time and encouragement to develop. In these clips I observed how skill and confidence seemed to support authentic expression.

(Appendix 5, Video 44 – class 1)

(Appendix 5, Video 45 – class 8)

Because dance is a ‘whole being’ experience, I was aware of how difficult it was to protect self esteem during critique. However,

If the child lacks realistic self knowledge of own strengths and weaknesses, it will influence his or her ability to discriminate and regulate the self” (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 123).

This requires one “... to develop the ability to be open to feedback and to take negative feedback as constructive” (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 123). I used times of reflection to engage in all forms of feedback.

(Appendix 5, Video 46 – class 3)

I believe it is imperative

.... to avoid attaching self-esteem to performance outcomes ... Individuals who believe in their abilities do better because that belief motivates them to work harder and longer and persist in spite of difficulties (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 124).

I did however endeavour to protect self esteem by encouraging ‘caring’ critique of the ‘work’ not criticism of the individual. In this clip Mr. Silence surprises us all by his choice to dance ‘silently’ and I became aware of the need for me to encourage critique of his work, rather than him personally.

(Appendix 5, Video 47 – class 6)

4.4 The Group as Sensitive Participant Observer

I introduced the group as ‘participant observer’ from the first lesson and I gradually developed this concept to encourage focus, observational learning, sensitivity, accuracy and humility.

“I then introduced a new skill of learning to provide the beat or rhythm for the dancers. Those who were watching were now given the added responsibility of providing the clapping for the dancers. I described it like being a drum. They were to provide a clear strong beat for the dancers to work to. This is not easy, as it requires great empathy and sensitivity from those clapping. I told them that they needed to clap in unison and that they needed to sound like ‘one person’. A ‘splintered’ sound was not acceptable. I then made the comparison with how they clapped in assembly where no clear rhythm was evident. I thus tried to show them what I wanted by showing them what I did not want.”(Appendix 2, class 3)

In this video clip I taught unison clapping by asking them to clap as they would in assembly, in order to show them how I did not want them to clap.

(Appendix 5, Video 48 – class 3)

Here I used the ‘incorrect’ to guide practice. I later observed how I responded to their fears and insecurity with sensitivity.

*“I then let them try to clap for the dancers and as I expected it wasn’t very good. They looked disheartened. One of the boys expressed his fear of doing the steps in two groups. I responded to his expressed anxiety by sharing my story. I did this in the hope of conveying to others who may have been feeling the same anxiety that I knew how they possibly felt. I hoped thereby to reduce their self imposed pressure to do well immediately. I tried to encourage them to be patient. I told them how it often took me six months to be able to perform a new dance. I then reminded them that this was only their third lesson and to ‘chill.’”
(Appendix 2, class 3)*

When I used my own personal story of anxiety in the learning process to convey my empathy I was aligning with Palmer. “As we listen to each another’s stories, we are often reflecting silently on our own identity and integrity ...” (Palmer, 1998, p. 147).

I reflected on my own experience and used my story to try to ease insecurities, but because I saw little sign of relaxing of insecurities from the group yet, I decided to introduce the ‘leading’ and ‘following’ in flamenco to encourage this.

“When they swopped groups the second group was worse: the clapping had no ‘sensitivity’ or conscious awareness of the dancer ... I had to interrupt this group in order to explain how the clapping worked in flamenco. I gave them what I hoped would be good news: “in flamenco the dancer rules!” I then explained how the pace of the dance is determined by the dancer. Those clapping for the dancer (or in the instance of a musician, playing for the dancer) had to follow the pace of the dancer. The dancer was the leader and the clappers were the followers. I then told them that they would all get a chance to ‘lead’ and to ‘follow’.

Both first attempts to clap successfully for the dancer were weak but I did not interrupt their ‘poor’ performance as I wanted them to observe and analyse for themselves what was going wrong. I merely allowed them to struggle to the end and then sat them down for a moment of reflection. I hoped that they would then be able to identify and solve the problems themselves.”(Appendix 2, class 3)

In this clip I reminded them to ‘chill’ when they felt the pressure to get the dance correct immediately. I introduced the idea that as dancers, they were ‘leaders’, in charge of the pace of performance and the ‘clappers’ had to be sensitive to their needs.

(Appendix 5, Video 49 – class 3)

Throughout my classes I used the group experience to encourage focus and individual self correction while often restraining from giving my opinion. I often allowed ‘poor’ or ‘incorrect’ performance in the group to awaken the inner teacher. By allowing them to experience what it felt like to dance to ‘bad backing’ I hoped they themselves would improve their own ‘backing’ skill. Reflection assisted this.

“When I asked for comments on what it was like to clap for a dancer they responded:

“... you get tired ...

*... it’s confusing when you first start dancing and you hear the claps ...
and then you get used to it and it works its way out ...*

... it needs you to look and see ...

... your hands get tired ...

... it’s difficult because you have to listen to yourself and the dancer...

... you can't just relax and enjoy it."

... I then asked if knowing the dance helped them at all in their attempts to clap. When I asked for a show of hands to indicate who felt that it had helped them, the majority agreed that it had.

I then asked what it felt like to dance to the claps. One replied that he found it 'hard'. When I asked 'why' they responded:

"you get distracted ...

It's confusing

It's nice ...

you're tempted to clap with them while you dance."

I found all responses identified many of the difficulties and I hoped that their experiential learning had helped them to begin to try and address their difficulties. Sharing experiences also can help others to identify problems that they might not yet have been aware of."(Appendix 2, class 3)

This clip shows this time of reflection.

(Appendix 5, Video 50 – class 3)

I believe having to continually 'swop over' groups, provided opportunity to experience 'both sides'. Being a good flamenco dancer requires courage to lead and it requires confidence in own and the 'backer's' ability. Being a good flamenco 'follower' or 'backer' requires considerable sensitive observation to enhance another's performance, with little expectation of personal acknowledgement.

This was intensified when I divided the class into smaller groups, where the majority watched, while smaller groups clapped for one another's performance.

"I now had three groupings: one small group dancing, one small group clapping and the rest of the class observing. This introduced the idea that those who were clapping were in fact also 'working'. They needed to concentrate as much as the dancer and were not allowed to 'sleep' or lose focus. I then told those observing to watch both clappers and dancers in order to pass comments.

The first group of clappers did not concentrate and they made it very difficult for the others to dance to their 'splintered' rhythm. When they swopped over I made the same group that had just clapped experience what it was like to have those same people clap for them. In this way I hoped to draw their attention to their lack of focus. I remarked that they had been too busy having a "good time" and had not watched the dancers. I then pointed out that we would now see if they would be given the same treatment. I wanted to draw their attention to the fact that clapping is an unselfish activity. Clappers may not be noticed or appreciated as much as the dancer but they had a responsibility to the performance as a whole and to ensure that the dancers were successful.

I then let each group 'struggle' to clap and dance for one another in order to experience what it felt like when things were not working. Those watching were given opportunities to observe both activities and all had a chance to observe as well. I emphasised that I wanted them to 'think' while they were observing what was working and what was not working ... why some things were good and some not. In other words I wanted them to be engaged in critical analysis of what they were watching." (Appendix 2, class 3)

The teacher also observed their challenges and felt the urge to participate and experience what the children were going through,

When the group were split into two groups - they did not realize at first that the clappers had to work just as hard at focusing as the dancers. Some battled with this. This was quite an intense workout!

Only when I tried one of the stepping movements did I realise how difficult it was to remember and to master - this made me even more impressed with how the children have coped and done so well! (Appendix 3, week 2)

I used the group as participant observer to give personal experience of the roles of 'follower' and 'leader' in flamenco and to encourage focus, sensitivity and understanding of the requirements of both. Even the teacher felt the urge to experience being a 'participant observer'.

I further developed awareness of sensitive participant observation when I introduced 'jaleo' (vocal support from participant observers).

“I reminded the clappers that they had an added responsibility to shout and clap now. I reminded them of the need to eliminate ‘background noise’ (chatting). I only wanted to hear their claps and their ‘jaleo’. As I expected the shouting was excessive and sounded like the school gala. I swopped groups and the second group was no better. Both were examples of unskilled uncontrolled noise.

I then explained that I had been waiting for this to happen and that I would now explain to them how to ‘jaleo’ correctly. They had just witnessed how not to do it, I then showed them how to do it correctly. After I had given an example of how and when to ‘jaleo’ for a dancer I asked them to tell me if they had noticed when I chose to shout. Responses included:

*“every time they did another section ...
... in the gaps”.*

I then asked what happens when shouting happens continually. Responses included:

*“.... you get irritated ...
.... you get distracted and you forget your steps
... its confusing ...
... .you can’t hear the claps”.*

All these responses were correct and I hoped that having experienced the problems for themselves they would try to be more sensitive in how they shouted for others. I then summed up that ‘jaleo’ was there to help and not to distract.

After both groups had done it I then got the whole class to dance the sequence while I shouted for them so that they could all experience the correct way. I then sat them down to reflect on how my shouting had felt while they were dancing. Responses included:

*“it helps you ...
it didn’t distract you ...
it made you feel better”.*

I responded by saying that the main purpose of 'jaleo' was to make the dancer feel better and to encourage them. I then asked what was difficult about it.

Responses included:

"trying to find the gaps...

you have to look and listen". I then tried to ask how they would shout if I was not too sure of my steps. The response came:

"... when you need help".

I asked these questions in order to draw their attention to the need to be sensitive to the dancer's needs, to be able to observe body language accurately and to support one another's performance." (Appendix 2, class 4)

The following clip shows the above.

(Appendix 5, Video 51 – class 4)

'Jaleo' is another skill of the sensitive participant observer in flamenco, requiring awareness of the emotional experience of others. As a 'backer/follower' the accuracy of clapping together with the empathetic expression of emotion in the shouting (jaleo), demands integration of body, mind and emotion as well as sensitive awareness of the integrated experience of others. It requires a "relationally dynamic and receptive response to the flow of energy" (Whitehead, 2009a lines 592-593) of the dancer. I felt I needed to demonstrate this when I saw no signs of this from the class. Their observation and comments led to their 'jaleo' then improving.

I observed how I tried to limit my critique in order to encourage theirs and to respond with loving encouragement wherever possible and by empathising with their fears.

"I then asked the same people to swop over so that those who had just clapped now danced and those who had just danced now clapped. The group who had just described their performance while clapping as "excellent", soon discovered that the same description of confidence could not be applied to their performance as dancers. They began to possibly experience a bit of pressure and could not remember their steps. I immediately responded to their fears by sharing my own personal experience of 'mental blocks' in performance. I tried to reassure them that forgetting ones steps was 'normal'. I then encouraged

them that when they had a mental block again to just carry on and that it was highly unlikely that all three of them would forget the same step at the same time and to rely on one another.

I did this because the support of a group no matter how small often helps those who are not so confident or sure of their steps. That feeling of being able to rely on the person next to one is one of the advantages of group dancing. I told them to make full use of it. I was reassured once again that as teacher I needed to 'trust the process' at times. These three boys may have overestimated their ability to do the sequence unaided after their success at clapping. I allowed them to begin again. They then made a third attempt and I let them struggle to the end even though the timing was all out of sync. They finished to the applause of their friends who rewarded their perseverance." (Appendix 2, class 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 16 – class 4)

I began to question my response in this situation. Had I been empathetic or cruel? I reflected on my action,

"The pressure to succeed immediately is often almost subconscious in many of us and can prevent us from allowing our selves and others to struggle for longer in order to build self confidence as well as a truer reflection of our ability in that moment. Those boys felt better and so did I that I had allowed them to complete the task instead of stopping them at the first sign of a mistake. Perhaps the lesson for me was that if I give others the opportunity and permission to "test their wings" before they have learnt to fly, maybe they might give me the opportunity to do the same. This pursuit of perfection can be very debilitating if used as the standard of judgement in all assessment."(Appendix 2, class 4)

I came to realise that the timing and manner of intervention is challenging for me and success and failure have a fragile relationship. I observed how I relied on my intuition to determine my responses. Here I felt tempted to rush in and help at the first signs of a mistake but I resisted the impulse. In retrospect I am so glad I did.

"I then asked them if they were surprised at how much they were able to do when they "just chilled". I asked how they might have felt if I had stopped them and told them that they weren't able to do it and to just sit down. They

responded that they would not have felt good. I asked if they felt better having tried to go further than they thought they could. The response was: “yes”. I then responded that that was my intention: that they try and see how far they got. I feel that a great deal is learnt in the ‘trying’ and I do not like to interfere with the learning that takes place when things do not go as expected.

For this reason I often let poor attempts stumble along without stopping them at the first sign of a mistake.”(Appendix 2, class 4)

Some may consider my actions un-empathetic but this was another of those moments when a judgement call was needed and I made it. I wanted to give them the opportunity to learn from trying as I believe ‘process’ leads to learning and increases opportunities for success. In this case the future success became that of subsequent groups.

(Appendix 5, Video 17- class 4)

“By the time the third group came to do it they were able to do the sequence very well. They finished to a round of applause. The fourth set was also “fantastic” and I praised them all enthusiastically. I then asked them to try and analyse why their performance had been so good. One responded that:

“they had learnt from the other groups mistakes”.

That was exactly what I had hoped would happen. I then asked them if they always learnt from people who “get it right”. There was no response. I then asked if they also learn from people who “get it wrong”. The response was a resounding “yes”. I had hoped to draw their attention to the value of mistakes in the learning environment. I feel that valuable learning can take place when one experiences personally the effects of mistakes or incorrect execution. I find it a great motivation to ‘get it right’ after experiencing ‘the wrong’. I therefore value mistakes in my classes and want students to not be afraid of trying and getting it wrong. In fact if they do make mistakes I want them to view them as opportunities to learn rather than view them as embarrassing ... I try to use the constructive feedback sessions to support that aim.” (Appendix 2, class 4)

At the same time the inquirer tries to shape the situation to his frame, he must hold himself open to the situations back-talk ... he must adopt a kind of double vision.” (Schon, 1983, p. 164)
“Double vision does not require us to stop and think, but the capacity to keep alive, in the midst of action, a multiplicity of views of the situation (Schon, 1983, p. 281).

I believe my experience as a flamenco performer has helped develop my ‘awareness’ of a ‘multiplicity of views’ which was supported by opportunities to ‘slow down’ the action in practice. Performance simply speeds up the process. I believe my teaching has benefits from this. I felt aware of my own experience and that of others and I observed myself encouraging this in the children with my use of the group as sensitive participant observer.

4.5 Individual Authenticity in the Group

I became aware of individuals through reflection, observation, empathy and creativity.

Ms. Differently-abled, (the young dyslexic girl) was the first individual I became aware of when she admitted during reflection time that she had let her fear of dancing go after one class. Later,

“I noticed that there was one particular boy who was making no or very little effort in the class and I was concerned with why. He seemed well and I could not understand why. I later asked the teacher and she told me that he was a ‘problem’ and described him as a ‘high risk’ child with the potential to go ‘off the rails’. I decided to keep an eye on him and to try and include and encourage him where I could.”(Appendix 2, class 4)

I later came to name this boy Mr. Rhythm for his rhythmic ability.

In class 5, two more individuals emerged: Mr. Silence (the young man with hearing and speech difficulties) and Mr. Einstein (the intellectual). While these names may suggest ‘boxing’ that is not my intention. I used these names to describe my perceptions of them. When I asked them to form groups to work out their own improvisations some individuals immediately went to work alone. The teacher,

“.... pointed out two particular boys: one who was often shunned by the other students as his speech capacity was slower than theirs and who was hard of hearing (... Mr Silence) and the other because he was very ‘mature’ for his age and often found his peers ‘immature’. He also excelled academically, (.... Mr.

Einstein). The one had chosen to work alone and the other had been left to work alone.

I then intentionally went over to both of them to offer them help or merely to keep them company. Whether this was in fact necessary I will never know but I instinctively did not want them to feel isolated or to intensify any feelings of isolation that they may have already been experiencing. My desire for an inclusive classroom where no one felt excluded became almost instinctive. I offered to clap while they experimented with their creation.”

(Appendix 2, class 5)

(Appendix 5, Video 53 – class 5)

Here I became aware of my being “receptively responsive” which required me to improvise “in making a creative response to the perceived needs of the other” (Whitehead, 2009a lines 604-605). By focusing on creativity, individuals gradually emerged from the group and I realised the importance of this. While I believe children should learn “to work together to attain a goal and that their performance is then motivated as a result of others performing the same action” (van Staden, et al., 2004, p. 130).

I also believe group work does need to be balanced with opportunities for individual expression and the ‘physical’ change in class formation supported this. The ‘order’ of circle and semi circle transformed into ‘disorganised’ and ‘organic’ as individuals and groups of various sizes began finding a space to be creative.

By changing his/her position in the room the teacher varies the students’ feeling for space; alternating frontal organisation with group and partner work encourages individual and group responsibility. These structures stimulate awareness of self and of the group in the students and avoids flat-front, teacher-centred class (Ickstadt, 2004, p. 87).

Mr. Einstein volunteered to go solo first and used his ‘creation’ to correct misperceptions of himself.

“I thought his work was of an exceptionally high quality. Not only was he able to combine the voice with rhythmic movement but he also used the opportunity to give a ‘message’ to his peers. His composition is worth quoting:

*“They see me as this boring dude
They see me as this all time prude
Don’t they know I’m not that bad?
They can know I’m sometimes glad”*

This was followed by a wonderful improvisation session of rhythmic stamping.

I responded by describing his work as “excellent”. The whole class gave enthusiastic applause.”(Appendix 2, class 5)

Mr. Einstein was a student who in fact was capable of the task I had initially given. He proved to be the exception. The high standard of his work both surprised and delighted me. When Mr. Silence volunteered to go solo his performance came as a surprise.

“When the learner who was frequently shunned by the class (Mr. Silence) chose to do his routine on his own I was aware that he might expose himself unwittingly to ridicule from his peers. I was aware of a couple of ‘sniggers’ during his piece. He chose to do a very ‘moving’ performance in virtual silence. He made big bold movements with his legs and explored body movements that a contemporary dancer might use. As he finished his routine I chose to acknowledge his courage rather than critique his work as I felt that even if some had not appreciated the nature of his creation they would possibly be able to appreciate his courage.

.... I am very aware of the possible damage that can be done to an individuals self esteem in circumstances like this so I am very careful to watch for negative comments and to negate them with positive affirmation in acknowledgement of courage and effort. I reminded them of how difficult it was to perform solo especially when one was not sure of how ones creation would work. I then praised his bravery and the class responded with applause.”

(Appendix 2, class 5)

In class 6 he volunteered again but this time his performance was almost ‘silent’. I was aware of the class ‘sniggering’ again and I made a conscious move to accept and include his improvisation for what it was: his authenticity. “It is just as difficult to

describe a dance in words as it is to interpret music verbally” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 101). While I tried to use words to describe what I had seen and felt while watching Mr. Silence, it is in fact almost impossible to do so. I feel that not even a video recording can capture the experience.

(Appendix 5, Video 54 – class 6)

I had asked the class to do a task with rhythm which he with his hearing ability was not inclined to do. He chose to dance in silence. His body became his ‘voice.’ I now realise the extent of his courage as he risked even further isolation by choosing to dance the way he did. Yet he took ‘action’ and faced his fears by dancing and moving with his unique ‘voice.’ The fact that he volunteered placed the decision to face those fears into his own hands. I felt tremendous humility to have been witness to such courage. Not only had he done it ‘his way’, he had encouraged me to embrace ‘silence’ into our creative space.

Dance educator Diana Jordan suggests that

“... children, even the ablest of them, are imperfect masters of language, and communication in this medium, is for some of them very difficult. Particularly is this so for the less able and for those who have not the advantage of hearing thoughts well expressed in their daily lives. But in bodily movement ... there is a means of communication and expression for all” (Jordan, 1966, p. xvi).

I was astounded by his courage to communicate in ‘silence’ in a world where ‘sound’ dominates.

Later in class 5, Mr. Rhythm came to my attention again.

“I decided to show them the step that I was going to teach the following lesson ... It contained body percussion which I thought they might enjoy experimenting with. As I was demonstrating it to the class the teacher came over to me to draw my attention to one of the boys who had in fact been doing a similar thing in the improvisation session but who had not yet performed. It was the same boy I had noticed in previous lessons who did not seem to want to engage in the classes and the same one I had been drawn to encourage in this lesson’s warm up session ... I began to clap the beat for him as he continued and this made what he was doing sound even better. The whole class and I were astounded and gave

him enthusiastic applause. Not only was his timing outstanding but his rhythms were astounding as well. I realised this was another example of ‘natural’ talent ... I then concluded the class by calling Mr. Rhythm to perform his improvisation again for the class while I clapped the beat for him. It sounded so wonderful that I instinctively joined him by adding my own improvised rhythms to his. We were all inspired by the mini ‘jazz session’ we had just experienced and it ended in applause by all for what we had shared.”(Appendix 2, class 5)

(Appendix 5, Video 55 – class 5)

Here was a boy who already ‘knew’ and I felt compelled to provide opportunity for his talent to develop.

“... I was left feeling humbled once more by the process of creativity and how some of us already “know” before we are even “taught”. The learner who did not engage fully in the warm-ups was the self same learner who left the class in awe at his natural rhythmic ability. Perhaps he already knew his rhythmic capacity but if that was the case I hoped the affirmation he received from me and his peers would confirm and strengthen what he already ‘knew’.”
(Appendix 2, class 5)

I work on the assumption that people already know much of what they need to know, but that they are often unaware that they know what they know, and that they become aware of what they know and how to use what they know by reflecting critically on their practice and from interacting with others (Conolly, 2009)

I would add,

... and by dancing together.

As I reflected on the circumstances that led to the ‘discovery’ of Mr. Rhythm’s talent I began to wonder what would come of it, without the opportunity to develop.

“I feel as teacher it is my obligation to be able to recognise the difference between ‘natural talent’ and ‘developed talent’ and to encourage both to develop a work ethic. The natural talent will only achieve a certain amount on its own. If there is no work ethic it will not reach its full potential. Those who do not have natural talent should also be encouraged to work at new learning as

they may be surprised at how much they achieve if they really apply themselves to sustained effort.” (Appendix 2, class 5)

Friedlander differentiates between ‘talent’ and ‘skill’:

“We talk about people being talented when they can do something very well. There are attributes which some people are born with that make a skill easier to attain, but generally the potential to be ‘talented’ must be unearthed and skills learnedlearning is critical for both skill acquisition and for discovering or refining ones innate talent” (Friedlander, 2001, p. 64).

This ‘learning’, I believe is learning to ‘work’ irrespective of natural ability. As teacher I believe it is my responsibility to inspire this work ethic and maximum effort from all. Whitehead insists that learning to harm or working un-cooperatively is not educational and he stresses the importance of “influences in learning” being “educational” (Whitehead, 2009a line 695). I reflected,

“As teacher I see my responsibility to inspire effort and ‘passion’ and to encourage and support these when needed. By striving to do this I hope to raise the levels of ability for all” (Appendix 2, class 5)

I believe all can benefit from finding and developing authentic communication through the body. A strong work ethic merely refines it. I had observed individual talents and began thinking of how to develop them.

CHAPTER 5

Development of Individual Ability

5.1 Individual Affirmation, Body Language

At the beginning of class 6, some of the boys came in practicing, including Mr. Rhythm. I wanted to encourage him. After our greeting,

“As the warm up began I put my arm around Mr. Rhythm. I felt drawn to express my joy at what he had shared with us the previous lesson and wanted to encourage his continued participation.”(Appendix 2, class 6)

As I now consider the implications of my action I realise that by putting my arm around this boy I was using my most natural and comfortable form of expression: body language. Words did not seem adequate to express just how much I wanted the continued participation and inclusion of this young man. I’m not even sure if words would have conveyed much at all. At the time I did not even consider the educational stance that suggests that touching a learner under any circumstance is unacceptable. The debates on this issue I know will continue. I am very aware of the abuses of body language in education but this was an instance when I felt it was not only appropriate but perhaps necessary. Freire suggests that,

Any situation in which ‘A’ objectively exploits ‘B’ or hinders his and her pursuit of self affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression. Such a situation in itself constitutes violence, even when sweetened by generosity, because it interferes with the individual’s ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human ... Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognise others as persons- not by those who are oppressed, exploited and unrecognised. It is not the unloved who initiate disaffection, but those who cannot love because they love only themselves (Freire, 1970, p. 37).

My instinctive decision to put my arm around Mr. Rhythm was not intended to exploit or oppress, it was to include and affirm. To do this I had used my most trustworthy means of communication: the body.

(Appendix 5, Video 56 – class 6)

As I watched the videos again I became aware of just how often I indeed to ‘put my arm’ around a student to express my desire to include or affirm. One such example was to ‘include’ Mr. Silence.

(Appendix 5, Video 54 – class 6)

Later in class 6 Mr. Rhythm started to really participate enthusiastically.

“We then began the recall exercise and I reminded them that they needed to be sure of their steps in order not to “make a mess”. They did the sequence very well and I was thrilled. They were equally thrilled. Mr. Rhythm was fully engaged and concluded with a big smile.” (Appendix 2, class 6)

In the following clip Mr. Rhythm is the smaller boy with his back to the camera.

(Appendix 5, Video 57 – class 6)

I realise that the boundary between the ‘boxes’ of appropriate and inappropriate body language should be clear in the classroom but I also realise that their exact point of intersection is almost impossible to define. This ‘boundary’ is fluid and is observed differently from individual to individual and from culture to culture. Complete concurrence seems impossible and I rely in my intuition to guide my responses.

As class 6 progressed I became aware of the tremendous progress that was being made, including Mr. Rhythm:

“We then repeated the sequence from the top and I gave them the challenge to see who would manage to do it successfully. They performed it fast and very well. I was thrilled. They began to shriek with the excitement of success and burst into smiles and jumps of joy. Mr. Rhythm jumped and spun with elation. I responded by saying: please tell me if you have rhythm, put your hand up if you think you’ve got rhythm!” Mr. Rhythm could hardly contain himself as he put his hand up enthusiastically along with about 12 other students.”

(Appendix 2, class 6)

In this clip Mr. Rhythm has his back to the camera and is wearing a green jacket.

(Appendix 5, Video 58 - class 6)

I began to consider how my ‘belief’ in their rhythmical capacity influenced the way I approached my classes. If I believed that they had rhythmic capacity, did this account for my insistence that all could participate? I realised my natural inclination was to hold no expectations regarding individual ability. Perhaps this is because I have too often made predictions about a student’s ability (prior to the evidence) only to be proven incorrect at a later stage. Here I saw the majority developing their rhythmic capacity, including Mr Rhythm and I was delighted.

This fuelled my resolve to continue developing it. I sent them off to work on their improvisations.

“I then called Mr. Rhythm over as he was just sitting waiting and did not seem to be developing his ideas. He wanted to merely repeat what he had done the previous lesson almost as if he did not see himself capable of doing another one. I then encouraged him to develop what he had done. I clapped the rhythm for him and allowed him to hear how interesting his rhythms sounded to ‘backing’. He managed to improvise for quite some time.” (Appendix 2, class 6)

(Appendix 5, Video 59 – class 6)

It surprised me that Mr. Rhythm did not think he was capable of more than he had shown me the previous day. Here was a boy with outstanding rhythm not knowing what to do with it. Perhaps his self esteem needed to improve to support the development of his talent. I began to realise the absolute necessity of providing opportunity and encouragement because left to its own devices his talent remained static. The teacher commented,

One boy really attracted my attention (Mr. Rhythm). [He] does not always feature academically and his physical build restricts his success on the sports field. He then tries to seek attention in other ways normally in a negative way and is therefore in trouble. During the free creative period, he focused and was doing some amazing steps with arm movements as well. He has a natural way in his dancing. When asked to show his steps his grin stretched from ear to ear – what a positive boost to his self esteem! (Appendix 3, Week 3)

Was he “the student from hell” (Palmer, 1998, p. 41) who had been misdiagnosed?

As I watched the end of this clip I saw him run off with a great smile and enthusiasm to continue ‘working’. “Becoming aware of our gifts can help us teach more consistently from our identity and integrity.”(Palmer, 1998, p. 69) Here Palmer refers to a talent as a

gift while Whitehead sees teachers using their ‘talents’ to produce ‘gifts’ which are shared with others (Whitehead, 2008). I believe the criteria to determine whether the ‘talent’ should be shared or ‘given’ should be whether it evokes a “life-affirming energy” (Whitehead, 2009a line 595) or not. As teacher I seek to develop my talents as well as the talents of my students which through their expression of ‘life-affirming energy’ can become ‘gifts’ for others.

By affirming Mr. Rhythm’s talent I hoped to develop it. I realised how I value affirmation to encourage progress. As teacher I too depend on affirmations from my students and I often become aware of them during ‘time of reflection’. Against this background of our strengths we are able to face our failings leading to better understandings of self (Palmer, 1998, p. 70).

If children reared in an atmosphere of lovelessness and oppression, children whose potency has been frustrated, do not manage during their youth to take the path of authentic rebellion, they will either drift into total indifference, alienated from reality by the authorities and the myths the latter have used to ‘shape’ them; or they may engage in forms of destructive action ...The atmosphere of the home is prolonged in the school, where the students soon discover that (as in the home) in order to achieve some satisfaction they must adapt to the precepts which have been set from above. One of these precepts is not to think (Freire, 1970, p. 136).

I believe Mr. Rhythm had found himself in a place where his talent was not catered for and consequently his self esteem was poor. His ‘rebellion’ had taken the form of resistance and deviant behaviour where he seemed to refuse to ‘think’, at least not in the ways that were required of him. His refusal to ‘think’ was even evident in something he could do well. My intervention at this stage seems timorous.

“Later I noticed how he called one of the other boys to come and accompany him with clapping so that he could develop his ideas even further. I was so thrilled. Not only had he seemed to realise his natural talent and rhythmic ability but he had also discovered that if he had rhythmic ‘backing’ his rhythms were enhanced. This then gave a wonderful opportunity for another boy to discover that he had the ability to ‘follow’ a dancer with such accuracy.”
(Appendix 2, class 6)

Here was a wonderful example of the discovery and development of one individual’s talent leading to the discovery and development of another. The young boy who Mr. Rhythm recruited to clap for him became his permanent ‘backer’ and he too realised

that he had natural ability to ‘follow’ a dancer. I can only imagine what may have resulted if this team were given the opportunity to develop this.

I also had to encourage Mr. Einstein to develop his ‘talent’.

“After I had given enough time to this I asked who would like to volunteer to do their ‘improvisation’ first. Mr Einstein jumped up enthusiastically. After my encouragement to develop his creation he composed another verse.

*“They see me as this all boring dude
They see me as this all time prude
Don’t they know I’m not that bad?
Don’t they know I’m sometimes glad? Glad.
(Does improvisational stamps)
I’m glad until they see me as
This Einstein that they think I am
I know I may not be that cool
But I just want to rule!”*

(He finished with a series of improvisational stamps and a very strong stamp at the end as if to reinforce what he has just done.)

I was so happy to see him do this as it gave an indication of how this activity could be developed into a creative ‘writing’ exercise without the use of written text.” (Appendix 2, class 6)

This clip shows his ‘developed creation’.

(Appendix 5, Video 60 – class 6)

Mr. Einstein used his creation to draw attention to correct where he felt misunderstood. As the class continued I began ‘blending in’ as I increasingly began taking my place in the group to observe what was developing. I no longer felt my expertise was necessary as I began to witness the creativity of others.

When Mr. Silence performed in class 6 instead of being sniggered at he was encouraged by his peers. Whitehead suggests that in order to overcome difficulties a

“spiritual resilience” is required and “a connection with a loving energy to move beyond the difficulties” (Whitehead, 2009b, p. 116). I saw evidence of this here.

“At this point the class decided to encourage Mr. Silence to do his dance. He was cheered and applauded as he went to perform. He then performed a true improvisation. He seemed to flow silently from one movement to the next as he was inspired to do so. It was far more complex than his previous one and seemed to ‘draw the whole class in’ as he focused with such intensity on using his body to ‘speak’. He finished to enthusiastic applause and shouts of ‘ole’. I then applauded him and thanked him. I asked the class why his performance had been so lovely. I did this to see if any were able to identify from watching what had made his creation so unique. Responses included:

*“it was different ...
it was silent...”*

I then remarked on how lovely that ‘silence’ had been. I asked them if they had noticed how he seemed to be “really into what he was doing” and the class replied “yes”. I then tried to draw to their attention the importance of that as a means to draws others in to share our experience. I did this in order to try and make them aware of how powerful performance can encourage empathy. I also mentioned how he had used his whole body as instrument of communication and not just his hands and feet and how lovely his ‘extensions’ were. I felt he had managed to use his body to draw the class into his silent world rather than trying to be heard in their world of sound. I applauded his courage and success.” (Appendix 2, class 6)

I ‘felt’ Mr. Silence’s courage to be authentic: his ‘spiritual resilience’. I ‘felt’ he was connecting with a ‘loving energy’ which seemed beyond his ‘boundaries’ and that others were also ‘connecting’ with the same ‘loving energy’ in support of this (Whitehead, 2009c). Whitehead suggests that “we can all help each other, whatever age, to create our own living educational theories in which we account to ourselves for living our values and understandings as fully as we can” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 118). I felt that this young man was accounting for himself through his understanding of communication and that he was sharing it with us. His courage to use his talent became his ‘gift’. He demonstrated that all dance does not *need* music. His body became the

expression of his authentic communion with ‘his entire being’ and the silence seemed to enhance it. His ‘knowing’ extended our ‘knowing’.

Flamencos use the term ‘duende’ (Webster, 2003) to describe a performance that is infused with the power of the spirit. I felt as if I had just witnessed this duende in silence. Adendorff speaks of the “sacred landscape” which requires a form of ‘transformation’ of the dancer where we go

beyond ourselves while on stage ... so many of us are not in our bodies. We live in our heads, in our memories, in our longings ... it is time to put ... the human body back into the ‘Sacred Landscape’.... When soul and spirit dance dancers become instruments not slaves (Adendorff, 2001, p. 9).

Here Mr. Silence had done so immediately. His communion with self reached beyond to include us as well. I ‘felt’ his spirit as well as ‘saw’ his body dancing. “To me all true dance is both sensual and spiritual. There needs be no separation or duality here” (Adendorff, 2001, p. 9). Mr. Silence showed us in silence that

To dance fully is not to withhold ... thinking and being become one when I dance. No longer are there the distinctions of mind and body. There is instead only being. When I am dancing nothing else exists for me. Space, time and energy ... are made concrete by my body ... (Shapiro, 2004, p. 18).

and how “... to become one with yourself .” (Fernandez, Appendix 4)

(Appendix 5, Video 54 – class 6)

The Individual in the Empathetic Group

Whitehead describes one of his challenges as “remaining open to the flow of loving energy” (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 118). I would suggest that this is the challenge which we as human beings all share. Throughout my classes I tried many ways to encourage us all to remain open to this ‘flow of loving energy’ by encouraging group work which developed empathetic awareness of the others experience. Class 8 revealed that empathy within the flamenco group can be experienced.

“The ‘solos’ followed and Mr. Einstein volunteered to go first as he had chosen to do the sequence alone and not in a group. He began with great enthusiasm but soon discovered the ‘pressure’ that came with performing alone. Many went up on stage ready to clap for the solos. He managed to get as far as the

end of the claps and then had a mental 'blank'. When they saw his struggle to continue the entire class decided to clap for him. He seemed to become overwhelmed by the focus on him and the pressure to succeed. (After all he was the 'clever' one and surely he would excel at all he attempted?) He put his hands to his face almost in embarrassment and asked if he could begin again.

I then reminded the class of how "nerve racking" it was to perform on ones own and I praised his efforts and encouraged him to "keep going". We pressed 'pause' on the 'video' and allowed him to begin again. The whole class began to clap and he managed to slow them down to the pace at which he was happy to dance at. He was truly 'leading' them.

The second time he realised that he had begun the dance too far forward on the stage and ran out of space half way through. The class by this stage had become totally supportive of his efforts. This was the self same boy who the teacher had told me the class had often shunned because of his 'intelligence'. Perhaps now they had begun to see him in another light. Here was the so called 'genius' struggling to remember the steps and to complete the dance. The whole class immediately began clapping in support of him as if their clapping would give him the courage to continue.

He then struggled to complete the sequence on his third attempt. His timing was erratic but the clappers followed him and shouted encouragement. I wondered if the entire classes' immediate rally to support him had assisted him to successfully complete the dance. Had their perceptions of him and his of them shifted? Had this so called "fun" environment of dance turned into an opportunity to provide new perspectives of one another? It certainly looked so to me! He completed the dance to their roars of approval and appreciation and applause."(Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 61 – class 8)

This 'moment' cannot be examined in isolation: everything that had taken place during the course seemed to me to be influencing this experience. This was the boy who had been regarded as the 'clever one' and here he was struggling to complete what he had

volunteered to do. In this situation of extreme vulnerability, he was given the opportunity to show another perspective of himself to himself and others. Perhaps he did not realise the pressure that comes with 'solo' dance. Intellectual engagement is only part of the requirements in dance; the physical and emotional are equal participants. Here I 'saw' and 'felt' the group supporting Mr. Einstein to persevere.

What would have happened if I had intervened, to avoid further embarrassment, and allowed him to 'give-up'? I know that he would have missed an opportunity to experience what it felt like to be enthusiastically encouraged and praised by his peers. His intellectual ability had gone 'blank' at a crucial time, but he had the opportunity to rely on others to assist him in his moment of vulnerability. This phenomenon of going 'blank' happens frequently in flamenco. I believe personal experience of it can develop humility in performance and can also provide opportunity to allow 'sensitive others' to come to assistance. Persistence in dance is fundamental to progress and the empathetic group can support this. I refer now to another boy who showed such persistence.

"The next boy to volunteer was Mr. Persistent. He had already danced in a group but perhaps he had found courage from the support that the class had given Mr. Einstein which then enabled him to volunteer to do the dance solo. This was a boy who I had noticed from the beginning as having very little co-ordination and limited rhythmic ability. I had watched him struggle to assimilate what I gave them each class. I assumed he would just 'blend in' as one of those learners who had limited ability but that at least he was 'trying'. Well was I about to be proved incorrect again. Here in this environment he seemed to feel empowered and safe enough to 'risk all' as he attempted to 'go solo'.

At this point there was a mad dash by the majority (approximately 18) to go up onto the stage to clap for him. I heard one shout aloud: "were supporting you!" as they rushed to support his efforts. I then echoed this shout of encouragement by repeating that we were indeed supporting him. It was wonderful to watch.

This could have been the point at which he may have regretted ever having volunteered as the reality of the situation of going solo sank in and he may have had an overwhelming desire to run and escape. I imagined this as a possibility as this is often how I feel before a performance. I immediately sensed his

courage and wanted to support him as well. The vocal support from the whole class was astounding. He must have 'felt' it and his sheer delight at managing to complete the dance with their overwhelming support was beyond description. He finished to shrieks of approval and applause.”(Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 62 – class 8)

The mutual interdependence of group and individual became apparent. He needed the group to follow him and support him and they needed him to lead and succeed. I also realised with this boy how easy it is for me as a teacher to make assumptions about student ability only to be proved incorrect. I had assumed he had limited ability and did not place any expectations on him. He took the initiative and in so doing was able to demonstrate his ability. I realise now how important it is for me to provide opportunity for my assumptions (which in many ways are unavoidable) to be proved or disproved. The next opportunity for group empathy came when Mr. Silence was encouraged to dance the class choreography.

“The class then began to shout for Mr. Silence to dance. Here was the self same ‘isolated, shunned’ boy being encouraged by his class mates to do the dance alone. One boy went to take him by the hand to lead him to the stage. I too went to him and spoke privately to him to see if he was ready for what they were asking him to do. He asked me if he could do his own dance and I said he may but after doing the class sequence first. I did this because I felt that sufficient ‘support’ was evident to risk him trying.

He started slowly and may have been feeling fearful of attempting something he was not sure he wanted to do. As he got to the section where he could walk and make a ‘pose’ the class began calling his name in unison followed by ‘vamos’(Let’s go! Let’s go!) as they saw him struggling to complete the dance. This seemed to give him courage and his poses became more and more confident. He extended his arm above his head in a ‘fist’ of ‘power’. He managed to complete the dance far better than I had ever imagined he was capable of. I too had learnt never to underestimate how much can be achieved in an environment of support.

Unfortunately the video is quite dark and it does not show the expressions of support and empathy all over their faces. He did not show the same degree of skill or speed recall that many others did but his face showed his absolute delight as he felt the power of their 'inclusion' propelling him to exceed his and others expectations. Words cannot describe how I felt. I was overwhelmed to the point of tears ...

I began to realise the impact that this boy had had on all of us. The confidence that he seemed to have begun to experience due to being 'included' and 'accepted' seemed beyond belief while his courage to be different was an inspiration to watch. This was the self same class who at the beginning of the course had sat and 'sniggered' at his first attempts to dance for them. I began to wonder if they had come to the realisation that being different was 'ok' and in fact something to support not shun." (Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 63 – class 8)

I now realise that here too was another situation that could have ended in a disaster. I had relied on my 'gut instinct' that there would be sufficient 'support' to embrace the vulnerabilities of this boy, but it could have been the reverse. I am now trying to consider the deeper implications of these 'risks' that I take every lesson. I could have just let him dance in silence again. Why did I choose to insist that he dance the group dance? Did I subconsciously want him to experience the feeling of that group support that was waiting to include him? He had previously given us the opportunity to experience a different way of 'knowing' now the group was waiting to give him an opportunity for inclusion.

Conolly discusses this immediacy of the performing mode influencing the spontaneity of the performance:

... the performer can adjust his/her performance immediately according to his/her own responses with him/herself simultaneously with the responses from the audience ... each performance is the unique product of the interactions within the performer and audience, and is therefore the product of simultaneous personal introspection and group authorship (Conolly, 2002, p. 6).

This is further explained by Laban,

What really happens in the theatre does not occur only on the stage or in the audience, but within the magnetic current between both these poles (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 6).

I ‘felt’ connected to the ‘magnetic current’ between Mr. Silence and us and I was not alone. I believe this profound and immediate ‘connection’ between Mr. Silence and the group is what made the ‘live performance’ so powerful. No video or recording can replicate the almost cellular response that ‘live’ experience affords where the energy of the individual is ‘felt’. This interaction between the individual and the group was unique: the experience was not replicable. I ‘felt’ we had all shared in an experience where the boundaries between self and other had dissolved. I believe the power of this experience resided in the actual physical proximity of the individual to the group and ‘energy-fields’: no video or description can replicate that.

The Non-participant

After many years of teaching and performing I know that

To become a better teacher, I must nurture a sense of self that both does *and* does not depend on the response of others- and that is a true paradox. To learn that lesson well I must take a solitary journey into my own nature *and* seek the help of others in seeing myself as I am ... (Palmer, 1998, p. 74).

I am aware that there are always those individuals who will choose non-participation for various reasons but I rely on my intuition to know when to encourage participation. In previous lessons, I became aware of Mr. Under-the-Radar, but in class 8 where the focus was on performance, he was drawn to my full attention by the class.

“One of the learners then pointed out that Mr. Under-the-Radar (a name I had given to a little boy who always seemed to ‘escape’ having to dance and who the class said had not danced at all.) I responded: “some people are just not confident enough and that’s ok. When you plant your seeds in the garden do all the flowers come up at the same time?” “No!” “No. some people come up a bit later than others [some never]. The seeds are planted. When they’re ready to bloom they will.”

I said this because I believe that everyone should be allowed to participate voluntarily in my dance class. I do not believe in ‘forcing’ but rather in ‘encouraging’. I see my responsibility as teacher to provide every opportunity

for talents to develop and grow. This requires me to ‘water’ and ‘feed’ the soil in which these talents are expected to grow. This ‘nurturing’ is my responsibility when teaching and as ‘gardener’ I do not expect the same results from all ‘seeds sown’. I trust that when and if individuals are ready they will take ‘root’.

I had chosen to allow Mr. Under-the-Radar to ‘escape’. I did not feel that eight lessons was sufficient for me to delve into the possible reasons why he had not wished to participate but I ‘felt’ that I should not ‘force’ him. I myself had been “Ms. Under-the-Radar” at school when it came to P.E lessons or extra mural sport. I had no desire to participate no matter how often I was encouraged. I believe there will always be those who do not want to participate. As far as I was concerned he was still witnessing and watching others and in his observation was also ‘learning’.

He had watched and participated in groups and that was enough for me.”(Appendix 2, class 8)

As I reflected on this decision of mine to allow a student to slip ‘under the radar’ I began to consider the implications of such a decision in the long term. I realise that if I had continued working with these children, that I may have been impelled eventually to find out the reasons for his non participation. My intuition combined with the possibility that he was ‘just like me,’ seemed to influence my actions. I did not want him to suffer as I had. Now I realise there may have been other reasons for his non-participation which I was unaware of, but because of the short duration of my course I felt it was unnecessary to ‘force’ his participation. I found solace in the advice of Murray,

The act of dancing, particularly dancing with others, implies voluntary participation on the part on the dancer. Other performances involving human movement, for good or ill, can be imposed on the participant against his will, and the result of his engaging in them will be much the same as though he had willed it. He can be forced to march, dig lift, carry on complicated movement patterns under sufficient pressure, but to dance, no! in dance something of the self must be given out, not held back or repressed; otherwise the spark that makes it exhilarating, dynamic, and vital is extinguished (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 17).

At this point I became aware of the fact that “re-creation ... is one of flamenco’s defining characteristics ... it is a solo art, always – even when several are performing

together” (Totton, 2003, p. 19). This boy had perhaps sensed that even group performance involved a certain amount of individual ‘exposure’. My decision to keep participation voluntary placed increased demands on me as the teacher: I had to simultaneously guard our ‘atmosphere of trust’ and inspire willing participation. Murray suggests that in an atmosphere of “... fear, suppression or imposition, dancing emerges as no more than a series of wooden mimetics” (R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 17). I realise that I was not about to force anyone to perform ‘wooden’ ‘mechanical’ movements in order to achieve total participation. “One’s heart must be in it if what emerges from the act is a genuine dance experience for both dancer and observer”(R. L. Murray, 1963, p. 18).

Learning to dance from the ‘heart’ is fundamental to authenticity and this cannot happen when participation is ‘forced’. My own personal experience of ‘painful participation’ caused me to find myself finely balanced on the edge of indecision. I do know that many students are in fact slipping ‘under the radar’ in the educational system and that I as teacher should be very aware of those who may be doing so when under my care. However, I rely on my intuition to assist me with such decisions. I had been reading Mr. Under-the-Radar’s body language which conveyed to me that he was unwilling: every time a new group went to perform he would lower his body closer to the ground and literally crawl to another spot to hide. I rely on body language more than words for momentary truth. If I had had more time I would have investigated further and possibly encouraged even his limited participation.

5.2 Authenticity in the Group

In class 8, Mr. Silence insisted on dancing ‘his way’ and asked me if he could perform his creation for the class. I intuitively felt his ‘need’ to dance ‘his way’.

“He then proceeded to go on stage dance another new creation of his own in total silence. I, the class, his teacher and the headmaster sat in silence as we witnessed this boy ‘speaking’ with his body. I felt it was a privilege to watch. He held us all completely transfixed with what I felt was a performance that was both astounding and profoundly moving. At the end of the class one girl said that what she felt they had learnt was that even though some people “don’t speak much” they can “speak with their body”. I was amazed at her depth of perception: who dares to say that learners are empty vessels which we are there

to be filled? My response was to thank Mr. Silence with all the sincerity I could express.”(Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 64 – class 8)

Laban suggests that

Movement-thinking does not, as thinking in words does, serve orientation in the external world, but rather it perfects man’s orientation in his inner world in which impulses surge and seek an outlet in doing, acting and dancing (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 17).

I wonder whether perhaps Mr. Silence had used movement to assist him to orientate himself in his inner world, and had found an outlet for this inner world in dance which other forms of communication did not afford him.

Whilst animals’ movements are instinctive and mainly done in response to external stimuli, those of man are charged with human qualities and he expresses himself and communicates through his movements something of his inner being (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 75).

Many of us “have lost this language of the body (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 91). I felt that Mr. Silence had re-discovered it for himself and was sharing his discovery with us. He had taken us into “The world too deep for speech, ” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 95), into “... the silent world of ideas and inner stirrings” which lie “ brooding within ... actions” (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 97).

The student must realise that there exists no right or wrong forms of an interpretation. It is for the artistic temperament and taste to find out which interpretation is preferred ... [and]to risk the acceptance or non acceptance of his interpretation (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 138).

With children I believe this ‘risk’ should be a calculated one in which the teacher stands vigilant guard over an atmosphere of trust and respect. This young mans insistence on performing solo in silence confirmed to me my need to remain ‘open to possibility’. I had tried to include him in the group by encouraging him to do the class choreography and here he seemed to be insisting that even though he had done that, he in fact wanted to express himself ‘differently’. He reminded me that ‘different’ can share the ‘same’ space. I felt his insistence on his own authentic way of expressing himself became opportunity for others to do the same.

“At this point Mr. Rhythm asked if he too could show his ‘new creation’ to the class. He had continued developing it even when I had not asked him to do so. I was thrilled. He jumped up with his ‘company’ of two clappers to back him. He organised them to sit on chairs and give him rhythmic backing for his dance. I was so impressed with his innovation. I could hardly believe the level of initiative I was seeing him express.” (Appendix 2, class 8)

Mr. Rhythm’s ‘difference’ was inherent rhythmic talent which found opportunity to be revealed and progress during the course. Was this enough? Perhaps the discovery of his talent had another hidden purpose? Later one of his peers observed,

“The focus that he’s putting into his dancing he’s also focusing in his class. So it’s kind of gone from the dancing to the classroom.” (Appendix 2, class 8)

The teacher confirmed this.

This session was the cherry on top of the cake for me! The children are so much more confident. They come out after a dancing period oozing confidence and as one learner mentioned, this confidence has overflowed into other lessons.”(Appendix 3, week 4)

After 4 lessons, the teacher also remarked on the ‘differences’ which she observed in her students:

“I am so amazed to see how some of the learners who have experienced learning a difficulty in class but here in dancing, have actually excelled! Wow what a boost to their self-esteem!”(Appendix 3, week 2)

In Mr. Rhythm’s case, having encountered rejection in many instances in the school environment, perhaps the discovery of his ability may have provided him with the necessary boost to his self esteem to motivate his engagement in other activities in which he did not normally excel or wish to engage. Howard Gardner in discussing multiple intelligences suggests that “individual profiles must be considered in the light of goals pursued by the wider society” (Lee, 1990, p. 11).

If this is so I would argue that students like Mr. Rhythm whose “kinaesthetic intelligence” (Lee, 1990, p. 10) was only revealed in the dance class, need opportunity to develop this further. Discussing the behavioural approach to the classroom Kevin Wheldall and Frank Merrett in Lee state:

The main assumption is that children's behaviour is primarily learned and maintained as a result of their interactions with their environment, which includes other children and teachers. Consequently, children's behaviour can be changed by altering certain features of that environment (Lee, 1990, p. 15).

Here they suggest that rewards and consequences are needed to modify children's behaviour. I do not however believe that "... teaching is about changing children's behaviour" (Lee, 1990, p. 15). This seems to me to suggest a linear process where teachers become responsible for how students behave. I rather believe that teaching is about providing opportunity for children to discover and develop their talents. Teachers can support this quest by broadening the range of opportunity available to children for this to happen, in order to nurture self esteem. Perhaps in this way many behavioural problems in school could be averted. I believe affirmation is a powerful motivator and opportunities to be affirmed in school should be varied and numerous.

In Mr. Rythm's case he had come to 're-member' himself 'whole' (Lussier-Ley, 2010) and in so doing seemed to be able to 'modify' his behaviour without an external process of rewards and consequences which had quite clearly not served him to this point. He merely needed opportunity to discover his 'intelligence' in one aspect of his being in order for it to have an influence on 'the whole' of his being. The 'external' was not 'consequences' attempting to modify his behaviour, but 'opportunity' to 're-member' and be affirmed. In Mr. Rhythm's case the effect was visible after five lessons.

Leading and Following in the Group

I used the group to introduce qualities of 'leader' and 'follower' in flamenco. In class 3,

"We sat down to reflect on why the clapping had sometimes not worked. The responses included "they weren't following the dancer or they weren't together... the clappers were not concentrating on the dancers ... some started before others". When I asked what it was like to dance to poor clapping responses included "you can't dance to it ... its frustrating ... its annoying and confusing". These were observations I was hoping for. I feel that if dancers had personal experience of trying to dance to poor clapping they may be more inclined to make an effort to clap properly for others. For this reason I always insisted the same group that had just danced were made to clap for the same group.

I hoped to encourage the empathy and sensitivity that being a good 'background worker' often requires. They did not have the focus or accolades but their work was vital for the success of the whole. Learning to give without expecting to receive is part of being a good 'backer'. ” (Appendix 2, class 3)

Here I used “group talk” (Loughran, 2004, p. 835) combined with personal experience to become aware of the importance of sensitive ‘backing’ for a flamenco dancer. After reflection I felt I needed to demonstrate the body language that communicates leadership in flamenco.

“I then asked what a good leader should do. They responded: “Lead!” I then asked how they do this in the dance context. One responded by saying “by dancing.” I felt this was insufficient and decided to ‘show’ them what I would do if I was leading badly.”(Appendix 2, class 3)

Words were insufficient to convey what a good leader ‘moved’ like in flamenco: I needed to use my body to do this. “... man expresses himself splendidly whilst not bringing the tongue into play” (Jousse, et al., 1997, p. 668).

I used my example to encourage focus on the body language of leadership. First I demonstrated ‘bad’ leadership and then ‘good’. Reflections were very accurate.

“Their descriptions of my ‘leading’ included: “not putting enough effort into it ... not loud enough ... you don’t look like you want to do it ... you’re not moving ... It doesn’t look like you are dancing.” I then reminded that to be a good leader as a dancer required them to be strong and clear and to not be afraid to “take charge”. I then demonstrated how shuffling movements of the feet were not easy to clap for. In other words when the dancer doesn’t lead well it is difficult to be a good follower or clapper.”(Appendix 2, class 3)

Later I reflected how understanding of this may benefit children.

“I believe that life is constantly presenting opportunities to ‘lead’ and ‘follow’ and that as a society we should give our children opportunities to identify the skills needed for both. Personal experience of both is even better. Just as I believe teaching is so inextricably linked to learning so is ‘leading’ to ‘following’. Life is a constant vacillation between the two where the distinctions are often not easily ‘boxed’ as separate activities. Giving children opportunities

to experience both in flamenco provides an opportunity to develop these skills where the body is used as medium of communication.”(Appendix 2, class 3)

Can we be leaders and followers simultaneously and should circumstance not dictate which is required? I started to imagine the educational implications of allowing students to experience the ‘body language’ of being a ‘leader’ and a ‘follower’. From my own experience it seems to me that a society that is constantly promoting qualities of leadership in children to the exclusion of those qualities required of a good follower seems to be suggesting that leaders are more important than followers. There would be no-one to lead if there were no followers. I believe poor leadership often fails to recognise and acquaint itself with the experience of the follower and equally good followers need experiential knowledge of the challenges of leadership. I used flamenco to explore these ideas of being ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ through corporeal and audio communication.

In the following two clips I introduce these ideas to the class and I always used the same group to ‘back’ after having danced. In this way I tried to encourage them to clap properly, as the same people who they were clapping for, would clap for them.

(Appendix 5, Video 65 – class 3)

(Appendix 5, Video 66 – class 3)

In flamenco ‘leading’ and ‘following’ are mutually inter-dependant. I believe this has broader social implications and resonates with Freire,

If true commitment to the people, involving the transformation of the reality by which they are oppressed, requires a theory of transforming action, this theory cannot fail to assign the people a fundamental role in the transformation process (Freire, 1970, p. 107).

I would argue that we cannot fully understand what good ‘leading’ or ‘following’ requires in flamenco until we have had experience of both. I believe life provides us with opportunities to be ‘leaders’ and ‘followers’ and children can benefit from opportunities to explore both through movement, without resorting to theoretical jargon. Acquaintance with the experience of others is liberating. Those who “are truly committed to liberation, their action and reflection cannot proceed without the action

and reflection of others” (Freire, 1970, p. 107). I used personal experience of being a leader and follower combined with observation and reflection to that end.

In the following clips the mutual interdependence of leader and follower are explored and experienced personally.

(Appendix 5, Video 67 – class 7)

(Appendix 5, Video 68 – class 7)

Perhaps opportunities to communicate multiple perspectives of an experience could help to modify tyrannical tendencies in leadership and unquestioning subservience from followers. Awareness of relationships which are mutually dependant for success I believe, require frequent and meaningful communication. It should matter to one what the other is experiencing. Times of reflection were used to communicate ‘problems’ with performance.

I did not exclude myself in this matter. I was supposedly the leader on most occasions but there were times when I allowed the children to influence my decisions. It mattered to me how they were feeling and I used reflection, communication and intuition to guide my decisions. In class 8 I initially asked the class to divide up into groups of two (hoping to graduate to solo). I soon realised that many were not ready for this,

“... many asked if they could go in threes and fours as well. I realised that while some enjoyed the ‘group feeling’ possibly some were not ready for the ‘high exposure’ of duo or solo performances. My decision was based on my instinct not on my lesson plan. I think in retrospect this was a good idea because it allowed for different groupings. Those who preferred to have the comfort and safety of the group could have it. Those who may not have been included in a group were also able to perform without feelings of ‘being left out’ which may have intensified their sense of isolation. It felt better to allow them to enjoy their final day in the way that they felt ready for or comfortable with.” (Appendix 2, class 8)

Perhaps my intuitive decision to allow freedom of choice in groupings was more important than I realised at the time. I think it may have allowed students to ‘take charge’ of their conditions of performance and perhaps that encouraged the high levels

of motivation I observed. Palmer believes that teachers should be able to take criticism from their learners and not only their peers. If students are not given opportunity to critique those who profess to 'know' they may not "become producers of knowledge and discerning consumers of what other people claim to know" (Palmer, 1998, p. 94).

I knew solo work was beneficial but they knew that they were not ready for it yet. I resisted adopting the position that I was always in control and correct and welcomed them challenging the status quo. Even though I began with big groups in the earlier classes and progressed to smaller groups and solo work as confidence increased, I still allowed them, even in the last class, to take charge of their conditions of performance when necessary.

5.3 Observation, Reflection, Progressive Learning in the Group

I used group work to encourage observation, reflection and progressive learning. I observed how I used the 'good' and 'bad' examples to encourage children to critique one another. In class 8,

"I began by asking the clappers to start clapping. I did this because they needed to establish a unity in sound and it also then gave the dancers the opportunity to 'lead' by deciding if the clapping was too slow or fast for them and to 'lead'. I was thrilled when the dancers did just that. As they began the audience began to 'jaleo' (shout words of encouragement) in all the appropriate places. This particular group being the first was not the best. When they finished I asked the others for comments on the clapping. I did this because I felt that the clappers had not been able to keep a steady rhythm throughout and that this had led to the 'break down' in performance.

I knew this to be the problem but by asking the class to problem solve I was hoping to see if they were able to and also felt that if the correction came from their peers it may have been more meaningful. One observed that "they started off good but then they went down". I was satisfied with this response and asked the groups to swop over.

The next group of four girls started well and really 'led' the clappers. They performed wonderfully. I responded with "fantastic!" I asked the class for comments on the clappers. The response came: "they were very good". I

repeated their observation in agreement. I then asked what they thought of the dancers to which they replied: “very good”. For me this is what I call ‘informed praise’ which is rooted in personal experience. I then confirmed their praise by adding mine: “excellent!””(Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 69 – class 8)

With these two groups I saw evidence of progress and learning. Each successive group seemed to benefit from observing and reflecting on the previous one. The ‘informed praise’ which was given by peers as well as me, seemed to leave them feeling satisfied. When someone who has experienced similar struggles to my own, praises my efforts, I feel much more affirmed than if the same praise comes from someone who has limited experience of what I have just achieved. For this reason whenever I divided the groups up, I insisted that the same group who had just given critique were now critiqued. In this way I tried to encourage sensitivity to the others experience. I felt that the praise or critique which was given would therefore be more meaningful. I also encouraged respectful focus on performers.

“At this the third set ran up eagerly and began clapping. It consisted of four boys clapping and three dancing. I had to remind the audience that the performers deserved their respect by not making “back ground noise” and I reminded the performers to wait for that respect. I asked for the audience responses to the dancers. This comment was forwarded: “good but they looked nervous”. I then asked about the clapping: “the clapping could have been louder”. Both these comments were very valid.” (Appendix 2, class 8)

By asking performers to wait for evidence of respect I was insisting on their respectful attention to encourage constructive critique and meaningful praise. I later encouraged performers to include critique of their own work,

“When they swopped over the next set of clappers described them self as “confused” as they went a “bit wrong”. The clappers expressed their difficulty in following the dancers because they didn’t know which person to ‘follow’ as they were all different. I then pointed out how difficult it was to clap for a group of dancers when they didn’t ‘keep together’. I asked the dancers what they thought and they told me that they “forgot”. The reason I asked for comments from different perspectives was to encourage awareness of self and sensitivity to

the other. I also hoped to encourage continued focus on multiple levels.”(Appendix 2, class 8)

The ability to focus on multiple levels I believe is assisted by the ability to critique self, together with openness to critique from multiple sources. I observed how each group presented new opportunities to learn from the experience of others without having to necessarily have had first hand experience. By witnessing the problems of others, each group had opportunity to avoid similar ones when it came to their turn. The next group were even better. This progressive learning was organic, where each groups experience potentially helped to influence the learning of others. In this ‘organic’ progressive learning I observed my role as leader becoming superfluous as children began self correcting without my or peer assistance.

“After this group of boys there seemed greater enthusiasm to participate and there were more volunteers to go and clap for the dancers. I got a sense that they were enjoying themselves and ‘nerves’ seemed to diminish. The fourth set of boys was not that sure of their steps. I watched from the side and decided to refrain from “helping”. I then became aware of a small group of boys who were watching deciding to clap for them.

At the end I asked the performers to identify their own problems. The audience probably saw them too but I was more concerned that the performers themselves were aware of what went wrong in order to encourage them to identify their own problems. I went over to one dancer and asked how he felt to which he responded “confused”. I then assured him that I did not think he was ‘alone’ in that sentiment. Another said: “I forgot my steps”. I then asked the clappers what they thought of their own performance and the spontaneous response came: “perfect!” I decided to leave them on a positive note.”(Appendix 2, class 8)

This clip shows the children taking more and more control of their performances and how they seem to learn from each others performances.

(Appendix 5, Video 70 – class 8)

I observed here how I was aware that not all experiences were ‘good’ and how I consoled a learner when the reality of own performance seemed hard to bare. I empathised by sharing my experiences with them. Perhaps these boys had gained their confidence from watching others (where performance often looks easier than it is) and then when it actually came to doing it, the realisation of the difficulties became apparent. My choice to allow them to perceive their less than perfect performance as ‘perfect’ may be considered incorrect. I however feel that my intuitive decision was based on my desire to encourage self confidence together with skill. I reasoned that if motivation was lost through lack of self confidence, how would skill or confidence ever get a chance to improve?

“The next set of six girls danced at a tremendous pace. I asked them at the end to comment on their own performance. The response came: “we were too fast”. I agreed that they were too fast for on another.” (Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 71 – class 8)

Later Mr. Rhythm and his group danced.

“The next set was Mr. Rhythm and his clappers. He provided the solid leadership that his two friends needed in order to successfully perform the entire sequence faultlessly and at pace. When I asked for comments the response was “Fantastic!” which indeed they were. One’s natural skill had assisted two others to achieve at his side what they might not have achieved alone. The spontaneous grins on their faces were evidence of a sharp rise in self esteem and pride. When asked how they would comment on their performance they replied “excellent!”

I asked the three clappers (Mr. Rhythm and his clappers) to comment on their own performance to which they replied confidently: “We were too good!” I allowed their self confidence to remain unchallenged. All these responses were wonderful as I saw them as an indication of their ability to identify problems through observation and to learn from watching others as well as an indication of a rise in levels of confidence.

I found it wonderful how so many young folk were able to praise their own performance with such ease. I began to question what happens to so many when

this confidence in own ability often diminishes with maturity. Even the headmaster (who had come to watch the performances) laughed in response to their confident self appraisal. The clappers also described their performance as “very good”. I left it there as I was enjoying their youthful confidence. I noticed how many of them volunteered to clap over and over and how many requested to perform again. I saw this as an indication of their enthusiasm and enjoyment.” (Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 72 – class 8)

I noticed how this rise in confidence seemed to progress in spite of the critique that was being given. I was delighted with the quality of critique but even more so with the enthusiasm to participate. I realised that without participation there can be no opportunity to progress. Their enthusiasm seemed to peak at this point. I saw progressive evidence of enjoyment, participation, self esteem, skills development and critique energising participation. When all seemed to be going along as ‘planned’ along came the ‘unplanned’.

Empathetic Group, Suspended Teacher Intervention

Class 8 continued,

“The next set of four girls was very weak. The shock of the contrast was evident within moments of their beginning and there was an awkward silence as this realisation began to dawn on the class. It was at this point that the lesson transformed from performance and critical evaluation to something far more profound.

This set of girls was the last group remaining to perform. They were the ones who I had noticed throughout the course as ‘struggling’ with learning the steps and to keep up with the pace of the majority of the other learners. I had anticipated that some learners would struggle with certain movements or with co-ordination and speed recall of steps. However I know from experience, that sometimes the learners who may not seem to have natural ability when given more time or encouragement often go further than expected. When they ended up being the last group I was not surprised. Perhaps they felt they needed as much time as possible before trying.

They seemed to start well but not long into the routine they started to flounder as they battled to remember and perform the steps at speed. I decided to let them continue 'trying' for as long as possible with out my assistance. Up until this point they only had a group of volunteers to clap behind them. However as they began to struggle to continue despite my verbal encouragement the rest of the class who were sitting watching them spontaneously 'sensed' their need of 'support'. As they struggled to continue a small group of boys sitting on the side began to clap in unison and shouts of "bien! bien!"(good! good!) broke the awkward 'silence'. I was completely astounded at their sensitivity and immediate response to these girls 'cries' for 'help'.

These girls managed to complete the sequence with their support and encouragement and finished to enthusiastic applause from the whole class. I responded by expressing my approval and acknowledgement of their sensitivity: "how sweet of you to clap for them ... well done to the dancers too. I know you didn't find it easy. Well done!" (Appendix 2, class 8)

In one moment what could have been embarrassing 'exposure' of lack of learning or skill had transformed into an expression of empathy for the other. I was speechless. "... the most deeply moving moments of our lives usually leave us speechless and in such moments our body carriage may well be able to express what otherwise would be inexpressible" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 95). I had resisted my impulse to help.

If the educator should ever believe that for the sake of education he has to practise selection and arrangement, then he will be guided by another criterion than that of inclination, however legitimate this may be in its own sphere; he will be guided by the recognition of values which is in his glance as an educator. But even then his selection remains suspended, under constant correction by the special humility of the educator for whom the life and particular being of all his pupils is the decisive factor to which his 'hierarchical' recognition is subordinated (Buber, 1947, p. 122).

By resisting my impulse to intervene and allowing these girls to continue, I created a 'space' for others to do so. Instead of possibly laughing at them, these boys chose to 'help' by clapping to show their sincere and genuine support for these girls. This empathetic resonance was 'felt' as well as 'seen'.

(Appendix 5, Video 73 - class 8)

The teacher reflected:

One good aspect that has definitely developed is the support for one another. This support was visibly shown when the group of girls, who battle to remember the full routine, performed. At one stage they had lost the sequence and at that moment the group of boys sitting on the side joined in with the clappers, and this encouraged the girls to continue and they were able to complete the dance. This spontaneous action brought a lump into my throat - I was really touched. (Appendix 3, week 4)

This experience transformed me and my perspective of my course. My original intention had been to give a series of classes which could possibly help to inspire teachers to include similar into their learning programmes, but I realised here *“the potential of developing a sense of empathy which goes beyond the mere transference and development of dance skills.”* (Appendix 2, class 8)

I too was learning from ‘the incorrect’/ ‘the unplanned’. It became the secret ingredient which transformed my understanding into something new. I observed the girls who thought that they would not manage having the opportunity to realise, that with the support of others, they were able to do more than they anticipated. Their fearful situation became an opportunity to succeed. For the boys who encouraged them it was an opportunity to assist others and empathise with another’s plight. For those observing, it became an indirect opportunity to learn from the experiences of others. For the teacher it became opportunity to feel touched by the capacity of the children to support one another. For me it was the opportunity to experience and ‘feel’ the deeper implications of the empathetic resonance I had observed.

Why this situation had not ended in a disaster? Had we established an atmosphere of sufficient trust for me to be able to resist my impulse to influence without compromising it? Was my influence no longer vital to its continuance? This I cannot say with certainty. What I can say with certainty is that in that moment I ‘felt’ the urge to withhold my influence. I believe this intuitive decision to resist assisting those girls gave others the opportunity to do so. Why I did not assist them remains a mystery to me. I just ‘felt’ I should, even though my normal instinct would have been to avoid any compromise of self esteem. What could have been a painful experience in fact wasn’t.

In that moment I felt as if I was not in control and had merely played my part as directed.

5.4 Learning through Reflection in the Empathetic Group

At the end of class 8 our 'time of reflection' evidenced learning on multiple levels. The responses were often quite soft so I repeated them for the class to hear and have written them in a way that approximates what was said:

"This has been the 'best practice' you've ever had."

Mr. Persistent (the young boy who I recognised as slow to learn, but never gave up trying) felt that he had really improved. I responded by saying: "You know what? I've just said that to Mr. Spiteri (the headmaster). You have really improved, and I'm so proud of you for being able to go from being a little insecure, to doing it on your own (solo) Wow!"

"It really helped you learn as a team- aah I'm so happy to hear that."

"You want me to carry on doing it because it brings the peoples inside out"

(Ms. Differently-Abled) The little dyslexic girl said she was "very sad" that it was over.

"We've learnt to set aside our differences and we've learnt to support one another and to clap for one another and we want to thank you for that." (Whole class burst into applause.) I respond: "Thank you SO much! That's what dancing should be. We should all get together and have fun."

"We really found we started to work as a team"- "I'm happy you saw that and it is such fun."

I then turned to include the headmaster who I had noticed slowly coming closer and closer until he finally ended up sitting on the floor with us.

"Don't you agree with that?" I asked him.

This is what he replied:

“I think there’s things that they understand that they don’t even understand that they’re understanding ... they don’t even realise they’re understanding, today that I saw that you saw ... there were people dancing today that you clapped for that as a team people were dancing that slowed down and I watched people dancing and while clapping you actually slowed the clapping down to follow them without ever looking at them and that’s a connection that you’ve developed over these weeks with the people who were dancing without even realising it. That’s an empathy. Do you know what an empathy is? It’s a connection that you developed with the dancers, such a close connection that you were able to follow them and not be involved in yourself while you were clapping but be involved with the dancer and follow them for their sake not your sake.”

I then agreed that it was about “caring”.” (Appendix 2, class 8)

(Appendix 5, Video 74 – class 8)

For Laban

Some people who by-pass their fellow men, ignoring their struggles, sufferings and joys, miss a great deal of the meaning of life and what it offers. They miss the opportunity to experience what is hidden below the surface of existence, and they tend to ignore the theatre where the depths are revealed. They lack the sense of the significance of persons and situations, and the world appears to them, more often than not, an accumulation of meaningless happenings.....a person who has no interest in his fellow men’s striving is not an actor, hardly is he a human being. The emptiness of life resulting from such a lack of interest and sympathy spells blindness towards the most important values of human existence (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 107).

These reflections revealed deeper life lessons which emerged in the ‘empathetic group’.

Pithouse suggests that

interactive learning through whole class discussion is supported by the growth of a sense of self-assurance for each learner and of an associated atmosphere of mutual trust, support, and empathy within each class (K. Pithouse, 2007, p. 84).

I realise that each child would have had a unique focus in their learning, but when one remarked on ‘learning to set aside their differences’ which resulted in the whole class bursting into applause, I became aware that the whole class felt the same.

(Appendix 5, Video 74 time: 1.43-1.53 - class 8)

Here the group and the individual united in applause. The teacher reflected:

The comments from the children show how much they have learnt and gained. The comment - "the dancing has allowed the inner person to come out" really sums up the true value of the lessons. (Appendix 3, week 4)

Her observation of the ‘inner person’ ‘coming out’ made me reflect on how important an atmosphere of trust in the ‘empathetic group’ may be in this regard. She later expressed her gratitude for what she felt had been the main value in the classes:

A big thank you to you Linda for your perseverance and determination - you have brought into the Grade 7's fun enjoyment and most important factor - you can work hard and still have fun!" (Appendix 3, week 4)

I regard her reflections as evidence of my values of work and fun in my practice. The ability to focus on the needs of others is one of the inherent qualities of being a ‘backer’ in flamenco. It requires individual commitment to group experience, even when one is not ‘centre stage’. Here I observed that this shared goal could be perceived of as ‘fun’. I was surprised at how many of them expressed high levels of enjoyment, even though I had expected them to work so hard irrespective of whether they were ‘following’ or ‘leading’: the boundary between ‘work’ and ‘fun’ seemed to me to dissolve.

In this video I saw children enjoying having worked hard and learnt well.

(Appendix 5, Video 75 – class 7)

In the final reflections in class 8, when one spoke on behalf of the class, it suggested to me that she felt others shared her sentiments,

“It’s a memory that you grade sevens will never forget ...”

(Appendix 2, class 8)

Further comments included,

“Together we can achieve more.”

“People who didn’t speak much spoke through their dance.”

(Appendix 2, class 8)

This first comment suggested to me that one of them had come to understand that ‘more’ is achieved when the group and the individual are in symbiotic relationship. The second comment suggested to me that another had become aware of the body as communicator and that it was possible to ‘speak’ through movement. In this final class I saw evidence of the influence of my values of work, fun, authenticity, respect, empathy, organic experience in the learning of others. I became

aware that for me to understand my educational influence in the learning of the other I must see that what I have done has been mediated in the other’s learning with values to which I subscribe (Whitehead, 2009a lines 689-691).

At the conclusion of the class I reflected:

“What an amazing day it had been. It had once more confirmed that while I as teacher will continue to plan for my lessons with as much vigour as I can, there will always be unexpected ‘detours’ which I must be prepared for and willing to take. Often my greatest ‘discoveries’ and my most meaningful learning take place at these times.

... I thought I was there to teach dance when in fact I was there to let dance teach me and others. Perhaps dancing and learning are one. As I dance I learn and as I learn I dance” (Appendix 2, class 8).

Here I saw boundaries between ‘boxes’ as existing only in my consciousness. I became more aware of my ‘whole being knowledge’ having transformed and “ I find myself dancing in the *spaces in between* what I know and what I am discovering” (Lussier-Ley, 2010, p. 212).

5.5 The Group as Community of Truth

Palmer suggests that “to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced” (Palmer, 1998, p. 90)

This community is recognised when reality is viewed as “a web of communal relationships, and we can know reality only by being in community with it” (Palmer, 1998, p. 95).

He suggests that:

The community of truth is an image of knowing that embraces both the great web of being on which all things depend and the fact that our knowing of those things is helped, not hindered, by our being enmeshed in that web (Palmer, 1998, p. 99).

I observed my desire to ‘blending in’ where I literally placed myself physically in amongst students, resulted from a subconscious realisation that I was part of a ‘web’ of learning and knowing. Feelings of superiority or inferiority dissolved in an awareness of others authenticity. Class 6 showed an amazing display of creativity and escalating self esteem while I merely observed.

“One of the little girls was also amazing when she naturally used percussive sounds to add another rhythmic dynamic to her sequence and she managed to do this while she was dancing ... One group of two decided to rush up onto the stage to make use of the wooden floor to ‘amplify’ their footwork. They had probably heard how loud my beats sounded on the stage and decided that they wanted to do the same. Their beats were wonderfully clear and consequently the next group also decided to utilise the sound of a wooden floor. Then another boy decided to dance solo. His rhythm was wonderful and he received enthusiastic applause.

I then encouraged a bigger group of six boys to go and dance. They formed a circle and did two wonderful combinations which they repeated in unison. Then came two girls and they used complex floor patterns and choreography together with the voice. They received enthusiastic applause.”(Appendix 2, class 6)

(Appendix 5, Video 76 - class 6)

(Appendix 5, Video 77- class 6)

According to Palmer:

... competition is the antithesis of community, an acid that can dissolve the fabric or relationships whereas conflict is the dynamic by which we test ideas in the open, in a communal effort to stretch each other and make better sense of the world (Palmer, 1998, p. 103).

I felt at this point all had a contribution to make to this ‘community of truth’ and these contributions were not in competition with one another in an ‘either-or’ but rather a ‘both-and’ holistic relationship. The atmosphere in which this was happening became filled with excitement and passion. I understood that:

truth is an external conversation about things that matter; conducted with passion and discipline ... the dynamic conversation of a community that keeps testing old conclusions and coming to new ones to be in truth we must know how to observe and reflect and listen, with passion and with discipline, in the circle around a given subject (Palmer, 1998, p. 104).

I felt I had at this point taken my place in the ‘circle around the subject’ and

... my gift as a teacher is the ability to dance with my students, to co-create with them in a context in which all of us can teach and learn, and that this gift works as long as I stay open and trusting and hopeful about who my students are (Palmer, 1998, p. 72).

I began to realise that if I assume that I as dance teacher am the ‘all knowing being’ I will more than likely never experience the joy that comes from witnessing the ‘knowing’ of others. I realised the enormous potential of creative opportunities to inspire the learning as well as the teaching processes. This was truly witnessing the subject at the centre of the circle with all taking their turn to jump into the middle to experience it up close.

The ‘unknown destination’ of creativity and authenticity continues to encourage me to remain receptive to new learning and allow the ‘subject’ to teach me. Palmer quotes the poet Robert Frost to make this point: “We dance around a ring and suppose, /But the Secret sits in the middle and knows.” (Palmer, 1998, p. 105)

I believe that we all have access to the “secret” and that at any given opportunity it may reveal itself to us. What I as teacher strive to do is keep that circle ‘open’ to opportunity.

CHAPTER 6

The Children's Journals

The children used 'simple' colourful descriptions of their experience and they evidence many of the values which I believe carry hope for the society in which I live.

Whatever our socio-cultural history I believe that educators around the world have a responsibility to enhance the flow of values and understandings that carry hope for the future of humanity. This involves sharing our different understandings of what constitutes a good social formation and which values and understandings carry hope for the future of humanity (Whitehead, 2009c, p. 119).

My understanding of flamenco as educational involves "resilience" to the "risks" that are involved as I realise my values and understandings may not be fully shared by others (Whitehead, 2009b, p. 9). I have endeavoured to deepen my "understanding of the socio-cultural influences that can constrain ..." (Whitehead, 2009b, p. 9) in order to explore this 'new' understanding. My risk was a calculated one but one worth taking as in each child's journal I see evidence of my influence in their learning and evidence of many of the values which I consider to carry hope for the future of humanity.

The greatest risk is that the power relations in a culture of conformity will stifle the students' creativity integrity and freedom in making a choice to respond to their lives and the world with the spontaneity of love and productive work"[and] "Given the globalisation of movements of capital with control being exercised in the interests of a minority with damaging results for the humanity of the majority, risk taking is inherent in protecting higher education to ensure that it carries hope for the future of humanity and our own (Whitehead, 2009b, p. 22).

The values I became aware of in their journals, include my values of respect, joy, trust, self esteem, effort, love. I have indicated my observations on the journals themselves. Even though I risk rejection, I regard 'risk' as intrinsic to being an artist and a pioneer because I believe " People strive for something that has value for them" (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 108). I have spent many years striving for 'value' through dance, but this is not shared by all artists.

An artist can display virtuosity for the satisfaction of his egoistic desires without bothering much about the degree of inner truthfulness which the shapes of his movement may reveal ... He does not even notice that he withholds the spiritual food for which people crave. He is content to satisfy their more superficial tastes, and is highly satisfied with external success ... Too many people today still think that all movement tuition and training consists in the learning of bodily tricks, and that the aim of such training is to exhibit the empty brilliance so highly praised in the virtuoso. This shows that most people have not the faintest conception of what

shape and rhythm of stage movement really is, and they are not aware of the deeper purpose it is meant to serve (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 159).

The ‘spiritual food’ for which people crave is I believe those values which enrich our lives rather than impoverish them. In the children’s reflections I saw how this dance experience had enriched many of them and I realised that therein lies the ‘deeper purpose’ of the dance experience.

The motions of bodies and sounds seen and heard on stage stir the imagination, awaken the will to look with open eyes into that vaguely discernable world, the world of human values (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 108).

I believe,

Our present form of civilisation has perhaps greater need than any earlier one to be awakened to the appreciation of our values. The speed of modern life is not only little adapted to quiet contemplation but the feeling for values seems to be steadily atrophying (Laban & Ullmann, 1971, p. 109).

I saw in their reflections evidence of the children’s profound capacity to value the dance experience and that flamenco as educational had been a holistic experience.

If an external “cause” is applied to an organism or a living body it will become internalised and transformed, and will be experienced as a stimulus, which in turn will be followed by a response. The response is not the mere mechanical effect of the cause, and this is due to the complete transformation which the latter has undergone ... the organism has made the stimulus its own, as it were ... the result is “new” in one degree or another (Smuts, 1927, p. 143).

Their responses evidenced for me transformed perceptions of self, others and dance. In contemporary South Africa, many of our children in primary education today were born into post apartheid South Africa. The change of government policy has provided new opportunities for them which were not available to their parents. Herein lies the challenge to educators: to devise opportunities to allow them to find ‘new’ ways of being, as they move forward progressively in a more humane and loving society. Maqoma suggests that “arts education and participation in arts and culture” is “the best way of improving the welfare of the people of this country” and that “(t)herein lies a challenge to develop an inspiring arts programme to appeal to children from widely different cultures (Maqoma, 2001, p. 77).

As I read the children's comments and engaged with the values which I saw evident, I realised that,

people of different backgrounds can transcend cultural barriers and create a new and dynamic culture for all South Africans ... South Africa has a diverse culture and its diversity we cannot afford to remain in our little squares; it just doesn't work. We are a world as we are ... (Maqoma, 2001, p. 79).

Progressing to a "new reality" requires living with the 'old' and 'new' and trying to adapt to change while simultaneously conserving the traditional (Maxwell, 2008, p. 130). This ability to embrace the 'old' and the 'new' simultaneously seems to me to be the challenge facing dance throughout the ages and yet I saw evidence of children from diverse backgrounds engaging openly and joyously in something 'new'. Even though the "uneven playing fields" of dance (Samuel, 2008, p. 137) during the 1990's in South Africa are still in residue form in education, here I saw hope of this changing. I realised that "If we are to accept our complex urban, rural, mass and high culture differences, integrate and include one another's dance practices as we shape a tolerant, ubhuntu contemporary world then our hard work and effort will celebrate our deviance and value the individual spirit of dancing human beings" (Samuel, 2008, p. 140).

I realised that embracing the "high culture embodied in the school" but still being alert to the "challenges of including all people and all traditions and histories"(Soudien, 2007, p. 12) is not an easy matter. Soudien sees this problem as universal and "new pedagogical practices can be envisaged that have the potential to resist those forms of globalisation that are only about standardisation, homogenisation and universalisation" (Soudien, 2007, p. 13). As I read the children's reflections I saw tremendous capacity to embrace the 'new'. I saw evidence of 'high culture' blending with traditions and the 'new' embracing 'old' values of trust respect and love. Their individual unique focus in their reflections confirmed my insistence on resistance to homogenisation and standardisation.

I too had resisted conforming to old ways of teaching flamenco and their responses confirmed that "The aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle" [and] "...to be readable and engaging" (Bullough Jr & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 20) I feel the children's reflection are mini self-studies which are readable and engaging and which resist 'boxing'.

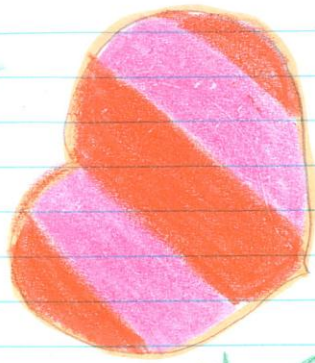
Knowledge is never capable of being reproduced faithfully and completely. It is always in a state of interpretation ... No knowledge is absolute ... Knowledge itself must, therefore, be made the object of inspection and not simply accepted or rejected because of where it comes from (Soudien, 2007, p. 14).

I have gleaned much knowledge from children and for this reason I include their 'whole' journal activity rather than edited versions. I saw in their reflections flamenco as educational seeking "a third interstitial space between the local and the global" with "people remaking meaning on their own terms"(Soudien, 2007, p. 14) encouraging "the development of deep forms of engagement with the *range* of knowledges that people have access to" (Soudien, 2007, p. 14) and allowing young people to "understand themselves critically" (Soudien, 2007, p. 15) and to think "*from within*" local conditions and not "*against*" them (Soudien, 2007, p. 16).

Their reflections may not be 'absolute' but for me they hint at the 'absolute' value of love. They confirm for me that it is impossible to do anything well, especially teach, without the capacity to love.

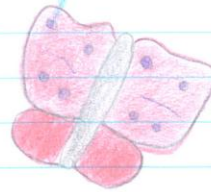
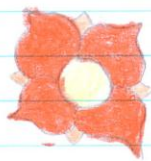
... knowledge is by definition the inquiry we make into the world, which is a pursuit inaugurated by a loving encounter with a teacher. With love, education becomes an open space for thought from which emerges knowledge. If education is to be a space where teacher and student search for knowledge, then we must strongly affirm that "Yes, a teacher and student can and must love each another." But ... it is important to make clear that, when a teacher and student love one another, they do not have sex, they do not merely care for one another, nor do they pass knowledge between each other. Rather, with love, both teacher and student become self-aware and recognise that "there is no such thing as teacher-student relation." This truth opens a space for both lovers to preserve the distinctiveness of their positions by turning away from one another and toward the world in order to produce knowledge through inquiry and thought ... If education is to be a space of thought, we must insist with Freire that "it is impossible to teach without the courage to love"³⁷

37. Freire, *Teachers as Cultural Workers*, 3. (Cho, 2005, pp. 94-95)



Enjoyment

I had a really really
great time. I enjoyed
dancing and I appreciate
what you did. I am not
a good dancer but I enjoyed
dancing with you.



Perceptions of ability did not interfere
with enjoyment

comment on dancing

Dear Linda

I found the dancing fun and interesting, fun exciting and hard

but I found some of the steps quite difficult such as the stamp punch heel I found difficult to go fast

Some of the steps were easy and I caught on quickly but others not so much I learnt that we all have different ways of learning. Sorry I will not be making the festival due to something my dad planned for that weekend. Thank you.

From

Awareness of own learning challenges, as well as those of others.



Enjoyment

Mr Silence

Enjoyment

Awareness of own learning

Comment on dancing

For the past 8 weeks you have helped us to learn dance. But you gave us the opportunity to be able to look, listen and learn. It was fun and enjoyable. This will be remembered for a very long time. When we were dancing we were concentrating carefully, and we can use that in class work. So I thank you for teaching the art of flamenco.

from: /

Understanding of self in relation to others through dance.

PS: You have also given the grade 7 & 8 a way to better understand each other.

Awareness of transferability of focus in dance to class work



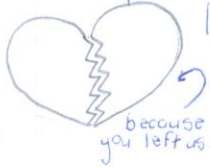
Dear Linda

I would like to thank you for all you have done for us, the grade 7s of Glenmore.



WE'LL MISS U!

Your presence here has improved my concentration and focus in many learning areas and I thank you for that.



LINDA YOU ROCK!



Flamenco made me realise that dancing is not as easy as it appears. Your dance moves were the bomb!

WHY DID YOU HAVE TO GO?



FLAMENCO
4
BEST DANCE '09

Changed perceptions of dance

FLAMENCO ROCKS

From

Sadness at my leaving

Gratitude for increased ability to concentrate and focus beyond the dance class

Linda

Awareness of value of experience beyond self

* Think you Linda for what you have done in our ~~street~~ School and I hope that what you have done to our school you do it to other school and not just schools I hope that you show it to the whole world. I am sure that I and the whole school appreciates what you have done. *

We love You

From:

Love and gratitude

To: Linda

Dear: Linda

I am really happy that you took your time to teach me how to dance.

I hope you come back next year to teach the grade six classes.

I am a really shy person when it comes to dancing but im not anymore because you gave me confidence.

Changed perceptions of self.
Realisation of increased confidence

I really liked the steps that you showed us and I appreciate it. I wish you could teach us longer because its just so fun.

I hope you go further in life because you are a exalent dancer and I think you have a real talent in dancing.

Appreciation and enjoyment

I know our class enjoyed the dancing lesson just as much as I did. Most of my friends don't like dancing but they did and the reason is because u believed in us.

Changed perceptions of dance.
Awareness of my 'belief' in them

From:

THANK
YOU

To : hinda

Day * 16 Nov 09

Time * 1:3:50 pm

Place * In class

love * 95% sure



MESSAGE

Gratitude for my 'lovely' encouragement

Thank you for everything.
Thank you for sharing your time with us. We love you so much. You encouraged us in a lovely way. I also liked your rhythm when you were saying "pam pam ~~para~~ param."

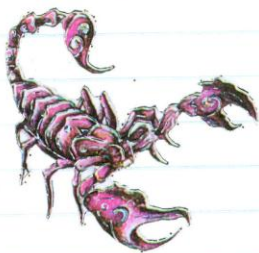


Ilu Gih

Enjoyment of 'vocals'

I also when you said the-
lay, bamoh.

We had a great time with you. I wish you could enjoy your year.



WE ♥ U



Love

To Linda

Dear Linda thank you for teaching us an amazing dance. We really enjoyed it and hope you carry on teaching other people the dance. It has been fun and a really good experience for me. We really appreciate it. THANK YOU!

Enjoyment, Gratitude.
Desire for others to experience same

Gratitude for my humour while

What I Thought About the dancing

Awareness of challenges in learning flamenco

I thought that the flamenco dance takes time to learn and needs lots of effort to perfect it. Our first section was easy but when we added extra stuff it was very confusing. We all enjoyed you being very humourise and fun so you made us have fun but at the same time we were learning. We All feel appreciated for what you have teachen us, Im sure that even the other teachers had fun by watching us.

Fun while learning

To: Linda

Gratitude to me for kindness

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Aware of benefits of group work

You inspired me to work hard and to stay determined!

Inspired work and determination

Together, we achieve better flamenco dances

Enjoyment

Happiness, we were always happy to come to dancing. Always learning more.

Now we can use this dance to achieve goals.

Kindness, you were always kind if we got a move wrong you showed us again and again and again.

You told use to be ourselves and we were.

Obedient, we listened to what you had to say.

Useless, None of us are useless.

! This ! is for our excitement 2 (twice) a week.

From: Struggler to achiever (as the serious one)

Authenticity

Self esteem

Realisation of transferability of dance skills to other activities

To: Aunty Kirpa

Awareness of life skills in dance and their transferability

Thank you very much for teaching us the dance Flamenco, It was a very nice experience. All the rules that you told us I'm sure to use in my life. You inspired me and touched my heart. I enjoyed every single practise with you and you taught me how to work as a team and think ahead. I don't think I will ever forget the dance. And I'm very sure that your students are very very happy to have a teacher like you in flamenco. We all going too miss you and your teachings and carry on at yer what you do because you do it best! I wish you and your students the best of luck for the concert.

From

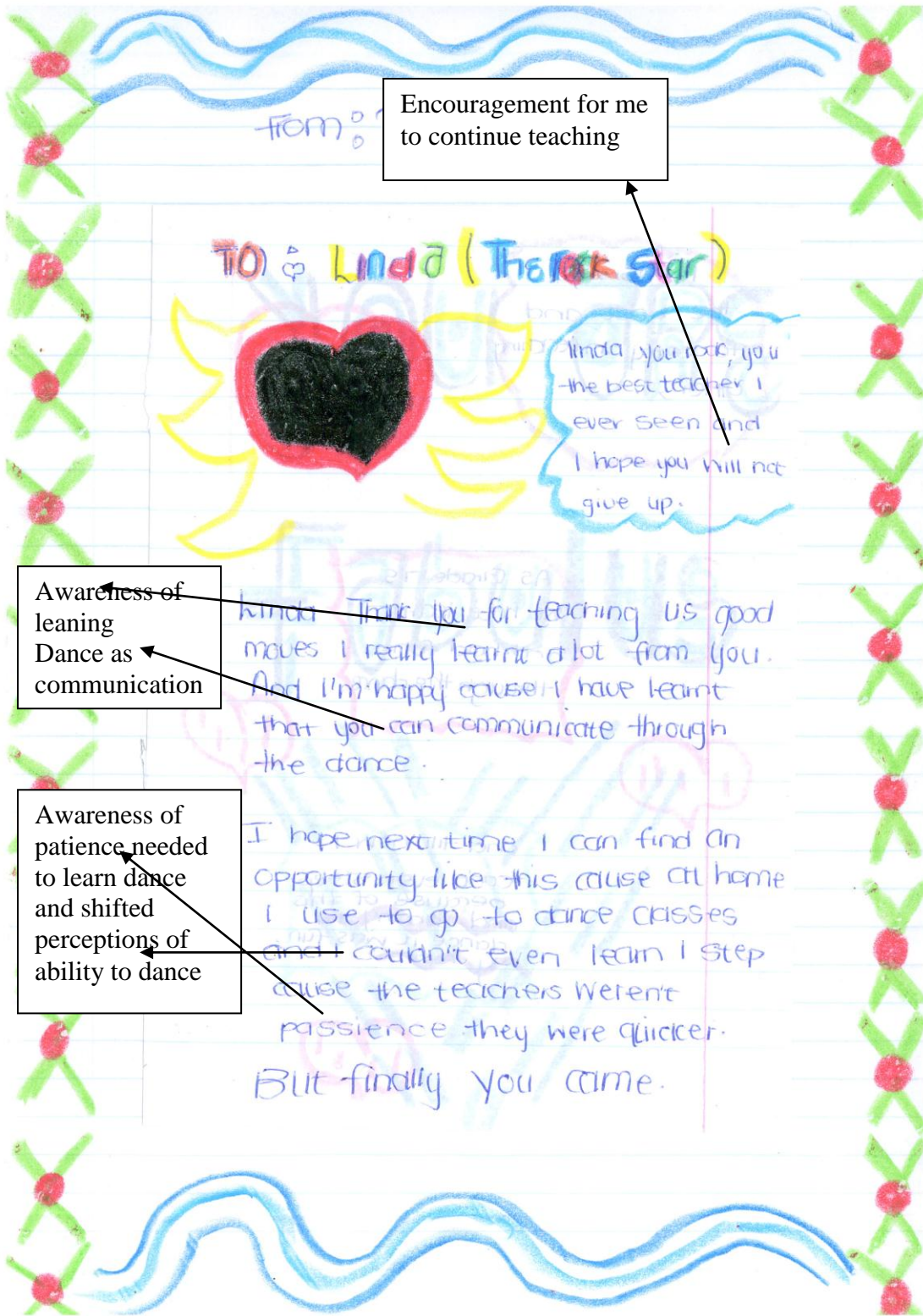
Encouragement for me to continue

Inspiration

Enjoyment

Team Work

Learning



from

Encouragement for me to continue teaching

TO Linda (Thank Star)



Linda you rock, you are the best teacher I ever seen and I hope you will not give up.

Awareness of leaning
Dance as communication

Linda Thank you for teaching us good moves I really learnt a lot from you. And I'm happy cause I have learnt that you can communicate through the dance.

Awareness of patience needed to learn dance and shifted perceptions of ability to dance

I hope next time I can find an opportunity like this cause at home I use to go to dance classes and I couldn't even learn 1 step cause the teachers weren't passience they were quicker. But finally you came.

♡ Linda...♡
My Comment.....♡

The dancing really brought out the person in me. I'm not the best the best dancer but ~~flamenco~~ flamenco really makes you special and comfortable to do. You must really carry on with flamenco it can change someone's life and boost their self esteem. I know It really changed my life and I'll never forget it.

P.S I love the clothes you wear and shoes plus you a really good dancer

From:

Description of self using body awareness

gal tall ene-ga

Awareness of dance to express the inner being

Flamenco as means to feel comfortable and special, boost self esteem and to change someone's life

LINDA

Thank you

I would like to thank you very much
for you done. taught me a new
type of dance. I had never heard
of flamenco, never seen it before
until you came to teach us now I
know every thing about flamenco. I
appreciate what you have done.
I wish you could come back to
teach us more move

OLÉ
BIVEN

from

Appreciation, thanks,
desire to continue
learning

Dear: LINDA

Thanks
Practice and work

I would like to start off with a Huge Thank You! You don't know how much I have practice, I think I have practiced so much at home my mom and brother know the dance of by heart 😊

I really didn't think I would be able to cope with dancing and didn't think I could do it. I was confused when I heard we are going to do flamenco dancing, I had no idea what it was.

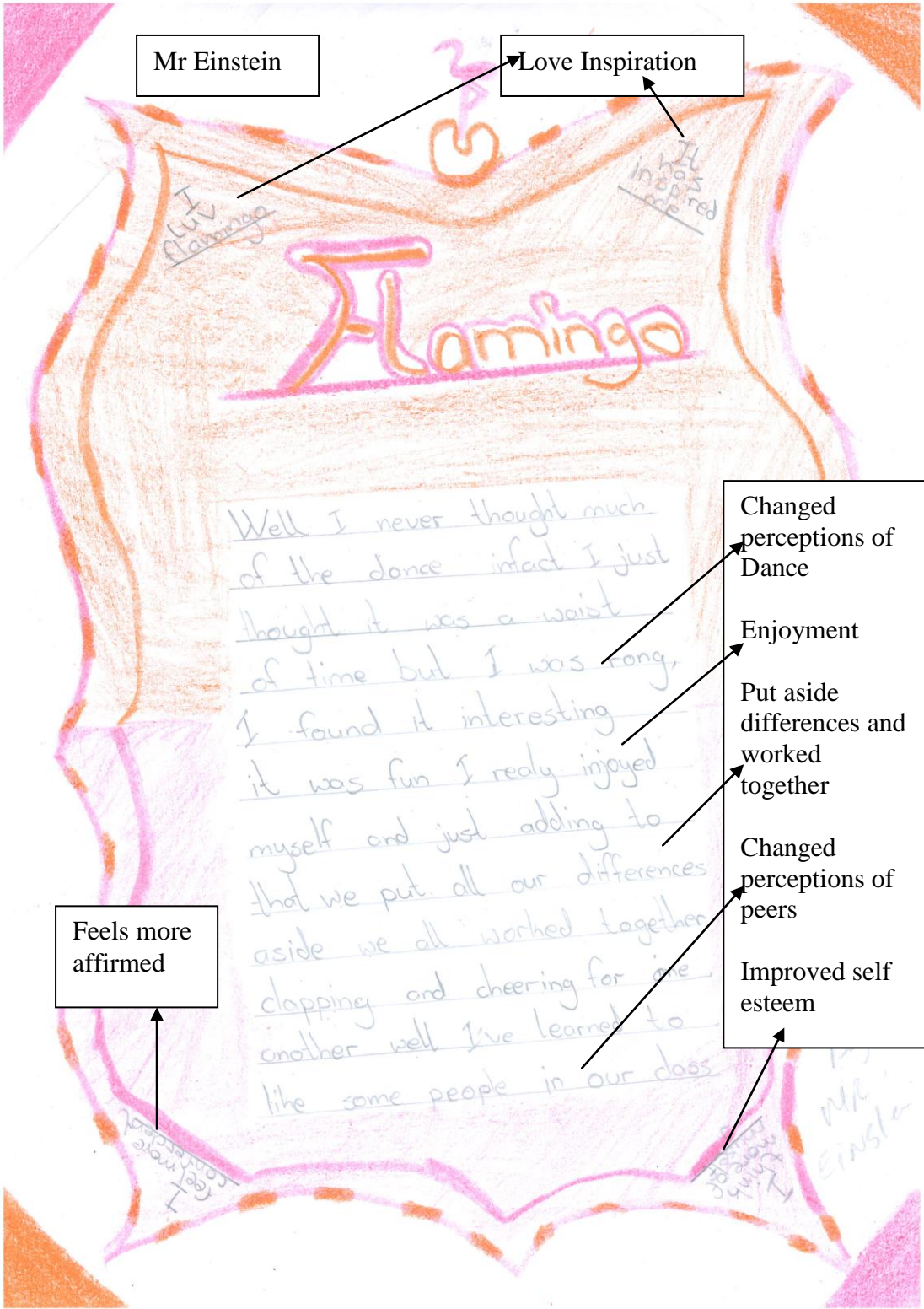
I really had fun and always couldn't wait until the next practise, I was sad when I was told on thursday that it would be our last practice because I really thought we would have had more lessons.

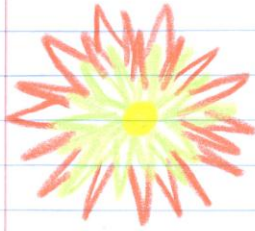
So thank you soo much!

Enjoyment
Thanks
Sadness that
experience ended

From: [Name] an 7 Walks

Changes
perceptions of
ability to dance



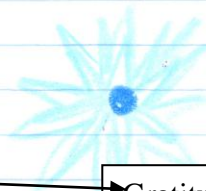


• Remember the Steps.

DANCE

• THINK AHEAD!

Dear Linda



Thank you for teaching us this lovely flamenco dance! I have learnt a lot and I thought I was actually good at dance but when it came to this, you really need to put your thinking cap on and must learn your step. Like you always say "Your mind always think ahead everytime!" We will miss you Auntie Linda not for only teaching us the dance, for the person you are to give up your time for us. That describes what kind of a person you are and may you enjoy your life with special people around you! 😊

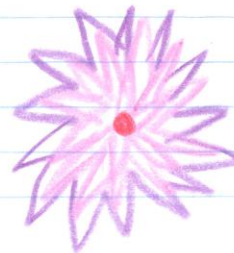
Gratitude
New learning
Changed perceptions of ability

Thanks
Wishes for my well being

From

girl

THANK YOU!



P.T.O. plz
Thz a song at
the back. 4 u.

enjoy

Dance

4rm: Mbali. M. 7w

DEAR: Linda

Thank you ~~so so~~ much for
all.

The ~~time~~ and the ~~love~~
you gave to ~~us~~. We will
~~always~~ remember this ~~year~~ for
the ~~fun~~ we had. You have
made my ~~last month~~ or ~~weeks~~
~~enjoyable~~ and ~~rememberable~~. I
Love You ~~Kinda~~ and ~~Thank you~~

- Gratitude for Fun
- Love
- Memories
- Learning

Dnt If at
Lf with.

Rememba
ur stepz.

Rememba haw
& Count 2
lol!!

Fun

Boat



Fun exciting tiring
Memorable

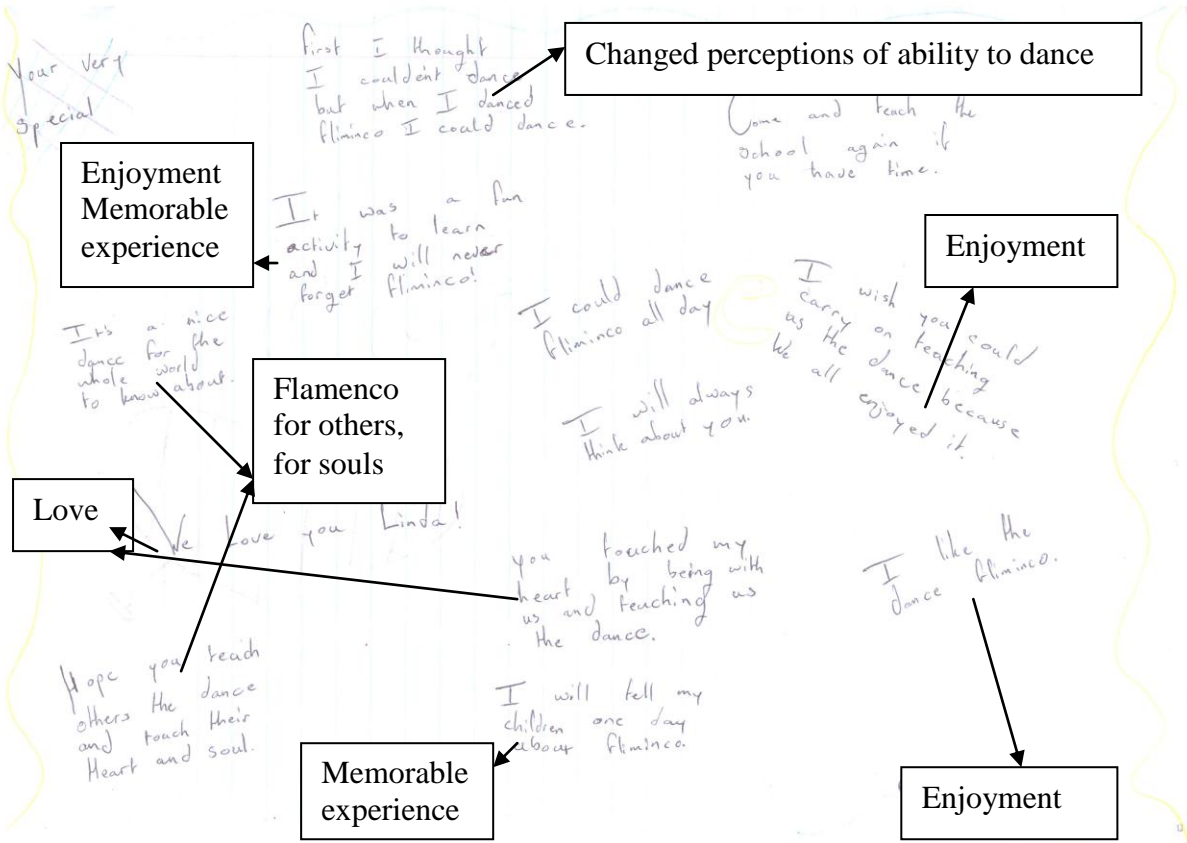
Learning to be
energetic

Increased self
esteem

First it was fun, exciting and tiring
it is something I will never forget, Linda
thank you, you taught me personally how to
have energy and confidence and I gained
a higher self-esteem!
I honestly think you succeeded in what
you came to do.



From: Thanks



FLEMINCO

Dear Linda - We thank you for teaching us. Flemenco and all the different steps. and all this time you took preparing the Moves we had alot of fun practising and we reveled our true selfs. thank you again linda wish you luck in your life chericooooo!!

Thanks

Fun

Bien

Think Ahead

Ole

Awareness of individual authenticity

Bamo

Count to 6

Remember

Learning

From

MY COMMENTS ON FLAMENCA

Dear Linda

When we first began dancing I was very nervous and a bit afraid. I thought flamenco was very hard but it wasn't. You though taught us step by step and because of that it made it easier for us. By dancing I began to overcome my fear and I also learnt about other peoples differences. Now I know the dance off by heart and i'm also beginning to teach my sister how to dance flamenco. Thank you for coming to Glenmore Primary School to take your time to teach us how to dance flamenco, it was wonderful having you with us. Thank you very much

From

Changed perceptions of dance and flamenco due to my approach

Learning of others differences

Sharing

Gratitude

To: Linda

Mr Rhythm

Enjoyment

Thank you for coming and teaching us
This wonderful Flamenco dance I really
enjoyed those 4 weeks with you. Before
you came I was a very naughty boy
always getting into trouble but when
you taught us all those steps I
started focusing on my school work
and my behavior and you made me
realize that there is more to life than
just being naughty so the dance really
changed me to be a better person
and I love the dance thank alot

Changed
perception
of self and
behaviour

From

Improved perceptions
of self and behaviour
through dance
experience

Boy
MR
(Miss)

~ ❁ LINDA ❁ ~

Before I go any further with this letter, I would like to say.....

WOW

Inspired by my smile

Learnt to set aside differences with others and work together

It is the only word to describe how I truly felt! You have inspired me in many ways... You have a never ending smile 😊 Linda, you have taught us to set aside our differences and work together.

You showed me how to focus and be more confident in my self.

Improved focus and confidence

The Flamenco was an amazing dance to learn. I absolutely loved it!

Never have I had so much fun as I did when I was learning this dance!

You are an **Excellent** dancer and person!

A Person so priceless
A person so true... It's gotta be me!


Oh! Oh! big deal, It's **you!**

lots Of love from:

Enjoyment
Love of flamenco and me

Kinda

Fear of dance and performance removed

Dear kinda on the first day when we were going to start this exciting dance, I was extremely, extremely scared as in the past I've gotten stage fright and fallen on every step, but as we worked and I enjoyed the steps I never noticed that my fear was packing up. My friends and I thought we were going to have partners so we were like eww! But you proved us wrong it was very fun, exciting and made us focus so much. The way we danced and showed it to our fellow mates was a self-esteem grower and I want to thank you!
clap Clap ^{clap} clap ^{clap} clap Clap 

P.S = I know that we all will miss you and your teaching to us, plus thank because I know how to count to 7!!

1, 2, 3 ... 1, 2, 3
1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

- Enjoyment
- Increased focus
- Increased self esteem
- Humour



G.P.S
From Hype + energetic

...Linda...

Us Grade 7's have had an
AMAZING time! Linda,
thanks to you we set aside our
differences and worked together!

On behalf of grade 7W.....

Set aside
differences
and worked
together

Thank
You!

Grade 7 Team

LINDA

Us Grade 7's have had an amazing time! We had experienced a fun time thanks to you.

ON BEHALF

OF GRADE 7W...

THANK
YOU!

శ్రీ: లిండా

Our



Dance

Teacher



MA. విశ్వేశ్వరి

Thank you for taking some your
time to teach us Flamenco Dance.
We enjoyed ourselves that we will
never forget, this wonderful experience
we had with you.

May the lord Bless you and
your family
Love:

Memorable experience

To: LINDA

Thank you for teaching me how to do flamenco dance. Before you came into the school to show us a little bit about flamenco dancing, I thought I could dance any type of dance, and it would be easy to do the flamenco dance, but now I know that there ^{are} other challenging dances.

Changed perceptions of ability to dance

Your way of dancing has taught me how to count up to six and how thinking doesn't only occur in class.

Changed perceptions of cognitive learning

From

Dear

LINDA

Motivated to repeat and practice
Awareness of my teaching skills
Awareness of group

The dancing was so much FUN!
I practiced and practiced, like you say Repeation... Thank you teaching just comes naturally to you!
I really am sorry we couldn't do it for longer but I believe that I will meet you again because if I do get into my entertaining occupation then I hope to see you! The way we moved it felt as if we were ONE person, when our peers supported us it felt GREAT! Linda, thank you Please carry on teaching... Otherwise it would be ashame for you not to spread the SPIRIT!!

Thank you so much
You're a rising Star!

Uplifted by group support
Dance is spiritual

P.S. I drew a picture to show how I felt...



Drawing to explain feelings about me
Encouragement to me

Ms I Can Dance

Changed perceptions of ability to dance
Enjoyment

To: Linda
I had a very fantastic time I really found it very interesting. At first I thought I could not dance but now I can. You are a very fun and inspirational dancer, I really enjoyed every minute of your spare time. I really thought it was fun.

Loving and
Interesting and
Never gives up.
Determined to do better
Anxious to do everything you do fun.

Perceptions of me as loving, interesting, determined, Fun loving

Obrigada
Ciao

You are like a ~~dedicate~~ dedicated, and loving, caring and interesting person.

part of dyslexia
dumb words
hard



DANCE

COMMENTS

To: Linda

Comment: I really liked the dance, it brought more meaning of what dance means and has broadened my knowledge and skills on life and dance. I hope that you keep this as a memory of working with us because we will keep it in our hearts.

Awareness of learning
Dance to learn life skills

From:

Heart felt experience

Boy



Empathy for Mr Silence

Comment \leftarrow

Auntie Linda

Dear Auntie Linda, I would like to thank you for teaching this amazing dance

FLAMENCO

I personally know that on our last lesson, when I clapped for Andale and heard the comments tear where brought to my eyes

LINDA

Impresite at first

GALE

Inspiring

Encouraging

Motivating

OLA

To Linda
Pam Pam

FLAMENCO

Hill
Ball

Learning

From \rightarrow

pam pam

My Comment...

LINDA

After our very first lesson I knew that that was the start of something new.

Changed perceptions of own learning

I thought learning would be hard but remembering was like a nightmare! Eventually I got the hang of things and began enjoying myself a bit more. Looking back, I don't know why I thought this was going to be hard.

Now that we've had the lessons I'm able to let go a bit more.

I've learnt that it doesn't matter what others say or whether they are catching on faster than you, worry about yourself and before you know it you'll be dancing like a star!

Thank you!

Increased confidence
Learnt to focus on own learning

To Linda

Changed perceptions of self and flamenco

Wow! What an inspiration you are to me. When I heard we were going to do dancing all that went through my head was "hip hop" but when you told us we were going to do flamenco I thought how boring. As the time went by I enjoyed it and started to see another part of me.

I hope you carry on with flamenco and keep teaching others too because you haven't only inspired me, you inspired the whole of grade seven.

Me as inspirational, strong, determined, fun

You are one of the women I look up to. When I look at you I see a strong, determined and fun woman.

Thank you for all the teaching you have done!!

Keep touching hearts because you have touched mine.

To Linda

Encouraging me to love, gratitude

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 ...

REFLECTIONS OF DRAMA TEACHER

Flamenco Dance Classes at Gordon Road Girls' School 2009

Background

As a Drama Teacher from a school that provides excellent support of the Arts - Music, Art and Drama -I find that Dance is an area that needs to be addressed. More and more children are becoming less able to involve themselves physically in "playing out" or Role Play. Even in a warm-up routine in Drama Class it is very difficult to get them to activate the trunk of the body. Because of lack of lesson time allotted to the Arts, I earmarked Grade 5 as a year in which, for two Terms (8 - 9 lessons) we would experience Dance Drama. But it became more Drama and less Dance as the lessons progressed.

Aim

I approached Linda Vargas and asked her if she would devise a series of lessons that would teach the girls how to experience and express Feeling and Meaning through Movement. I know Linda to be totally involved and passionate about dance and have witnessed her inspired and inspiring performances and teaching.

Linda agreed to teach eight lessons to 3 groups of Grade 5s (Approx. 75 children) Lessons were held fortnightly and conducted initially in the Hall and then in the Drama Room.

On Reflection

Age and Location: While every age group would benefit from the experience, I feel that Grade 7 would probably be the most rewarding class to teach. But my Grade 5 syllabus structure provides the best opportunity. It would also be preferable for children to attend classes once a week rather than once a fortnight. Location is important as adjacent classes need to be forewarned about the noise level.

Classes and Instruction:

Unfortunately I missed a number of lessons in the Second Term when I was off school, but I witnessed enough to know that I would love to include Lynda Vargas' Flamenco Dance Workshop as an integral part of the Grade 5 Drama year.

The children were both fascinated and enthralled by her lessons.

What They Learned

Skills :The growth in confidence and self-esteem was a joy to watch. Listening and memory skills, control, focus, accuracy, rhythm, beat, pace, co-ordination and expression were just part of the skills they managed to acquire.

Teamwork: Learners were able to experience the bonding power of teamwork as they joined in the stamping and clapping to the rhythm. They could see and hear if they were out of sync. The *loudness* of being *right* reinforced the measure of unity and the joy of achievement - the reward was immediate!

Role Play and Involvement: The more the child was swept along by the beat, the more the beat became the *heartbeat* of the role she began to assume. I saw her slip into another skin as her posture and attitude took on a different shape. All this even before she began to play out the story in a range of expression. Here was the achievement of physical involvement that I had been longing to see.

The adding on of steps into longer sequences challenged their concentration, yet as they kept building on top of what they already knew, it served as a continual affirmation of what they had and could achieve.

Individual expression and Culture: After the basics had been assimilated I watched each little person start, naturally and without prompting, to colour their dance with their own style. I began to understand and appreciate the universality of this dance form. It allows for a freedom of expression that unites yet enables each culture to feel at home.

Communication and Empathy: Where this art form probably surpasses Drama and Music is in its two way conversation between audience and performer. The Flamenco Dancer dictates the pace and the emotive value of the piece. The audience not only clap along in time, but become so totally involved in *matching* the pace and the mood that they too become part of the performance. What a solution to the dangers of passive communication that television and technology has engendered.

Teaching:

Classes were conducted with professional ease, passion and great warmth. I never once heard Linda raise her voice and yet the children followed instructions respectfully and with great joy. It was a very special place - and time.

To start with Linda greeted and got to know each child. She used questions and answers to stimulate and inform. I particularly enjoyed the caring pace at which she taught, somehow managing to scoop up all levels to a point where everyone could understand. Steps and sequences were regularly revised and work consolidated with great care so that no one felt out of their depth. Enthusiasm was rife with children bubbling over with excitement as I led them into each class. A further highlight was the Warm Up. During this period it never failed to amaze me that as soon as the music started and the exercises began, an infectious smile spread over the face of each child. Like a welcoming embrace, the warm-up bonded, focused and settled the class.

I loved learning about the history of Flamenco, the style and technique. I loved seeing the joy and sense of achievement in each learner. I loved the way that they responded - the vast majority did indeed involve themselves physically socially and emotionally in the activity. I know that they thoroughly enjoyed this deeply enriching learning experience because when Linda asked for volunteers to rehearse and perform at her end of year concert - giving up their lunch breaks - 44 of them signed up (This when approx 18 children were away from school- so there may be more)!!

I think a life lesson that I have learnt was when Linda said to the children that they should count the beats for themselves - that she was not going to think for them! (paradigm shift for me !) It made me realize that I do far too much thinking (setting up) on behalf of the learners - not allowing them to think for themselves.

On a personal note: I cannot thank Lynn enough for giving so very generously to us of her talents and her time.

Drama Specialist

Gordon Road Girls School

APPENDIX 2

My journal of learning moments and reflections while watching class videos.

Class 1

Before the course began I asked the teacher to tell the students that they could change into clothing which they felt comfortable in and that they did not have to wear their uniforms. I did this because I wanted them to feel relaxed and as comfortable as possible and I also wanted them to feel unique by expressing themselves through the way in which they dressed. They arrived to class having done exactly that. I am very aware of how clothing can and does influence the way in which we move. It also influences our sense of self and how relaxed or confident we feel. It is also an external statement of who we are and how we are feeling. I encourage dancers to dress in a way that they feel comfortable because of my value of individual expression and because I regard each dancer as unique. Flamenco is rooted in individual expression and how one is dressed either supports this idea or undermines it.

I waited for all to be seated in a group before I began my introduction activity. I introduced myself asked the dancers to address me as Linda. I feel more relaxed being introduced as “Linda” (my stage name is Linda Vargas) Being addressed as Ms Vargas only seems to enhance my position of power and this is not what I want. I want them to feel that we can all share in the sacredness of the moment (as well as the fun) as equals. By encouraging them to address me a Linda I am hoping to reduce my perceived position of power that being a teacher affords me. 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.

I then began by asking each student to introduce themselves to me and to use one word to describe themselves. I explained that while I knew it was impossible to be summed up in one word that they were to try. They then each introduced themselves and gave one word to describe themselves. I have been using this introduction to a new class for some time now and I find it really helps me to express an interest in each learner individually as well as helping to “break the ice”. My personal interest in and value of each member of the class is grounded in my value of inclusion. 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. 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.

I did this because I value self knowledge and the ability to reflect on the self critically. When I am aware of how I am feeling and how my perceptions of self influence my dancing I am better able to moderate them. I also value fun in the learning environment and I encourage laughter to help break down tensions. I have found this introduction activity helpful as a means of encouraging self reflection which I try to continue to use throughout the classes. I tried to convey the message that it was completely acceptable to be honest even if their description had a slightly negative connotation. I do not regard “explosive, moody, and alien” in a negative way. My acceptance of their expression of how they felt at that moment was to suggest that in my class it was their truth and therefore to be respected. I did however find evidence of myself living in contradiction to my value of inclusion as I responded to two individual’s description of self as “guilty” and “hyper”. I tried to replace what I perceived as possibly another’s perception of self which may have been “adopted”.

I value perceptions of self as well as perceptions of others in order to arrive at a more balanced “truth” but my effort to make the distinction was at the expense of my value of inclusion. Perhaps I could have drawn their attention to this distinction without my own value judgements influencing their choice of description of self. This desire to arrive at a perception of self which is more “positive” is grounded in my belief that a positive self image is one that needs to be cultivated in dance. Where perceptions of self are “negative” they often hinder the expression of emotions which distinguish dance from mere physical motion.

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 am not as accepting of all descriptions of self as I wish to be however I do value the development of the critical self. I value the individual’s ability to distinguish between perceptions of self and perceptions of others which they may have “adopted”. I felt that the student who described them self as “hyper” was more than likely using a description that had been assigned to them by another and I was thrilled when they promptly changed their description of self to “fun”. Yes my value of the critical self in that moment seemed to override my value of inclusion, but I had at least tried to draw their attention to the consideration of whether they had perceived themselves according to their own or someone else’s truth.

My obvious joy at descriptions of self which could be regarded as “positive” also suggests my value of a positive attitude towards self in a dance class. My encouragement of this positive attitude towards self is one I try to establish from the outset and is one which I continue to encourage wherever possible. I find that when there is a positive attitude towards self it is also more conducive to learning as well to the enjoyment of the class, both of which I value enormously.

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’.

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. Thus I used my introduction activity to try and lay the foundation for the values and principles which I hoped to develop throughout the classes.

I chose to do my warm up exercises in a circle. In this way I tried to ensure that all could see me clearly and I could also see each dancer clearly. Because of the improvised nature of my warm ups it was essential that each dancer had unobstructed vision. I also stressed that I did not require perfection merely engagement. My warm ups were designed to be as inclusive as possible. I therefore choose movements that virtually anyone can do. I did not want anyone to feel alienated at the beginning of the class and tried to use basic movements that warm the muscles in a gentle yet fun way.

I told them to copy what I did and hoped that by not telling them what to expect I would engage their visual focus and concentration. I used a piece of 'bulerias' (a traditional piece of flamenco music) to introduce them to the flamenco musical style. I hoped hereby to encourage their listening capacities. I began with focusing on the breath because physical movements without the support of the breath tend to become tiring. I did this while crouching into the foetal position in order to narrow and draw the focus into the body and self. By making the movements as accessible and fun as possible I also hoped to engage maximum participation. I wanted my warm up to reflect my value of inclusion, visual and audio learning, and my desire to disguise work as fun.

I tried to keep in a state of "receptivity" where whatever came to mind or inspired was incorporated. This often becomes almost a meditative state similar to how I feel with doing a classical ballet "barre". There is always a variation but the basic repetitive nature helps to stabilise the body and mind. I am always a little surprised at what "comes" to mind in the moment. I did not intend introducing stamps into the warm-up but it came to mind and seemed to help activate the cardio vascular activity. This is always a good thing as fast flowing circulation helps with quick thinking and movement. My inclusion of stamps and claps also introduced a sense of fun and laughter and laid the groundwork for the skills I would be developing later.

Thus my warm up attempted to draw the awareness out of the head into the body and to prepare the muscles for work as well as to engage sufficient focus to ensure greater concentration for when the real learning began. It also allowed me to remain receptive to momentary inspiration which is something I feel is indispensable to my skill as a teacher. I consider myself as both teacher and learner simultaneously. Being receptive to momentary inspiration from whatever source, reminds me of my ability to learn as I teach. I do not regard this as exclusive to me. I also tried throughout the course to

encourage students to perceive themselves and one another in the same way. For me teaching and learning are one and the same process and trying to “box” them as two separate activities is virtually impossible for me. As I claim this for myself I simultaneously try to claim it for the whole class.

After the warm up I first explained verbally what I was going to do and then I asked all to watch and listen as I demonstrated what I wanted them to learn. I am aware of the multiple ways of in which learning takes place and tried to draw awareness to the visual, audio and intellectual aspects of learning in order to engage them. I also tried to provide learning opportunities for as many different types of learning as possible.

When I taught the first part of the dance I tried to draw attention to the fact that they needed to “look and listen”. This is normally the way in which the majority will learn a new step. If I find that some still need verbal explanations/ names/descriptions of movements then I will include these, however I prefer to develop the listening and watching skills first. The circle is a wonderful way of ensuring that all have equal opportunity to learn visually hence my use of it when teaching large groups.

After I demonstrated the steps I asked them to join in with me. I then alternated between numerous repetitions of the movement and re-demonstrated the correct way when necessary. I value repetition as a learning tool especially when learning new rhythms. Not only does it facilitate retention but it also gives me an opportunity to develop muscle strength and stamina in the dancer. In order to develop their skills of co-ordinating muscular activity with intellectual engagement I assisted them by using visual sign language to “show” how many movements have been completed. I used my hands and fingers to “visually count” how many steps they had completed. I have found that this helps them learn the skill of “counting” while they are moving. If I had tried to shout above the noise it would firstly have been very tiring for my vocal chords but it would also not have developed their visual skills which is always paramount in my teaching.

My use of “sign language” to conduct my lessons became more and more evident as my class continued. This is because I really value visual learning when studying flamenco. Dance requires the development of visual learning skills and the more they develop the easier learning becomes. I therefore encourage this development at every opportunity.

Once the sequence is learnt the more important aspect of dance as a form of communication of the individual's inner world can begin.

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.

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. For this reason I did not ask students to demonstrate learning solo until much later in the course. My value of inclusion, respect, and self confidence to ensure maximum learning are what underpin my choice to praise long before praise may be truly merited.

When it came to teaching the step that travelled sideways I found that the majority were not able to learn it successfully in a circle so I decided to put them in two parallel lines. I did this to assist the learning of the directional changes the step required. I found this more successful as all were able to face the same direction at the same time and those who were not able to grasp the directional changes quickly were able to benefit from being able to copy others until they could. In the early stages of learning I allow copying of each other to take place as this is when confidence is often the most fragile. This is because I wish to create a place where individual learning rates are accommodated without "exposing" the individual who may learn slower than others. Those who learn quickly benefit from the stamina and muscular development that repetition ensures and those who learn slower benefit from copying those who have

already learnt the movement. This supports my value of inclusion and a non threatening environment in which learning can take place.

Once I felt that that the majority had grasped the sequence I moved onto the next one. I then focused on audio learning when I asked them to continue doing the step while trying to work out the “counting”. I hoped hereby to provide an opportunity for “discovery” learning. When they were not able to figure it out I made the “discovery” more and more accessible by at first clapping the rhythm and then eventually slowing the clapping down sufficiently to ensure that someone would eventually figure it out. This is exactly what happened and once they had worked it out for them self it seemed to speed up their ability to do it correctly. I value discovery learning where I do not provide the answer but encourage the discovery thereof by the individual. This is often a powerful way of ensuring retention.

My attempts to include all and leave no-one behind in the learning process is what forces me to problem solve while teaching. When they were not observing which foot was initiating the movement I avoided using the terms “left foot” or “right foot”. I often find untrained dancers do not know which is which, when learning to dance. So I decided to ask them to watch me and see which foot I used. My encouragement of visual learning skills was rewarded as many more were then able to begin with the correct foot. If this had still left others behind I would probably have used the “words” to assist learning.

Because I believe that learning takes place in a multifaceted way I believe it is my responsibility as teacher to accommodate as well as develop as many learning styles as possible. I do not consider my work complete until I have embraced as many of these learning styles as possible in order to include and ensure success for as many as possible. For those who may have been at the point of getting bored I tried to introduce further challenges to keep their interest.

I added the use of the extension of one arm while doing the movement. This I know to be very demanding of co-ordination skills so I tried to introduce humour in order to ease the tension that may have been developing. By suggesting that when they learn to drive a motor car one day they don't try looking in one direction while travelling in another I had hoped to release some of their anxiety that may have been mounting

through the use of laughter. As I had suspected when I asked how they were going one did confirm my suspicion and replied that it was very confusing.

I am very aware of the challenges involved in the learning of flamenco. It can place extraordinary stress on individuals who are not anticipating it to be so complicated. The co-ordination it requires as well as the rhythmical skill combine and what appeared to be quite accessible is discovered to be just the opposite. It is for this reason I tried to 'ease' students over these hurdles in their learning by disguising their work as fun. I also did not allow too much time for reflection as I wanted them to be too busy working to notice how long the process was taking. I also tried to avoid exposing their 'slow' progress by working in and praising the group and to give slower learners the chance to catch up without losing confidence.

I chose to work with no music as I wanted them to hear the sounds they were making with greater clarity and to get a sense of working as a group. There is a powerful energy that comes from working as a group where everyone is doing the same thing at the same time at the same pace. I explained to dancers that I am not happy until they were able to 'sound like one person'. The reason for this is that it requires discipline and sensitivity to modify ones pace to the group. There are always those who like to move fast and those who like to move slowly. Having to conform to a group pace helps to establish a moderate tempo more conducive to learning.

It also gave an opportunity to 'sound' much louder than one does as an individual as well as to rely on others where there were still gaps in learning. The music is paced at the 'final product' and is often too fast for many in the early learning stages. Without music there is also the added incentive to accelerate learning in order not to be the one who makes a sound that is incorrect. Most students try and avoid 'group exposure' of their mistakes so when these mistakes are heard by all it can encourage the individual to focus with greater intensity in order not to expose their gaps in learning and to get it right as soon as possible. I anticipated these 'odd' sounds so when they did occur I tried to make light of them through laughter and encouraged them not to be 'caught out'. I hoped hereby to impose gentle peer pressure to encourage focus and learning.

I consider music as the inspiration that can be added once learning has taken place. The benefits of working without music should not be underestimated. There is tremendous

intellectual engagement in flamenco and often the music can be a distraction in the early stages of internalisation. I feel dancers benefit from finding their own rhythm (as a group and then as an individual) and that the added discipline of then following the pace of the music can and should be attempted later.

When students had grasped the mechanics of the sideways movement in the two lines I then went back to the circle to see if they would be able to make the directional changes necessary to transfer it to the circle again. There was improvement but I still felt that there were gaps in understanding. I was then 'inspired' to use a visual image of a 'fire' in the middle of the circle which I asked them to extend their arm towards as the travelled in the opposite direction. This was a great success as it gave visual focus to the step and seemed to speed up learning. It also gave me an opportunity to introduce the emotive elements of flamenco by being able to suggest that they also needed a 'fire' in their hearts.

Even though there were still some learners who had not internalised the sequence as well as others I did not draw attention to this. I know that everyone learns in different ways at different paces. I did not feel it necessary to expose these gaps in learning as I knew from experience that many of these are removed with sufficient repetition. It was at this point that I felt sufficient learning had taken place in order to take a 'break' or moment of reflection.

I have been using these informal moments of reflection in my teaching for many years now. Flamenco makes enormous demands on concentration physical co-ordination and intellectual engagement and is often therefore very tiring. I have found that in order to give student a 'break' without losing focus or letting the energy that has been established disperse, the sitting down for a moment of reflection can be enormously valuable. It allows the body to rest and the mind to find renewed inspiration.

I then asked the students to come and sit together in a group where we reflected on what they had just experienced. I asked if they were tired and their response was "no". I found this encouraging and decided to keep the time of this 'break' to a minimum. At this point I decided to narrow the focus to what they had found easy and then what they had found difficult. While some found the stamps and claps easy, there were more who identified their difficulties. As I suspected the step that travelled sideways was a

challenge for a lot of them. One mentioned that the ‘counting’ helped him learn the sequence while another identified the problem of “remembering” the sequence. It was at this point that I decided to use a comparison to the skill of “reading ahead” required for speed reading to introduce their focus to a skill of “thinking ahead” while dancing.

I tried to introduce a possible new skill (or as I mentioned to them, a skill that they probably had but were just not aware of) where they were to try and think of the next step while doing the previous one. This is extremely difficult for many people and is a skill which I tried to draw attention to and develop from the outset. It requires tremendous mental focus to think of the next step while doing the current one. The mind is often focused on the technical as well as intellectual demands of the current step and the ability to think of the next step as well takes time to develop. I do not consider it a ‘new’ skill that I was teaching them. It is a skill that I hoped to draw their attention to in order to engage it and develop it.

When I had done so I then took them back to the circle where we continued to engage in several repetitions of the sequence in order to use and develop our new skill of thinking ahead. I did this because I believe that the skills required for flamenco may not be immediately obvious to all and by drawing attention to them I would facilitate learning. Without music to rely on to be reminded of the next step tremendous emphasis can be placed on the intellectual engagement of the individual. By drawing their attention to this I am hoping to encourage self responsibility for their own learning. In order not to have to rely on the music or others to help recall, I tried to encourage and develop the skills that would lead to the individual responsibility necessary for their success.

When they went back to the circle the improvement was slow but steady. I ‘invented’ the use of the word ‘pause’ in order to draw their attention that they had still not mastered the skill of thinking ahead. By having to press ‘pause’ on the ‘video machine’ I hoped to draw their attention to the fact that I was still allowing them time to gather their thoughts before beginning the next step. I hoped to eventually be able to ‘run’ the sequence without having to pause to think what came next. This skill of speed recall in flamenco is often not easily assimilated and may require extensive repetition to support it. For this reason I was not alarmed at the ‘slow’ progress. This was only the first lesson.

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.

When I divided them into the two groups not only was I asking them to get used to the idea of being watched but I was also asking them to make directional changes from the circle to facing the front. I chose not to draw their attention to this but merely to help them when I saw they were struggling. Thus I hoped to introduce directional changes under the guise of 'performance'.

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. I divided the class into two groups to allow time to rest but it was also to introduce the activity of learning to critically evaluate ones own as well as others performance.

I then decided to teach the technique of palmas (clapping). I had not planned to do so until the following lesson but I believe in the skill of ‘sensing’ when to make adjustments to plans. At this point I felt that this particular class were ready to learn the technique and I was reward for my choices. They in fact were more than ready. I chose to have them seated (and resting) while we engaged in a more intellectual learning activity. I taught the palmas technique by drawing on principles of science and music theory. I believe in the integration of learning areas and therefore chose to use theoretical principles from other learning areas to teach this new skill. I do not believe students should regard knowledge as ‘boxed’ but should be given every opportunity to view the world of knowledge as dynamic and interrelated.

I then gave them a new kind of ‘homework’ and introduced the idea that practicing a new skill at home can be fun. I always hope that all new learning will be regarded as fun and that I have given sufficient motivation to encourage individual practice. Learning to learn with passion and to transfer that passion into active self disciplined practice is a life skill which I try to encourage from the outset. I see it as my responsibility to motivate and inspire that passion and self discipline in others and to allow their passion to inspire me. For me this dynamic interchange of energy is what teaching and learning are.

I then concluded the class by going over the whole sequence, not in a circle any more, but this time with all of them facing the front. This was to consolidate learning and to allow them to finish the class dancing.

I was very pleased when I watched them to see how much learning had in fact taken place. I know I did not test individual learning but I hoped to use the feeling of confidence that dancing in a group affords to encourage and motivate further learning and practice. I also used my praise for their efforts to motivate them. When I concluded the class with a short group session I asked them for any comments. I had hoped that their comments would give me an indication of how they were feeling and how to approach the next class. I was busy with this class but already thinking ahead for the next one: using the self same skill of thinking ahead that I had tried to draw their attention to earlier.

I was rewarded by their honest comments: “thank you, wow, I can’t wait for Thursday, can we perform this dance?” The overall impressions were of enjoyment and a sense of ‘wow’ as one student described it. I reminded them of the importance of practice and that ‘the fun goes when you are not getting it right’. This reflects my value of a strong ‘work’ ethic on the road to success: natural ability without focus and discipline seldom lead to excellence.

The fact that one of them asked if they were going to be able to perform their dance for an audience was for me a clear indication that learning had taken place. Their confidence after one lesson showed me that at least one had learnt enough to want to show others what they had learnt. I then blew them a kiss and waved them goodbye. I left encouraged and motivated to begin their next lesson. Unfortunately we would need to wait two days.

Class 2

The second class was very enlightening for me. After the previous lesson when I reflected on the difficulty of teaching the stamp and half turn with two stamps, (a step which I have been teaching for many years) I tried to imagine how to convey to non dancers the concept of a half turn which keeps turning back on itself without too much technical information which often confuses them. I pondered this problem but did not

come up with anything that I have not tried before. The first lesson I tried teaching it in a circle but this is probably the most difficult way to try and learn it. My inspired use of the “visual aid” of a “fire” in the centre of the circle (something I have not used before) definitely helped them to know which arm to extend but the half turn still alluded many of them.

I began the lesson in the way I would continue throughout the entire course: with an informal greeting and chat. I asked if they were having a good day to which some replied: “yes”. I always try to begin my classes by asking students how they are feeling because I find if there are “issues” that can affect the class it is best to be aware of them. When emotional issues are brought to the class I prefer to know how to work with them and to be sensitive to them. I believe that dance offers release from emotional blockages and if I know what they are I can try to provide opportunities to allow for their positive expression and release.

My ‘greeting’ time at the beginning of the class was a time for any one to offer comments on the previous lesson. It was a time for students to share any thing they chose with me and the rest of the class. I found their comments very helpful to provide a guide for my focus in the lesson. If 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 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 was so humbled by her honesty and extended my appreciation by replying: “good for you my darling”.

My desire to be inclusive had motivated me to design a course that enabled as many children as possible to participate. The value and extent of that participation 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 the enormity of the potential of dance to shift perspectives, 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. I realised that even though time is always a factor and that I attempted to hear everyone’s comments in my ‘greeting’ time that I should at times ask learners to elaborate on their initial response. This was and can be very much more enlightening for me and others.

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. I did this because I believe in the power of critical thinking and the constructive sharing of criticism with others to help me do a better job. I hoped to show that if I asked them to do that it was because I was prepared to do the same myself. I did not expect students to do anything that I am not prepared to do myself. I strive to only “teach” /share what I have found valuable for myself.

In this second class warm-up I chose to play a piece of “tangos” that had flamenco singing as well. I hoped thereby to surprise them with rhythms and sounds that they may not be familiar with. Flamenco singing is something that many find difficult to relate to and it can be an ‘acquired taste’ for some. I tried therefore to allow the ear to customise to this style of singing while they were doing some thing else. I kept my warm-ups improvised in nature. I found that this encouraged them to focus from the beginning of the class because they did not know what I was going to do next.

The next part of my class I will call the ‘recall’ time. Immediately after the warm-up I asked them to show me the sequence that they had learnt the previous lesson. I did this before revising what I had done with them. The reason I have a recall time before revision is because I want to see what degree of learning has taken place without my

reminding them. It was very good to see how much had been ‘absorbed’ by the majority of them. I also used this recall period to expose the gaps in learning. I used this then to guide my focus in the revision. As I expected the gaps were found in the parts that had had the least repetition: the ‘new’ work.

Even though there were gaps in learning I chose to praise them for what they had remembered. I then reminded them that learning flamenco was similar to hammering a nail into a piece of wood: each time the hammer hits the nail goes in further. I likened myself to the hammer and told them that my lessons would hammer their memory until they had successfully learnt the sequence. I hoped hereby to introduce another of my values: the value of repetition. I hold to the age old adage ‘repetition ensures learning, repetition ensures learning’. I therefore see it as my responsibility to ensure that what is repeated is worthy of learning. I realise this is framed by my own interpretation of what I consider to be worthy but I do try to remain open to change when the situation requires it.

I chose to do the movement myself and then asked students how many I had done. I did this in order to encourage their skills of observation and I was thrilled when many answered by giving me the correct answer. This proved to me that at least some were counting and focusing well. I then decided to ask them to do the sequence with no ‘visual’ clues from me. This is often quite challenging as there is no music, no drum or beat and no silent ‘conducting’ from me that they are able to follow. It requires great sensitivity to the group and modification of ones own rhythm to that of others. I was thrilled when they managed to do just that and I praised their work with great enthusiasm.

I drew their attention to the fact that they had just completed the sequence with no ‘help’ at all and that they should give themselves a good ‘pat on the back’. I encouraged praise of self as I consider that when good results are achieved that praise and acknowledgement should come from self and others. In this way I hoped to draw their attention to learning to praise their own efforts. I hoped to encourage an awareness of own abilities and effort which could be then be balanced by what others say. Learning to praise one’s own efforts is a useful tool to motivate work further especially when praise or encouragement from others is not forthcoming.

In this second lesson I focused on the emotive aspects of flamenco. The reason for this was that I believe dance, and in particular flamenco, offers unique opportunities to develop emotional expression through the body as well as empathy and emotional intelligence. I felt that it was important to introduce this aspect as early as possible in the course. Learning to consciously express one's emotion through movement and dance is often a slow process and I wanted them to benefit from developing this for the entire duration of the course. The expression of personal emotions often takes time to develop and an atmosphere of trust needs to be established from the outset.

I began the class with the assertion that "we are here to dance" but in actual fact this particular lesson had very little dancing. I value times of reflection to such an extent, that I sometimes forgot that the very muscles and bodies that were warmed up earlier were now getting cold. The fine balance between intellectual reflection and physical work is one that I should always be aware of.

While I tried to balance the hour class by allowing time for "rest" when learners sat and reflected on what had just taken place, I also used odd times during the execution of some sequence to reflect on the possible value of what we were trying to do and what our intentions were. These spontaneous times of reflection formed an integral part of my classes as I believe when dancers work 'intelligently' their work becomes that much more meaningful and skilled. The fact that a particular aspect under discussion may not have been relevant to all was not as important to me as the possibility that it may. I consider reflection to aid learning as invaluable.

So the first time of reflection in this class came immediately after the consolidation of what had been learnt in the previous lesson. We sat down and I then played them two examples of flamenco music: one that came from the 'jondo' (deep and melancholic) and one that was 'chico' (fun). I used their 'dance' that they had just learnt and I showed them how I would use their sequence to interpret the music. First I allowed them to listen to the 'jondo' piece and then asked for their comments. The responses were varied and I merely repeated them so that the whole class could hear. I did this as I did not want to respond to every comment. I wanted them to be able to say whatever they wished without the fear of my evaluation of their comment.

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”. I then demonstrated how I would use their steps to dance to that rhythm. When I had finished I asked them what I had done to their steps. Their observations were very accurate: “you made them slower....you used ‘base’ claps (knowledge learnt from the previous lesson)...depressing....like you were in pain”.

I then tried to draw their attention to the fact that in flamenco 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”. This gave me a good indication that many had a sufficient understanding of the nature of depression and that I could then draw on this later in the class.

When I danced their steps to a happy and fun rhythm, “bulerias”, their response was spontaneous laughter smiles and applause. When I asked them to tell me what they had observed their responses were equally accurate: “faster....exciting...you put yourself into it....you enjoyed it”. I described what I had done to their steps as “turning them upside down”. When I asked what had enabled me to do this their response were: “the music...expression...the way you moved”. I then tried to sum up what I wanted to draw their attention to: “In dance if you don’t show how you are feeling nobody will know”.

I hoped that by observing me they would be able to learn from my expression the way in which emotion could influence my movement. This was so that I could lead them into the next activity where I would encourage them to do it themselves. I praised them for their comments and took them back to the circle.

I asked them to do the sequence they had learnt very slowly as if they were very sad and as if they ‘wished the world would end’. I then asked them to do the same sequence fast as if they were feeling happy. I did this as a brief introduction to two contrasting emotions and paces. By starting with sad and happy and slow and fast I hoped to be able to use the clear contrasts as a stepping stone to introduce others that were not as contrasting. I also wanted them to ‘experience’ for themselves how emotions and pace affected movements.

I noticed how they found it difficult to do the rhythm slowly and with the emotion of sadness. When it came to fast and happy most seemed to feel more comfortable. I then sat them down for a moment of reflection and asked them for their comments on how the experience had felt. Their comments for the slow and sad included: “bored... no feeling... lazy... no energy...taking your anger out on the ground...tired...time went slowly”. Their responses for the 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 the fast and happy: “the ‘fire’ step...trying to keep up”.

These resonated with my previous experiences of working with young people. I have found that generally young people enjoy moving ‘fast’ and ‘happy’ and therefore tend to feel more motivated to move in that way. They do not generally enjoy ‘slow’ and ‘sad’ and often find it difficult to do. For this reason when working with beginners I prefer to work with a faster happy approach to the sequence as this tends to help with motivation in the beginning stages. It also encourages speed thinking and recall which I consider valuable skills to develop from the outset.

My desire to keep the ‘fun’ also motivated me to work with them in the way that most of them enjoyed. I shared with them that it was my experience that most young people only move slowly when they are sick, tired or unmotivated and that we would work with the faster happier pace so that they would enjoy it more.

I also chose to do this exercise to show how any type of emotion was available to them to express in flamenco and to draw their attention to their own personal preference and pace of movement. In my experience I have found that there are always those who naturally move slowly and those that naturally move fast. I hoped to make them more aware of how they naturally move and to analyse how they preferred to move. If they were slow movers I encouraged them to develop the skill of speed as well. If they were fast movers I encouraged them to develop the skill of moving slowly. In this way I tried to broaden their range of movement capabilities and expression.

However with time being a factor for this course I chose to focus on what the majority did easily. I hoped that those who wanted to move slowly would be given the opportunity later in the course when I offered time for smaller groups and solos.

After reflection on the possibility of whether they were slow movers or fast movers I then got them up to continue learning the next step. This part of the sequence I had designed to allow them to begin to explore more fully their emotional world. It consisted of two walks and a pause in any position they chose. This was repeated three times concluding the fourth time with 5 stamps. I demonstrated the sequence first and then asked them if they had noticed how many times I had repeated it. They were able to give the correct answer. I then demonstrated it with clapping for them to figure out the counting or timing of the steps. I first demonstrated it fast and when they were not able to work out the timing I slowed the pace until they were able to do so. I did this to help increase their powers of observation.

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. I then demonstrated the sequence slowly again and asked them again if they had worked out the counting yet. At this point someone was able to give the answer 12, which was correct. I then asked them to divide 12 into two equal parts and asked what we would get and they replied '6'. I did this to draw their attention to the mathematical skills that are required of them when dancing flamenco. I then began repeating the sequence counting it in groups of 6.

I have found that while some flamenco rhythms are counted in musical phrases of 12 it is easier to teach beginners breaking that up into smaller phrases of 6 as their counting skills need to be more developed before they are able to dance and count in phrases of 12 simultaneously.

We then repeated the sequence until I felt they could demonstrate and count the step correctly. Once this was the case I then asked them to 'add' their own personal emotional expression. I gave them permission to express any emotion they wished on the 'stop'. I demonstrated a couple of examples and included some that I thought they might enjoy doing. I hoped thereby to give my 'permission' for them to be as creative

as they wished. I told them that the only thing I required of them was that they ‘say’ something with their ‘pose’.

I hoped to encourage the development of their physical ‘voice’ where they were encourage to express through their body how they were feeling and to communicate it to others. They then repeated the sequence a few times and I then asked them if their ‘pose’ was always the same on each repeat. They then correctly replied ‘no’. I then asked them why they thought that was so. One then correctly observed: ‘different feelings’. I then confirmed that we are very creative and had many feelings which we could draw on each moment and that they are not always the same. I was so thrilled with how easily they shared their emotions and how easily they seemed to express it through their movement. I praised them with great enthusiasm.

We then repeated the sequence ‘from the top’ in order to consolidate learning. I then divided them into two groups where I encouraged them to watch one another again. 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 constructive “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 hoped thereby to establish an atmosphere of respect. I value effort and a positive self image and these are rooted in my value of respect on multiple levels. Respect for the art form, the self, the process of learning, our travelling companions, the dynamic nature of the relationship of teacher and learner, the special space that we create in our class. I 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”.

Respect for others was encouraged when I at this stage announced my only class rule: “no laughing AT one another”. I did this to support and encourage respect for the learning process as well as the intimate nature of the space that we were trying to create. Later I tried to draw attention to my value of the mutual respect of teacher and learner when I concluded each class by the exchange of a mutual bow and thanks. I felt

that this was yet another way of acknowledging the respect for one another as well as our shared experience.

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'. I tried to emphasise the difference between laughing AT or WITH someone. Being laughed at by ones peers is often feared by learners. I therefore tried to set the tone from the outset by drawing their attention to the fact that all were trying their best and that no-one had the right to 'silence' another while they were still learning to 'speak'. Laughing WITH others is something I did and do all the time. I believe humour helps to create a more relaxed atmosphere so I didn't take myself too seriously and allowed others to do the same. This was however not to be at someone else's expense. This is something I tried to establish from the outset as I do not feel that meaningful authentic expression takes place in an environment of fear.

I then divided them into two groups where I told the group that was watching that they were not allowed to 'sleep' but that I expected them to focus in order to be able to offer the dancers "constructive helpful" advice. The first group then 'performed the sequence for the others and I helped them only when necessary. I then praised their efforts before asking the group that was watching to pass comment. 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."

I then asked them to swop over and reminded the group that was watching to give the same respect that they had just been given while the next group danced. I asked them to 'watch' and reminded them of the value of learning from what others were doing and that sometimes when they saw someone doing something that wasn't "quite right" that they could then use that as an opportunity to check that they were not doing the same. I believe that learning comes from watching the 'correct' as well as the 'incorrect' and that within the framework of trying to decide what is 'correct' and 'incorrect' lies the opportunity to develop individual preferences and authentic expression and creativity.

I did have to remind the second group to watch "quietly" as the performance of flamenco requires great concentration. One needs to be able to hear what other dancers

are doing in order to 'keep together' and in order to hear the external beat that is being given by another (in this case my claps).

During this course I invented the term "background noise" to describe insensitive 'noise' made by those watching. Flamenco does not require silence from its 'audience'. They come to form an integral part of the performance, and rather than remaining 'observers' they play a participatory role in the performance. They do however need to develop an understanding of what kind of noise is acceptable and when it is appropriate. This I only 'taught' in a later lesson but I had to lay the foundation for its introduction at this point.

The second groups comments included: "some of them don't know what's going on.....some didn't know what they were doing..... (I reminded them that at this stage of the learning process that that was normal and that "we all learn at different paces").....some are going a bit fast.....some forgot their steps.....didn't use expression..... needs energy (I reminded them that I did not want comments for specific individuals but rather general observations. The reason for this was that I have found when comments are given in a general way it is less threatening especially when still trying to establish a 'safe' space to be expressive. The individual could then decide if that comment was appropriate for them. I hoped hereby to encourage critical thinking and personal responsibility as well as analysis of performance without the often damaging effects of personal criticism which can 'paralyse' further attempts.)

I then said that I did not feel that their performance was "that bad". I then gave a personal account of my own experience as a performer where after what I felt had been a good performance someone would come to me after the performance and ask if I was having a 'bad day'. I then reminded them that sometimes what we think we are 'saying' in our performance is differently interpreted by others. There was also the possibility that what we thought we were expressing was perhaps not that accurately expressed.

This becomes the 'mystery' of interpretation, where 'miscommunication' or 'varied interpretations' come into play. I felt that it was important to draw their awareness to the skill needed to 'read' or understand another's body language as accurately as possible and that even if this was not always achieved it was worth developing. I feel that similar to the 'vocal voice' and the 'written voice', the 'physical voice' is another

way of expressing ones 'truth'. Just as we try to understand one another accurately when speaking or writing there are always those times when we misinterpret one another. So it is with 'body language', however I do often feel that 'body language' has a greater depth of 'truth' than the spoken or written word which can often be used in a contradictory manner.

I reminded them of the possibility that perhaps some of them thought they were expressing something when it didn't appear that way to others or perhaps it was because they were not being 'expressive enough'. By drawing their attention to the difficulties of communication, even with the body, I hoped to try throughout the course to develop a greater sensitivity and skilled use of the body as communicator of self.

We then ran out of time and I hastily introduced them to my 'bow' and moment of 'mutual thanks' and bid them farewell until the next class.

Class 3

At the beginning of class 3 as I was waiting for the class to filter in I asked for their comments on the previous lesson. I was thrilled to hear that the first comment was that they were surprised at how quickly they were learning the steps. What a relief I felt that at least someone was finding it easy and accessible. I then asked if there were others who felt the same and quite a few hands went up. This sort of feedback helped me keep in touch with the nature of their experience as it happened and influenced how I shaped the lesson.

I asked if there were any other comments and there were none. We then went straight to the warm-up. I chose a fun 'tangillo' for the music and tried to make it enjoyable as well as a little more intensive. I decided to speed up the initial bends to the floor to activate greater cardio vascular activity and I also added arm movements to the fast stamps. This required co-ordination and I tried to introduce it into each warm up so that by the time I came to needing it in the sequence this skill had been sufficiently developed.

I also used the warm-up to allow latecomers to join in as easily as possible. The fast squats that I used during today's warm-up were a good idea as it did help to warm

muscles up a little quicker. The fast stamps were a good idea as they also provided a sense of fun and many began to laugh through sheer exertion. I conclude the warm up with a fast 'crouch' to see if they were really concentrating and to surprise them. I noticed during the warm up that some of the boys didn't use their arms easily. At the conclusion I asked if their hearts were beating (in order to draw their attention to the fitness that was required), to which they replied: "yes!" I was satisfied that I had achieved what I wanted (at least with most of them).

I then prepared them for the "recall exercise" by asking them to "stand tall...be proud of who you are" and to draw their feet together as if they were "drawing their brain into focus." They remembered the steps perfectly without any visual clues from me. When I asked what they thought the value of repetition was, I realised that they had not seen its value in the dance context yet. They responded by saying that repetition gave "freedom of mind...practice...get the rhythm". These comments indicated to me that they possibly needed to experience the value of repetition personally in order to understand its value. I decided to ask them to think about it and to wait until later in the class, after my 'drilling session' to ask the question again.

During the 'drilling session' I required them to repeat the sequence numerous times as well as perfect certain movements that I thought were not skilled enough yet. I demonstrated that anyone could do these movements in a sloppy and undisciplined way and I reminded them of the need to 'think' while dancing. Loss of focus in flamenco, even for a moment, can be disastrous, especially when working as a group: the rhythm starts to 'splinter' and instead of rhythm one gets 'noise'. In this way I hoped to instil a strong 'work' ethic in the class where skill became the pursuit of all.

I then put them into two lines again to practice the sideways step which was still not good enough for me. In my desperation to get them to face the correct direction I had a moment of inspiration. I noticed the children's art work on the walls of the hall and decided to draw their attention to it while they were changing direction. I then demonstrated how at one point I was facing the 'fish' and at the next point I was facing the 'dolphins'. I then shouted out the rhythm using the 'visual clues' of 'dolphins...fish...fish...dolphins'. This proved to be a great success. They immediately started vocalising with me and we 'drilled' it until they had internalised the directional changes. Not only did they seem to find it fun (they got louder and louder culminating

in laughter) but they could then all do it correctly. I noticed that when they no longer needed it that the vocals reduced and finally disappeared quite naturally.

When I asked each line to perform the sequence for the other group I found that they began laughing at one another's attempts again. I reminded them of the one rule in my class. At his point one boy responded: "no laughing!" (at least one of them had remembered). When I asked them the possible reason for that rule one responded that "it doesn't make you feel good". I agreed and added that "all of us are trying" and indicated that that in its self deserved respect.

We then swopped over groups and they managed to do the sequence very well. I praised their efforts and we swopped groups again. We then went back to the circle where all had equal opportunity to see in order for me to teach the new step. I discovered while teaching the 'toe heel' action that if I described the quality of the movement it improved action. I used the word "punch" to describe the "toe" action and went to one of the boys where I made a sudden 'punching' movement towards him. I did this because I presumed they would then understand the amount of force required for a punch and would then apply it to the movement. The boys were able to identify with this and were then much more powerful in their attempts to do the step.

I only gave corrections when they were needed. I then asked my question again to see if they had discovered the value of repetition yet. One replied: "perfection" to which I responded: "skill!" I agreed that perfection may be one way of saying it but that I felt it was more to improve their 'skill'. I then added "and going over and over will also develop... (I paused)". One then replied: "Strength!" At this point I was happy that they had 'discovered' the value of repetition in a dance class (even if they had needed a little help.)

I then introduced the idea of doing two combinations slow and five fast. I then demonstrated it fast for them in order to show them the 'final product'. There were shrieks of delight which then helped motivate them to try and do it themselves. I reminded them that repetition builds skill and strength and we then began another 'drilling session'. This time it was not just mindless repetition but required them to count and vary the pace of the actions. When they were not able to stop at five I reminded them that at the beginning of the course they had assured me that they could

count to six and that I was only asking them to count to five. I did this to try and release their anxiety by thinking that all they needed to do was count to five.

I reminded them that I did not want to hear an 'echo' and that I would not be happy until they sounded like 'one person'. This was to set the goal. I then reminded them that I was not expecting them to get it right and perfect that day. I explained that in my class if we "didn't get it today we would get it.....tomorrow, and if we didn't get it tomorrow we would get it the next day, and if we didn't get it the next day we'd get it..... the next." I said this in order to try and ease the anxiety that may have been building with the slow learning of the new step. I told them not to be 'hard' on themselves and to keep trying. However I am sure that many may have remembered my goal of sounding like one person and that the drilling would continue until that was achieved.

I then introduced the idea of beginning the sequence with either the right or left foot. I felt that they were possibly ready to grasp this at this stage. I asked them to 'shake' their right foot in order to establish with great clarity which was their right foot. This may have helped because they managed very well to identify which was which. I then began another 'drilling session' beginning each repeat with either the left foot or the right. When I identified flaws in the technical aspect of the movements I slowed them down and went back to 'basics'. When an action was incorrectly executed I demonstrated the incorrect way for them in order to show them why it didn't work or look good and then showed the correct way. I hoped that by seeing the incorrect way they may be inspired to do it the correct way.

When I was happy with their progress I asked if they were tired. One mentioned that he was sweating to which I expressed my approval. For me this was an indication of work. It also indicated to me that cardio vascular activity was taking place. Even though they were nowhere near 'good' yet, I praised them once again for their effort rather than their skill. I did this to keep morale up.

I reminded them often to stand tall and strong before starting the sequence. I did this because I feel that conscious effort to hold ones body strongly encourages a positive attitude to self (even when this may not yet have been the case). By 'acting' in a certain

way I feel that I can ‘train’ that self confidence just through body posture. I feel this also helps to keep a positive attitude towards the learning process.

I then reminded them once more that I wanted their movements to convey to me how they were feeling. I did this in order to avoid the intellectual activity of learning overshadowing the expressive qualities of dance where movement becomes “mechanical”. I felt this required re-emphasis and I demonstrated a variety of possibilities in order to inspire them.

At this point I felt they needed a ‘rest’ so I divided them into two groups again. I asked them to ‘show’ me with their body posture that they were ready to begin. I asked them to put their feet together and ‘stand strong’. I was not prepared to begin until I could ‘see’ they were ready. I did this because it emphasised ‘body language’ again and also because I regard it as a sign of respect for what they were about to attempt. I reminded them again that neither I nor those watching expected perfection at this point and that we were merely “all working”. I assured them once more that repetition would help lead to success.

I then introduced a new skill of learning to provide the beat or rhythm for the dancers. Those who were watching were now given the added responsibility of providing the clapping for the dancers. I described it like being a drum. They were to provide a clear strong beat for the dancers to work to. This is not easy as it requires great empathy and sensitivity from those clapping. I told them that they needed to clap in unison and that they needed to sound like one person. A ‘splintered’ sound was not acceptable. I then made the comparison with how they clapped in assembly where no clear rhythm was evident. I thus tried to show them what I wanted by showing them what I did not want.

I then let them try to clap for the dancers and as I expected it wasn’t very good. They looked disheartened. One of the boys expressed his fear of doing the steps in two groups. I responded to his expressed anxiety by sharing my story. I did this in the hope of conveying to others who may have been feeling the same anxiety that I knew how they possibly felt. I hoped thereby to reduce their self imposed pressure to do well immediately. I tried to encourage them to be patient. I told them how it often took me six months to be able to perform a new dance. I then reminded them that this was only their third lesson and to “chill”.

When they swapped groups the second group was worse: the clapping had no ‘sensitivity’ or conscious awareness of the dancer. I had hoped that I would not have had to teach them to ‘follow’ the dancer and that it might come naturally. However this was not the case and I had to interrupt this group in order to explain how the clapping worked in flamenco. I gave them what I hoped would be good news: “in flamenco the dancer rules!” I then explained how the pace of the dance is determined by the dancer. Those clapping for the dancer (or in the instance of a musician, playing for the dancer) had to follow the pace of the dancer. The dancer was the leader and the clappers were the followers. I then told them that they would all get a chance to ‘lead’ and to ‘follow’.

Both first attempts to clap successfully for the dancer were weak but I did not interrupt their ‘poor’ performance as I wanted them to observe and analyse for themselves what was going wrong. I merely allowed them to struggle to the end and then sat them down for a moment of reflection. I hoped that they would then be able to identify and solve the problems themselves. When I asked for comments on what it was like to clap for a dancer they responded: “you get tired.....its confusing when you first start dancing and you hear the claps...and then you get used to it and it works its way out.... It needs you to look and see...your hands get tired...it’s difficult because you have to listen to yourself and the dancer.....you can’t just relax and enjoy it.” I thought these comments reflected their lived experience of trying to clap for a dancer and were worthy of attention. I then asked if knowing the dance helped them at all in their attempts to clap. When I asked for a show of hands to indicate who felt that it had helped them, the majority agreed that it had.

I then asked what it felt like to dance to the claps. One replied that he found it ‘hard’. When I asked ‘why’ they responded: “you get distracted....its confusing....its nice.... you’re tempted to clap with them while you dance.” I found all responses identified many of the difficulties and I hoped that their experiential learning had helped them to begin to try and address their difficulties. Sharing experiences also can help others to identify problems that they might not yet have been aware of. I therefore used the informal reflection time whenever the need arose.

I then asked if they would be comfortable if I divided them into smaller groups. I felt that I needed to ask them this in order to gauge their levels of confidence. If they had

not felt confident I would have waited until they were. I did not want to compromise the safe space that we had created and force them to perform in smaller groups until they were ready. This division into smaller groups should only happen when they feel confident. A smaller group means more eyes will be watching and therefore one has to be sure of what one is doing in order not to lose face. I therefore tried to introduce higher and higher levels of 'exposure' but only with their permission. This was my way of expressing respect for their learning and sensitivity to their levels of confidence.

I suggested six in a group and allowed them to decide on their own grouping. I felt that the experience may be more enjoyable if I allowed them to dance with their friends. As they began to group themselves I noticed that there were different size groups that emerged. I then allowed them not only to decide who but also how many they had in their group. Once the groups were established I asked if they were happy with their groupings. When all were happy I asked two groups to go and perform for the rest of the class.

I now had three groupings: one small group dancing, one small group clapping and the rest of the class observing. This introduced the idea that those who were clapping were in fact also 'working'. They needed to concentrate as much as the dancer and were not allowed to 'sleep' or lose focus. I then told those observing to watch both clappers and dancers in order to pass comments.

The first group of clappers did not concentrate and they made it very difficult for the others to dance to their 'splintered' rhythm. When they swapped over I made the same group that had just clapped experience what it was like to have those same people clap for them. In this way I hoped to draw their attention to their lack of focus. I remarked that they had been too busy having a "good time" and had not watched the dancers. I then pointed out that we would now see if they would be given the same treatment. I wanted to draw their attention to the fact that clapping is an unselfish activity. Clappers may not be noticed or appreciated as much as the dancer but they had a responsibility to the performance as a whole and to ensure that the dancers were successful.

I then let each group 'struggle' to clap and dance for one another in order to experience what it felt like when things were not working. Those watching were given opportunities to observe both activities and all had a chance to observe as well. I

emphasised that I wanted them to ‘think’ while they were observing what was working and what was not working....why some things were good and some not. In other words I wanted them to be engaged in critical analysis of what they were watching. As I expected most first attempts at accompanying dancers were not very successful.

I had to remind clappers to start at a medium pace and in the initial stages I had to help them keep a steady pace. When one of the groups was not able to find a common pace to clap at there was one boy who started to clap on his own and then told the others to join him. He had automatically appointed himself a leader of the group and that group were then very successful at keeping a steady pace. I praised them for managing to keep their rhythm and follow the dancer well.

After each group had had a turn I had another time of reflection. I always sat them down for this activity as it also gave their bodies’ time to rest. I deliberately repeated the comments made by students in order for the whole class to hear and to give time for them to individually contemplate whether the critique may possibly apply to them.

I explained why I continued to have these times of reflection in order to encourage them to be ‘intelligent’ dancers, to be someone who used their brain and not only their body. Success in any activity requires intelligent application of self. Those activities which focus on physical skill are no different: mindless physical exertion is extravagant use of energy.

We sat down to reflect on why the clapping had sometimes not worked. The responses included: “they weren’t following the dancer or they weren’t together.....the clappers were not concentrating on the dancers.....some started before others”. When I asked what it was like to dance to poor clapping responses included: “you can’t dance to it...its frustrating...its annoying and confusing”. These were observations I was hoping for. I feel that if dancers had personal experience of trying to dance to poor clapping they may be more inclined to make an effort to clap properly for others. For this reason I always insisted the same group that had just danced were made to clap for the same group.

I hoped to encourage the empathy and sensitivity that being a good ‘background worker’ often requires. They did not have the focus or accolades but their work was vital for the success of the whole. Learning to give without expecting to receive is part of being a good ‘backer’.

I then came to the focus of this lesson: learning to be a 'leader' and a 'follower'. I asked them if they could identify when they clapped whether they were a leader or a follower. They unanimously agreed that they were a follower. I then asked what a good leader should do. They responded: "Lead!" I then asked how they do this in the dance context. One responded by saying "by dancing." I felt this was insufficient and decided to 'show' them what I would do if I was leading badly. Their descriptions of my 'leading' included: "not putting enough effort into it.....not loud enough....you don't look like you want to do it.....you're not moving.... It doesn't look like you are dancing." I then reminded that to be a good leader as a dancer required them to be strong and clear and to not be afraid to "take charge". I then demonstrated how shuffling movements of the feet were not easy to clap for. In other words when the dancer doesn't lead well it is difficult to be a good follower or clapper.

I decided to make the focus of this lesson 'leading' and 'following' as I believe flamenco offers unique opportunities to develop these skills. Equal opportunity to experience what 'leading' and 'following' require in flamenco can be given to everyone. This could then lead to further investigation in other learning areas. I believe that life is constantly presenting opportunities to 'lead' and 'follow' and that as a society we should give our children opportunities to identify the skills needed for both. Personal experience of both is even better. Just as I believe teaching is so inextricably linked to learning so is leading to following. Life is a constant vacillation between the two where the distinctions are often not easily 'boxed' as separate activities. Giving children opportunities to experience both in flamenco provides an opportunity to develop these skills where the body is used as medium of communication.

We then ran out of time and I concluded the class with a 'run through' of the dance 'from the top' in order to finish the class dancing. I then called them together for our mutual bow and thanks. As they were all exiting the little girl who was dyslexic came spontaneously to give me a hug. I was very touched by her open display of affection.

Class 4

As I was waiting for the class to enter one of the boys came in practicing his beats and he asked me for some help. With that others began practicing as well. I was thrilled as

this indicated to me that perhaps they had been practicing between lessons and I saw this as an indication that they were keen to get it correct. When all were ready I greeted them and told them that I was very happy to see them again to which one of the boys replied that they were happy to see me too. I took this as an indication that at least one was keen to be there. I then asked if they had been practicing and as I suspected the reply was a strong “yes!” I asked if their beat was fast now to which they also replied “yes!” One said: “not quite” so I reassured him that that was ok because that’s what we were there to do: “practice some more.”

We made a circle and I had chosen a ‘fun’ piece of rumba music for the warm up. I noticed that some were really quite slow in participating fully so I tried to make the movements a little more energetic to get them going. By the end of the warm up all were doing vigorous waist twists and were hopefully ready for work. The warm up ended with spontaneous laughter from the exertion. I then asked if their hearts were beating fast to which came the reply: “yes!”

I then asked them to do the recall exercise and sensed a mild uneasiness that maybe they would not be able to remember the sequence unaided. I assured them that they would be surprised at how much they would remember. I told them to put “feet together, stand strong, head up, be proud of who you are!” When we came to the new step I reminded them that we could press “pause’ on the video in order to get our thoughts and in order to slow the pace down. We shook our right foot so we were sure which it was and then began the beat slowly.

I felt the technique was not good enough yet so I reminded them that as with all things in life there is always a ‘technique’ involved. I then asked them what they thought technique meant and a reply came: “a way to do something....how to do it”. I agreed and said that once we know the ‘how’ we can do it better. I then told them in a generalised way that some of them still did not know the ‘how’ so we would go back to basics. I told them to look and watch how I was doing the step and to spot the difference in how they might be doing it. I reminded them of a game many play as children when they examine two pictures and look for details that are different. I used this comparison as both require intense observation skills and I wanted them to realise that it is in the details that the ‘how’ is revealed. Many were familiar with that game and so we then set about looking for details.

Some were not bending their knees enough, some lifting the foot between the toe and heel action and some were not using enough energy. I then demonstrated some beats where I did not use any energy and showed them that a “half hearted” attempt made no sound. I then demonstrated the beat with energy and told them that what they were missing was ‘power’! They responded by using wonderful energy as if to show me that they did indeed have power!

After drilling the action for some time I then went back to the ‘two slow and five quick combination’. We alternated feet to try and strengthen both sides of the body equally and had another drilling session. I then observed that some of them were cheating and in fact were not doing the movement correctly. This is easy to do in a big group where one relies on others to do the work and either tries to fool oneself or the teacher that one is doing it correctly. I wanted them to realise that I was aware of that and that I was not going to accept any one ‘riding’ on the efforts of others.

The group has enormous value when learning and building confidence but I knew that sometime later I was going to ask them to do it in smaller and smaller groups and that the moment of truth would arrive when they and others realised they couldn’t do it. In order to avoid that embarrassing experience I made every effort to ensure that each individual was making an effort and working at their maximum in order to avoid humiliation later. I have found that the group can give a false and inflated sense of ability especially for children who often have the tendency to over estimate their ability.

I then reminded them of what repetition does and asked the question once again. One replied: “skill!” I then asked: “and what else?” there was no response. I then asked them to consider the value of repetition to a dancer or even a sportsman. And after a while one replied: “you get stronger.” I agreed and gave a personal account of my own dance teacher’s words who had told us that muscles have no memory and need to be reminded every day. I do not fully agree with that as I believe we do have ‘muscle memory’ but perhaps it means more that muscle strength needs daily work and I used it in order to try and get them to work hard. We then did another drilling session.

I noticed that there was one particular boy who was making no or very little effort in the class and I was concerned with why. He seemed well and I could not understand why. I later asked the teacher and she told me that he was a ‘problem’ and described him as a ‘high risk’ child with the potential to go ‘off the rails’. I decided to keep an eye on him and to try and include and encourage him where I could.

During the drilling session I reminded them that none of us were born doing skilled work like we were attempting and that as babies we only “bob in our nappies”. I did this in order to draw their attention to the fact that most skills are acquired and take effort. I then remarked that we all seem to start out bobbing in our nappies or ‘dancing’ in our nappies and I remarked that I didn’t know what seemed to happen after that. This relates to my inherent belief that we all start out with the innate ability to ‘bob’ or ‘dance’ in our nappies and that some societies do not provide opportunities for that innate ability to continue developing. I believe that our ability to respond to rhythm is fundamental to the human being and that it merely needs opportunities to be provided to enable us to become aware of them and to develop them.

We then continued with the drilling session and when I observed poor execution I remarked that they looked like they were in nappies and that I required them to “get skilled”. I then reminded them that unless they were sweating they were not working. When we stopped after the drilling session some of them started to “flop” with exhaustion. I asked them what had happened to their power. I did this in order to draw attention away from the tiredness and to re focus on the next activity: the repeat of the whole sequence from the top.

I believe that the beginning of the class should focus on getting the body properly warm and that this can be achieved by “drilling” technical aspects that the learners may be having difficulty with. This is also a perfect time to work on the cardio vascular aspects of training as well as to help to develop strength and stamina. I place great emphasis on the value of repetition and try to get learners to appreciate how it is something that they can regard positively especially when they understand its results.

I find that if learners can really appreciate the need and reason to work hard they tend to work harder and with more focus. For this reason I tried to keep the ‘pace’ fast at the beginning and allowed no time to think or rest in an effort to build strength and skill.

By asking them what they saw as the value of repetition I hoped to see if they had worked sufficiently at this or any other similar activity to have begun to appreciate its value.

I reminded them of the skill of ‘thinking ahead’ and that while they were doing the walks they were to already be thinking of the beats that followed. I did this in order to remind them of skills which facilitate success in flamenco. The skill of thinking ahead has to be developed in order that the pace of a dance remains steady. If that pace is erratic those trying to clap or ‘back’ a dancer are unable to do their job successfully. They did the sequence very well and I praised their efforts enthusiastically.

I then divided them into two groups again and asked the clappers what their job was to do. They replied “clap..... and support”. I added and to “follow”. I reminded them that they were not ‘leading’ but ‘following’. I also reminded them that I expected them to also observe and suggest how to make improvements. Yet again I reminded them of my value of critical thinking that is shared in a constructive way and not a destructive one.

I believe opportunities that encourage learners to take constructive critique as well as give it are essential to success in dance. I tried to allow these sessions to remain “open” in the sense that when the critique was given, that if the person felt that it was valid they may accept it but if they felt it wasn’t they could leave it. I feel it should be up to the individual to decide what they wish to accept or reject regarding their progress.

I feel that understanding the difference between constructive and destructive criticism is absolutely vital to a dancer as they come across both throughout their dance studies and it is absolutely essential to their survival. If they do not understand the difference they could make themselves very vulnerable to destructive criticism which could erode self confidence to the point where they may feel that they should not continue dancing. This has been my own personal experience in the professional world of dance. Being able to take criticism and being able to distinguish between destructive or constructive is essential to survival in the dance world.

If some decide to become professional dancers (and I always try to remain aware that I may have future professionals in my class), I feel it is important that they learn this at an early age so that they become skilled at their own internal self evaluation and do not rely too heavily on the opinions of others for their survival. Newspaper critics are the

public expression of these criticisms and can be very destructive if sufficient balance and resilience has not been established in the performer. The ability to evaluate criticism is not only valuable to dancers: all could be encouraged to develop this skill so that they do not place themselves at the mercy of other people's opinions.

For this reason when an observation or critique is given I try to merely repeat what has been said and try to avoid passing comment too often. This repetition is to enable the whole class to hear what was said as well as to allow them to each consider for themselves what has been said and if they are in agreement.

I reminded them that as observers they were to offer 'helpful' critique. I did this because it requires more sensitivity and intellectual engagement. It is easier to just give a thoughtless emotive response to something than to consider our response in a more in depth way. The first group did the sequence very well and the first comment was: 'very good!' I however did not want to leave it there as I reminded them that there is always something that needs improving and to look for it. This was so that my desire for constructive critique was not reduced to insubstantial meaningless praise. I believe honest work always needs improvement and that continual praise without guidance for improvement can tend to undermine progress.

More substantial comments followed: "the last step needs more practice...poses were not too good". I then agreed and told them that they needed to hold their body like a "statue" on each pose. I then demonstrated what a sloppy pose was and what a controlled one was. I then made the same group go and do their poses again and to this time 'hold them still'. I then asked those observing to pick an individual to watch and to try and identify what they were "saying" on each pose. To recognise whether they were saying "I'm cross, I'm strong I'm mmmm, or whatever". I did this because I value skilled expression of authentic emotion in dance. I also think the accurate recognition of emotions in others is a valuable life skill worth developing in all.

When this group did their poses some were not able to stop still and the rest of the class began to laugh in much the same way as children do in a game of "statues". I allowed this laughter as it seemed to relax the atmosphere. The comments that followed included very accurate descriptions of emotions that they saw. These were confirmed

by us asking the dancer if the observation was correct. I praised their efforts to express and observe emotions accurately.

They then swapped groups and I had to remind the new group to 'show' me that they were ready and that I refused to clap for them until they did. This was a reminder of the need to focus and the respect for those who 'back' them. I then turned to the clappers and asked them to 'show' me that they were ready too by sitting up straight. I would not accept lack of focus and respect from them either. This group then performed the sequence. I noted that they did not have the control in their core muscles to be able to stop still without 'wobbling' on their poses. I then demonstrated what they looked like and then asked them what they thought the body needed to do in order to be able to stop still suddenly. I had to repeat the question as no one had an answer. One then responded that they "had to tighten their muscles". I then demonstrated the poses without control and with control. I then made them repeat the poses as some had been laughing while trying to dance. This may have been caused by embarrassment but I tried to quickly focus on the task and thereby reduce the self awareness that may have been causing the laughter.

The next observations were varied and some included accurate observation of emotions and some didn't. I decided to leave it at that and come to the focus of this lesson which was to introduce them to the skill of 'jaleo' (vocal calling during performance) in flamenco. I asked them if they were able to shout (knowing that this was a great probability). I then asked: "how loud?" to which they responded "very loud". (I hoped to engage their curiosity.) I then introduced them to three words which they could use while watching a dancer perform: 'vamos' 'ole' and 'bien'. I explained that 'vamos' meant "lets get going" and 'ole' meant the equivalent of 'wow' and 'bien' meant 'good'.

I allowed them to practice each word individually and they responded with great enthusiasm. At one point the shouting was pitched a little 'high' so I asked them not to sound like they were at the school swimming gala but to try and pitch their voices a little lower. In other words I wanted them to produce their voice correctly. I demonstrated the correct and incorrect pitch the voice. I then asked them when they thought they would be able to use these words. One responded: "when you're dancing". I then asked if they were going to shout while they were dancing. They responded "no".

One added: “you’re going to compliment them”. I then explained how ‘jaleo’ was used to encourage the dancer and in response to something they were enjoying.

I then sent the first set off to try dancing while the rest shouted ‘jaleo’ for them. I reminded the clappers that they had an added responsibility to shout and clap now. I reminded them of the need to eliminate ‘background noise’ (chatting). I only wanted to hear their claps and their ‘jaleo’. As I expected the shouting was excessive and sounded like the school gala. I swapped groups and the second group was no better. Both were examples of unskilled uncontrolled noise.

I then explained that I had been waiting for this to happen and that I would now explain to them how to ‘jaleo’ correctly. They had just witnessed how not to do it, I then showed them how to do it correctly. After I had given an example of how and when to ‘jaleo’ for a dancer I asked them to tell me if they had noticed when I chose to shout. Responses included: “every time they did another section.....in the gaps”. I then asked what happens when shouting happens continually. Responses included: “you get irritated...you get distracted and you forget your steps....its confusing...you can’t hear the claps”. All these responses were correct and I hoped that having experienced the problems for themselves they would try to be more sensitive in how they shouted for others. I then summed up that ‘jaleo’ was there to help and not to distract.

After both groups had done it I then got the whole class to dance the sequence while I shouted for them so that they could all experience the correct way. I then sat them down to reflect on how my shouting had felt while they were dancing. Responses included: “it helps you... it didn’t distract you.....it made you feel better”. I responded by saying that the main purpose of ‘jaleo’ was to make the dancer feel better and to encourage them. I then asked what was difficult about it. Responses included: “trying to find the gaps...you have to look and listen”. I then tried to ask how they would shout if I was not too sure of my steps. The response came: “when you need help”.

I asked these questions in order to draw their attention to the need to be sensitive to the dancer’s needs, to be able to observe body language accurately and to support one another’s performance. I then asked them to get into groups of three. I let three clap while three danced, and the rest watched. I was very pleased at how many felt confident enough to volunteer to go and perform in a small group. This meant greater exposure and many seemed to feel ready for it.

The first group of three did very well and received great applause from those watching. I asked spectators for comments on the clapping and the response came: “a bit splintered”. I asked the dancers for their comments on the clapping to which one replied that they were concentrating too much to notice. I then asked the clappers what they thought of their clapping to which one responded confidently: “excellent”. I then added my little bit and suggested that the clapping could have been a bit louder. All were responses to the same event but merely different perspectives. I felt all were valid and worthy of consideration. This confirms my belief that progress is accelerated when perspectives are given from multiple sources.

I then asked the same people to swop over so that those who had just clapped now danced and those who had just danced now clapped. The group who had just described their performance while clapping as “excellent”, soon discovered that the same description of confidence could not be applied to their performance as dancers. They began to possibly experience a bit of pressure and could not remember their steps. I immediately responded to their fears by sharing my own personal experience of ‘mental blocks’ in performance. I tried to reassure them that forgetting ones steps was ‘normal’. I then encouraged them that when they had a mental block again to just carry on and that it was highly unlikely that all three of them would forget the same step at the same time and to rely on one another.

I did this because the support of a group no matter how small often helps those who are not so confident or sure of their steps. That feeling of being able to rely on the person next to one is one of the advantages of group dancing. I told them to make full use of it. I was reassured once again that as teacher I needed to ‘trust the process’ at times. These three boys may have overestimated their ability to do the sequence unaided after their success at clapping. I allowed them to begin again. They then made a third attempt and I let them struggle to the end even though the timing was all out of sync. They finished to the applause of their friends who rewarded their perseverance.

The pressure to succeed immediately is often almost subconscious in many of us and can prevent us from allowing our selves and others to struggle for longer in order to build self confidence as well as a truer reflection of our ability in that moment. Those boys felt better and so did I that I had allowed them to complete the task instead of

stopping them at the first sign of a mistake. Perhaps the lesson for me was that if I give others the opportunity and permission to “test their wings” before they have learnt to fly, maybe they might give me the opportunity to do the same. This pursuit of perfection can be very debilitating if used as the standard of judgement in all assessment.

I then asked them if they were surprised at how much they were able to do when they “just chilled”. I asked how they might have felt if I had stopped them and told them that they weren’t able to do it and to just sit down. They responded that they would not have felt good. I asked if they felt better having tried to go further than they thought they could. The response was: “yes”. I then responded that that was my intention: that they try and see how far they got. I feel that a great deal is learnt in the ‘trying’ and I do not like to interfere with the learning that takes place when things do not go as expected.

For this reason I often let poor attempts stumble along without stopping them at the first sign of a mistake. By the time the third group came to do it they were able to do the sequence very well. They finished to a round of applause. The fourth set was also “fantastic” and I praised them all enthusiastically. I then asked them to try and analyse why their performance had been so good. One responded that: “they had learnt from the other groups mistakes”. That was exactly what I had hoped would happen.

I then asked them if they always learnt from people who “get it right”. There was no response. I then asked if they also learn from people who “get it wrong”. The response was a resounding “yes”. I had hoped to draw their attention to the value of mistakes in the learning environment. I feel that valuable learning can take place when one experiences personally the effects of mistakes or incorrect execution. I find it a great motivation to ‘get it right’ after experiencing ‘the wrong’. I therefore value mistakes in my classes and want students to not be afraid of trying and getting it wrong. In fact if they do make mistakes I want them to view them as opportunities to learn rather than view them as embarrassing. For this reason I feel it is essential to try and establish an environment in my classes that students are not afraid to try and make mistakes due to their fear of embarrassing themselves in front of their peers. I try to use the constructive feedback sessions to support that aim.

I then asked them to repeat the sequence one last time all together. I was so surprised and thrilled when they performed the sequence with tremendous speed and energy. I was overwhelmed by their confidence and ability. I praised them enthusiastically and we concluded with our bow and mutual thanks.

Class 5

This particular lesson had the focus of improvisation. Before the start I was feeling rather uneasy about the outcome of this lesson as I have found that improvised sessions can often be difficult. Creativity is not always available on demand. How could I ensure that they didn't lose interest? What could I do to ensure their success? How could I encourage creativity without some of them losing heart? How does the creative process work? Was it possible to be creative in a classroom/group situation? All these questions run through my head as I sat waiting for the class to enter. I noticed that they too were entering in rather slowly and seemed to be a bit lethargic. This did not help how I was feeling as I envisioned having to struggle to motivate them in the creative process.

Their teacher then informed me that they had been “moaned” at by their previous teacher, which then explained to me their sluggish down hearted body language. I then used this information to pace my class and to shift their energies. I cut the chat short and began by starting the warm up immediately. I told them to “hold their body straight, forget about anything else that had been happening in their day, and focus on what they were about to do.” I did this intentionally in order to bring their focus into the moment and leave their mental ‘baggage’ behind until later. This was my way of trying to take them out of the head and into the body.

I did a gentle yet relaxing warm up almost in sympathy with how they were possibly feeling. I remembered the two boys who were not fully engaged the previous lesson in the warm up and I made a conscious effort to watch them and try and draw them into the action. I decided to stand next to them and to focus on their movements trying to encourage them to “work”. I was happy to see that they responded. Their participation in the warm up seemed to become far more energised.

I then began the recall section immediately. I praised them and we then began the drilling session. I went back to basics with the technique of the beats as the recall

period had revealed flaws again. We began by shaking the right foot and then isolating each movement of the beat combination in order to isolate technical problems. I then insisted that they were not using enough energy and that I wanted more 'power'. One began yawning and I wondered if it was because they had begun to work. I then reminded them of the bodies need to have more oxygen when it started physical exertion and that they should focus on their breathing in order not to feel tired.

After drilling the technique of the beats I then told them to watch and learn as I demonstrated the new step: two 'pas de basque' steps. I likened this to being like an eagle hoping that this would inspire them. As they were trying to learn it in the circle I realised that some were having difficulty because they were facing a different direction to me. This was especially so when I started asking them to use their right or left foot. I then was 'inspired' to get them to face the front in a big semi circle. This was a great success as all were still able to see me but all could face the same direction as me. We then did numerous repetitions in this formation.

When some were still not having success I then added the counting as well as descriptive words. When the majority were able to do it I shouted: "excellent" to which one boy responded "ole". I was thrilled: he had grasped the appropriate time for 'jaleo' and was using it accordingly.

I then reminded them that in order to do a step twice, well, they needed to practice it a hundred and two times. We then continued our repetitions. I then asked them to do two and stop. This was not easy and many were not able to stop after two repeats. I then made them repeat it until the majority could do it. I then told them to watch and listen as I demonstrated the next part of the sequence: "clap, stamp, clap, stamp, stamp". I demonstrated it slowly at first. There were signs of nervous laughter as I then asked them to join me slowly. Once I saw they were grasping it I then shifted the 'goal post' and demonstrated it fast. They responded with shrieks of excitement. I was thrilled at their response and told them never to lose the excitement of learning something new. I told them how often that excitement is what motivates them to try when the task may seem far removed from them at that point.

We then did many repetitions as a big group. When I felt they were tired I then asked them to do it four at a time. I did this to increase the 'pressure to get it right' as well as

to give them time to rest. The focus of the whole class watching did help to increase their effort levels. Those who watched benefited from the time to learn while watching others. I believe repetition through doing it oneself as well as repetition through watching others are both valuable to learning. In this way I could continue the process of repetition (this time in the head) without tiring the body too much.

The first set was good. Then followed a set where some were not all sure of the combination. I made them repeat it three times and finally did it with them so that they did not get discouraged. The next four were excellent and I then went around the semi circle asking them to do it four at a time. Some were better than others but I always responded by saying 'better' or 'nearly' when they were not quite sure. I did this because I believe that just because learning has not been established at a certain point does not give me the right to discourage further efforts. For this reason I used these almost 'generic' terms when there was need of improvement. My response of "nearly" was used in order to encourage continued effort. I feel that once learners feel that there is no point to their effort they cease to try. My value of inclusion propels me to think of as many ways as possible to keep as many learners engaged for as long as possible especially when they may be tempted to think of giving up.

I asked each set to repeat it twice to ensure the first time was not just 'luck'. I noticed how the whole class watched intently. This demonstration of their learning in smaller groups helped me to identify common difficulties that needed further explanation from me. I realised that many were having difficulty with the transition from the 'old' step to the 'new' one. This I have found to be a common problem when learning new rhythms. I decided to do the old step and the first step of the new one and then stop. This was a great help as they were able to break the step down into a more manageable size and focus on the transition only.

I then asked them to watch and tell me the timing of the claps of the new step. It took a while but eventually they figured it out as 'one' and 'three'. I then explained why some of them may need the counts in order to understand the step correctly. I explained to them that some of them would be able to learn the step from just listening while others needed the counts and that that was because we all learn in different ways. This did not mean that one way was better than another but that both were acceptable yet different.

I asked them to repeat the sequence from the beginning and we repeated the last step numerous times at pace. We then sat down to rest and reflect on how the new step felt. Responses included: “confusing, (I commented that it was fine to be confused).....relaxing....easy....complicated”. I then asked if they were surprised at how they had managed to which one replied “yes”.

I decided at this point to introduce the focus of the lesson: improvisation. I asked them to work in twos or on their own and to then work out their own rhythm sequence. I hoped that at that point I had taught enough work for them to use as inspiration if they needed to. I used the comparison to a ‘rap’ singer and asked them to ‘write’ their own verse and put it to movement which also had a six beat rhythm. I did however say that they were allowed to be as creative as they wished and could use their voice in a rhythmical way or make noises with their hands and body as well. I told them they could express any emotions they wanted to: none were ‘off limits’. I then sent them off to “do and say what they liked”.

Immediately they began to form groups of different sizes. These varied from 8-6-4-3-2-1 in each group. I decided to allow them to work in any size group they wished. At this point I was interested to chat to the teacher when learners went off in their groups. She remarked that she was interested to see how learners chose to work: some alone some in pairs and some in larger groups. She also pointed out two particular boys: one who was often shunned by the other students as his speech capacity was slower than theirs and who was hard of hearing (I came to call this boy Mr Silence) and the other because he was very ‘mature’ for his age and often found his peers “immature”. He also excelled academically, (I came to call this boy Mr Einstein). The one had chosen to work alone and the other had been left to work alone.

I then intentionally went over to both of them to offer them help or merely to keep them company. Whether this was in fact necessary I will never know but I instinctively did not want them to feel isolated or to intensify any feelings of isolation that they may have already been experiencing. My desire for an inclusive classroom where no one felt excluded became almost instinctive. I offered to clap while they experimented with their creation.

I noticed that as the creative session continued large groups eventually broke up into smaller groups. Perhaps they had realised for themselves that rhythmic creativity can be tedious in a large group and they may have found that it was easier to work in smaller groups. I spent the time (fifteen minutes) walking from group to group offering my guidance or help if requested. I also realised during this time that my idea of fitting their rhythms to a six beat phrase was rather ambitious for most of them at this stage.

Most of them chose to ignore my request and simply began creating rhythms with little awareness of the counting. I decided to let them create without timing restrictions imposed by me. I did this because I believe the creative process is fragile and in the beginning stages this process should be allowed to take its own course. External impositions can block the flow of ideas or even serve to be de-motivating. I did not want this to happen.

I then called them together to perform their ‘creations’ to the rest of the class. Many hands went up when I asked for the first volunteers. I told them that what they were doing was like being a composer or a writer and that they were ‘writing’ an original work. I asked them if being original was always easy. They responded no. I asked this question in an attempt to prepare them for the possibility that their creations may not be as successful as they had hoped. I hoped to allow for the ‘messy’ nature of the creative process to become evident and to encourage support for all efforts.

The first group consisted of 6 girls. They performed their creation with numerous stops to discuss what came next. It consisted of rhythms and vocal accompaniment. The rest of the class sat quietly and waited as they did. When they finished the class gave a round of applause. I tried to hurry up the process a little as I feared the loss of concentration of those watching. The next group consisted of three boys. Their rhythms were excellent but they had not used any vocals. Then Mr. Einstein volunteered. I thought his work was of an exceptionally high quality. Not only was he able to combine the voice with rhythmic movement but he also used the opportunity to give a ‘message’ to his peers. His composition is worth quoting:

“They see me as this boring dude
They see me as this all time prude
Don’t they know I’m not that bad?
They can know I’m sometimes glad”

This was followed by a wonderful improvisation session of rhythmic stamping.

I responded by describing his work as “excellent”. The whole class gave enthusiastic applause. I then told him as well as the rest of the class why I felt his work was so good. I mentioned that he had done exactly as I had asked: he had ‘written’ his own verse and combined it to movement. I added that his creation was even more amazing in that he had done it in such a short space of time.

When the learner who was frequently shunned by the class (Mr Silence) chose to do his routine on his own I was aware that he might expose himself unwittingly to ridicule from his peers. I was aware of a couple of ‘sniggers’ during his piece. He chose to do a very ‘moving’ performance in virtual silence. He made big bold movements with his legs and explored body movements that a contemporary dancer might use. As he finished his routine I chose to acknowledge his courage rather than critique his work as I felt that even if some had not appreciated the nature of his creation they would possibly be able to appreciate his courage.

In my experience this takes great courage to stand up in front of ones peers and expose ones self to their opinions or criticisms. I am very aware of the possible damage that can be done to an individuals self esteem in circumstances like this so I am very careful to watch for negative comments and to negate them with positive affirmation in acknowledgement of courage and effort. I reminded them of how difficult it was to perform solo especially when one was not sure of how ones creation would work. I then praised his bravery and the class responded with applause.

The next set consisted of three boys. Their rhythm was excellent even though one of them had never attempted anything like this before. I felt his friends must have helped him. I was thrilled with their creations and praised them enthusiastically. I then asked the class to go home and try and work out a creation on their own. I then said that if they felt they would like to share it with the class they would be more than welcome to do so. If they did not wish to that that would also be fine. I wanted them to at least try though.

At this point I decided to show them the step that I was going to teach the following lesson. I did this because it may have helped them with their ‘homework’: their own

creation. I contained body percussion which I thought they might enjoy experimenting with. As I was demonstrating it to the class the teacher came over to me to draw my attention to one of the boys who had in fact been doing a similar thing in the improvisation session but who had not yet performed. It was the same boy I had noticed in previous lessons who did not seem to want to engage in the classes and the same one I had been drawn to encourage in this lesson's warm up session. I later came to name him "Mr. Rhythm".

He came forward with his partner and the teacher encouraged them to show me what they had done in their creation. His friend then demonstrated a complex rhythmical sequence but it was truly improvised and did not seem to have any obvious structure. I tried to clap the beat for him but was unable to do so because of its constant unpredictability. I encouraged him to go and continue developing it so that it had more structure and could be repeated. I wanted him to understand what he was creating.

Mr Rhythm then came forward and began his rhythmical sequence. I began to clap the beat for him as he continued and this made what he was doing sound even better. The whole class and I were astounded and gave him enthusiastic applause. Not only was his timing outstanding but his rhythms were astounding as well. I realised this was another example of 'natural' talent. The class had now experienced how the creative process is different for everyone. Some have inherent ability that is not learned and others have to work to develop their skills. The assumption that we as teachers know more than the student is challenged when we 'discover' our student's talents. I feel that we should realise that we need only provide opportunities to allow them to demonstrate or develop their authentic creativity.

I feel as teacher it is my obligation to be able to recognise the difference between natural talent and developed talent and to encourage both to develop a work ethic. The natural talent will only achieve a certain amount on its own. If there is no work ethic it will not reach its full potential. Those who do not have natural talent should also be encouraged to work at new learning as they may be surprised at how much they achieve if they really apply themselves to sustained effort. As teacher I see my responsibility to inspire effort and 'passion' and to encourage and support these when needed. By striving to do this I hope to raise the levels of ability for all.

I then demonstrated the new step for the class to briefly learn. I then concluded the class by calling Mr. Rhythm to perform his improvisation again for the class while I clapped the beat for him. It sounded so wonderful that I instinctively joined him by adding my own improvised rhythms to his. We were all inspired by the mini ‘jazz session’ we had just experienced and it ended in applause by all for what we had shared.

I then ended the class on this ‘high’ note and I called them together to tell all how I had “loved” what they had done. I encouraged them to continue the creative process at home and we concluded our class with our mutual bow and thanks. I felt so inspired by what I had been privileged to witness and share with these young folk.

This lesson had proved once again to contain the “X factor” and I was left feeling humbled once more by the process of creativity and how some of us already “know” before we are even “taught”. The learner who did not engage fully in the warm-ups was the self same learner who left the class in awe at his natural rhythmic ability. Perhaps he already knew his rhythmic capacity but if that was the case I hoped the affirmation he received from me and his peers would confirm and strengthen what he already ‘knew’.

Class 6

While students were arriving for the lesson I tried to use the time to catch up with individuals and to assess the general ‘energy levels’ that I was going to be working with. I tried to be aware of those individuals who may not have been keen to join in the lesson or who may have been experiencing difficulties. If I am aware of any problems I always try to be sensitive to those individuals and to help them through the lesson. I used body language as a strong indication of how an individual may have been feeling. I was always thrilled when I saw any of them arriving practicing their steps. There were a few boys, (including Mr. Rhythm) who arrived doing just that and I used that as an indication of enthusiasm and well being. I also tried to be aware of those who may not have been feeling well so as not to overexert them during the lesson.

When I asked them for comments on the previous lesson I used their responses as a guide for this lesson. These included “fun.... nice.....very hard..... fun but hard..... can’t wait.....want to learn more things”. I used these as an indication of their

enjoyment, perceptions and enthusiasm. One learner mentioned their desire to do the dance to music. I expected some students to ask for music as it helps to inspire and increases enjoyment. For this reason I chose music for the warm up that would help to energise and “lift” tired spirits especially because the rest of the class was unaccompanied. I tried to explain to them that it was very important in flamenco to be sure of the dance before working to recorded music or with a musician.

As the warm up began I put my arm around Mr. Rhythm. I felt drawn to express my joy at what he had shared with us the previous lesson and wanted to encourage his continued participation. At the end of the warm up I reminded them of the use of ‘jaleo’ in flamenco and played a short piece of ‘bulerias’ which had good examples. I then encouraged them to clap the rhythm and hoped to show them how complex the rhythm is and how difficult it was to clap to let alone dance to. I did this to try and justify why I had not given them music to dance to yet.

We then began the recall exercise and reminded them that they needed to be sure of their steps in order not to “make a mess”. They did the sequence very well and I was thrilled. They were equally thrilled. Mr. Rhythm was fully engaged and concluded with a big smile. We then began practicing the ‘pas de basque’ step slowly. I then asked who had remembered the last step. One boy tried to show me but didn’t manage the whole thing. Then another boy who I came to call Mr. Persistent showed me the step perfectly. I had noticed him at the beginning of the course. He did not seem to have ‘natural’ ability, but he always tried his best. I was so surprised when he managed to do the step so well.

I then repeated the step numerous times with the class and began using vocal reinforcement of the rhythm. I was aware that many started to use their own voices as well. Perhaps it was fun or perhaps it helped them to memorise the rhythms.

I then asked them to link the two steps. I demonstrated it fast and then slowly when asked to do so. I reminded them that it was perfectly acceptable to ask me to repeat it slowly as learning was different for everyone. I explained that in my experience I had come to realise that students learn differently. Some often learnt quickly and forgot quickly while others learnt slowly and remembered for longer. I asked them to try and identify if they were either or whether they were perhaps a combination of both. I did

this because I feel that self knowledge is very powerful and that if they could understand their own learning they could take responsibility for it.

I do not regard this as a general rule. I mentioned this in order for them to become aware of what kind of learning process they may be using. This often brings greater patience for the slower learners and more focus with the faster learners. Trying to help them become aware of how they learn is important in flamenco where the learning processes are challenged on many levels.

I have found that flamenco requires great capacity for audio and visual learning and those with well developed rhythm and co- ordination are at an advantage and therefore often 'pick up' the steps with greater ease. A background in other dance training can also help to a certain extent but the skills required in flamenco are quite specific and even those with training in other dance forms still often struggle with the learning processes required in flamenco. Learning is very specific to each individual but I have found that by trying to become aware of these complex learning processes it often helps to reduce the stress of trying to keep up with the learning at another.

We repeated the transition from one step to the next very slowly until I felt it was understood. I used 'vocals' and 'counting' and reminded them of the skill of 'thinking ahead'. When I felt they had understood it sufficiently I asked if they felt they had "got it". There was a resounding "yes".

I then warned them that I was going to change the sequence of the dance and that I was going to include a new step in the middle. I demonstrated how the new sequence would go and added the new step at the same time. I then told them that the new step required emotive expression: "this is a movement. It's not a movement with any feeling unless you put it in". I wanted them to understand how the body can be used to express emotions and that this sometimes takes conscious awareness of the body as 'voice'. I demonstrated a couple of options for them "I'm strong, I'm angry, I'm depressed, I'm tired".

I demonstrated the new step slowly and they began to join me once they were ready to. Once I felt they were sure of the feet I added the arm movements. I had told them at the first demonstration that the new step would be repeated 4 times. At this point I asked

how many of them remembered the number of repetitions and they were able to tell me correctly. I asked them because I wanted to see whether they had been able to remember with only one instruction.

We then repeated the sequence from the top and I gave them the challenge to see who would manage to do it successfully. They performed it fast and very well. I was thrilled. They began to shriek with the excitement of success and burst into smiles and jumps of joy. Mr. Rhythm jumped and spun with elation. I responded by saying: “please tell me if you have rhythm, put your hand up if you think you’ve got rhythm!” Mr. Rhythm could hardly contain himself as he put his hand up enthusiastically along with about 12 other students.

I then told them that they would not have been able to do what they had just done if they did not have rhythm. “Sometimes our rhythm is just a bit underdeveloped. We’ve all got a heart going inside of us, we’ve all got rhythm there!” I said this to try and help those who may have been in doubt about their rhythmic capacity. I believe all of us have rhythm and that as with all skills it is either given opportunity to develop or it isn’t. I believe ‘natural rhythm’ is merely evidence of a more evolved skill and talent.

We then went back to repeating the ‘pas de basque’ and then the body percussion step. I tried to walk around and placed myself in different positions in the circle in order to communicate with those who may have needed individual help. Throughout the class I was very aware of how much I used ‘sign language’ or body movements to ‘conduct’ the timing and pace of the dance. I also used body language or ‘signs’ to give the class instructions such as “continue” “stop” “quiet” “sit down” or to ‘count’ the steps for them with visual cues etc. I did this when the noise levels were high and I didn’t want to have to try and shout above it.

After I was satisfied that there had been sufficient repetition to improve learning and skill I asked if they had managed to think of developing their improvisation. A few hands went up and I then asked if they would like a few more minutes to continue working on it. They answered “yes”. I decided to let them have this time in order to consolidate their practice. One boy came and asked me to help him and I put my arm around him to show that I was happy to do so. The next boy then came and asked me to help him by clapping the rhythm for him.

I then called Mr. Rhythm over as he was just sitting waiting and did not seem to be developing his ideas. He wanted to merely repeat what he had done the previous lesson almost as if he did not see himself capable of doing another one. I then encouraged him to develop what he had done. I clapped the rhythm for him and allowed him to hear how interesting his rhythms sounded to ‘backing’. He managed to improvise for quite some time.

Later I noticed how he called one of the other boys to come and accompany him with clapping so that he could develop his ideas even further. I was so thrilled. Not only had he seemed to realise his natural talent and rhythmic ability but he had also discovered that if he had rhythmic ‘backing’ his rhythms were enhanced. This then gave a wonderful opportunity for another boy to discover that he had the ability to “follow” a dancer with such accuracy.

I also went to help when one of the girls came to call me for my assistance. I then went to chat to the teacher and later noticed that one boy was sitting on the bench doing nothing. I went to see if I could encourage his participation or to see if he had a problem. I asked if he was not feeling well to which he replied that he was not and I tried to reassure him that I understood. I then asked if he didn’t want to try and join one of the bigger groups of boys. I did this because I thought he may be able to ‘hide’ within the group and still participate in a small way.

After about 10 minutes I called them all together to show the class their progress. One asked me about my shoes to which I gave a brief explanation about the construction of a flamenco shoe or boot. After I had given enough time to this I asked who would like to volunteer to do their ‘improvisation’ first. Mr Einstein jumped up enthusiastically. After my encouragement to develop his creation he composed another verse.

“They see me as this all boring dude
They see me as this all time prude
Don’t they know I’m not that bad?
Don’t they know I’m sometimes glad? Glad.
(Does improvisational stamps)
I’m glad until they see me as
This Einstein that they think I am

I know I may not be that cool

But I just want to rule!”

(He finished with a series of improvisational stamps and a very strong stamp at the end as if to reinforce what he has just done.)

I was so happy to see him do this as it gave an indication of how this activity could be developed into a creative ‘writing’ exercise without the use of written text and more along the lines of oral-auditory text incorporating movement to reinforce what was expressed verbally.

One of the little girls was also amazing when she naturally used percussive sounds to add another rhythmic dynamic to her sequence and she managed to do this while she was dancing. This sort of vocal rhythm is often used in traditional African dance and she may have had experience of this before and was therefore able to use it with what appeared to be such ease.

One group of two decided to rush up onto the stage to make use of the wooden floor to ‘amplify’ their footwork. They had probably heard how loud my beats sounded on the stage and decided that they wanted to do the same. Their beats were wonderfully clear and consequently the next group also decided to utilise the sound of a wooden floor. Then another boy decided to dance solo. His rhythm was wonderful and he received enthusiastic applause.

I then encouraged a bigger group of six boys to go and dance. They formed a circle and did two wonderful combinations which they repeated in unison. Then came two girls and they used complex floor patterns and choreography together with the voice. They received enthusiastic applause. At this point the class decided to encourage Mr. Silence to do his dance. He was cheered and applauded as he went to perform. He then performed a true improvisation. He seemed to flow silently from one movement to the next as he was inspired to do so. It was far more complex than his previous one and seemed to ‘draw the whole class in’ as he focused with such intensity on using his body to ‘speak’. He finished to enthusiastic applause and shouts of “ole”.

I then applauded him and thanked him. I asked the class why his performance had been so lovely. I did this to see if any were able to identify from watching what had made his creation so unique. Responses included: “it was different.....it was silent” I then

remarked on how lovely that 'silence' had been. I asked them if they had noticed how he seemed to be "really into what he was doing" and the class replied "yes". I then tried to draw to their attention the importance of that as a means to draw others in to share our experience. I did this in order to try and make them aware of how powerful performance can encourage empathy. I also mentioned how he had used his whole body as instrument of communication and not just his hands and feet and how lovely his 'extensions' were. I felt he had managed to use his body to draw the class into his silent world rather than trying to be heard in their world of sound. I applauded his courage and success.

At this point Mr Rhythm asked if he could go and practice his moves before performing them. I agreed to let him as I wanted them to realise I did not expect perfection and that we were there to practice not be perfect. My continual desire to try and make learners relax and feel that they are in a safe space where they are free to be a "work in progress" rather than achieve immediate perfection may have encouraged them to participate in the way that they did. Virtually all of them were keen to show their work this time. I was also pleased to see how they were able to develop their ideas from the previous lesson.

The next to volunteer was another boy who went solo and he received applause for his short yet brave attempt. A group of girls came next and wanted to practice first. The class and I waited until they were ready. Some used the time to practice as well. I then asked how many of them enjoyed improvising. I know this is not always an activity that every one enjoys so I wanted to assess who was enjoying it. About 10 put their hand up. I asked why some did not enjoy it. Responses included: "because last minute you cant think about it.....some people like to go with what they have planned and don't like improvising because it will ruin it". I then asked if they agreed that improvisation "ruins it". Some responded "no". I then responded by suggesting that perhaps like all skills it would improve with practice.

At this point Mr. Rhythm volunteered to perform and he went to the stage with another boy to 'back' him with clapping. The clapper started before the class were quiet and I then asked him to stop and wait for the class to show respect by not making 'back ground noise' while they were trying to perform. The class quickly quietened down and

they began. His rhythms were more developed and the accuracy and complexity were enjoyed by all. They finished to wonderful applause.

I asked the class why the clapper had been so good too. Responses included: “he watched him...he followed the rhythm.” And I added that he had kept his timing steady which is not always easy to do while listening to complex rhythms. I told him that if he was able to clap like that that he too had good rhythm. We then concluded the class by doing the class dance once more.

I had intended continuing this into a mini improvisation session where each could come into the centre of the circle to improvise. I began asking the class to keep a steady beat by ‘clapping like one person’ but soon saw that perhaps the group was too big for that. I also realised that it may have been too soon to ask them to perform solo. If individuals are confident enough to perform solo they can be allowed to do so but I did not think it was necessary to do so at this early stage of learning. I did not want to destroy the growth in confidence that has been established. I believe individual self belief and a sense of security are critical in the early stages of flamenco learning.

I then decided to rather teach them to contra clap. I went around the circle allowing each to individually try to clap contra to my claps. As I expected some had ‘natural’ ability and some did not. When I came to Mr. Rhythm I clapped faster as I knew he would be able to do it at speed. I was correct and I ‘rubbed’ his head in approval of his skill. When I called him to the centre of the circle to clap for me so that I could demonstrate contra clapping at speed, I did this to try and show the class how wonderful it sounds and to encourage them to practice. Also by inviting Mr. Rhythm to clap for me I had hoped to affirm his talent to him and the rest of the class.

The focus of this class had intended to be to develop creativity. It had also become an opportunity to ‘discover’ and ‘showcase’ talent. It gave me an indication that this sort of activity could be developed if I had had more time. It could possibly even have led to a class choreography where all could contribute their step and teach it to the class. This class choreography could then have been showcased for the rest of the school in some sort of performance. The time constraints were not going to allow this but it is certainly something to consider developing with more time.

We concluded our class with our mutual bow and thanks.

Class 7

As I waited for the class to enter I found myself wondering if what I had put together for this course had in fact achieved what I had hoped. Those nagging doubts that often plague me: should I be doing something else with my life? Did I hurt someone through a thoughtless word or action? Were the lessons of any value to anyone other than myself? Were they “educational”? My role as teacher seems like a two edged sword where I need to cut through all that would seek to entangle me within a jungle of information, theories and rules while simultaneously guarding that I do not injure or harm that which should be protected. I had shared my journey with others and perhaps that is why I also kept asking my companions how they were doing at the start of each lesson? I started this class with that very question: “How are you all doing today? Anyone not feeling good?” I felt an obligation to know how the lessons were being experienced and if anyone was not up to what I may have been about to demand of them.

When replies indicated that a learner was not feeling well I tried to be aware of this and not expect them to participate to the same extent as the rest. If they began to feel inspired as the lesson progressed that was up to them but I tried not to make the same demands on them, especially physical ones, as I did on the rest of the class.

I also needed the feedback that learners were prepared to give me on how they felt after the previous lesson. Their comments were used to guide me in how I approached the lesson. If they were not enjoying it I would try to bring more enjoyment. If they were finding it difficult I will try to find out in what way and would try to help make it easier. If there was a feeling of discouragement I would try to encourage. If there was a feeling of apathy I will try to inspire. If there was a feeling of “heaviness” due to exhaustion I will try to energise or allow time for rest.

Today’s comments on the previous lesson ranged from “fun (the little girl who was dyslexic)..... getting harder and harder....more complicated as you go.” When I asked if the “getting harder and harder” worried them the response was “No! We just keep trying.” I then assumed that while I was challenging them it did not seem to be

affecting their enjoyment or making them feel discouraged. When I asked them what they may have learnt about themselves or others the replies were much as I have come to expect:

- “Some find it hard to learn others don’t”
- “Everyone has rhythm in them”
- “People have learnt that they didn’t know that they can do it and they learnt they can”
- “Some, who are as stiff as sticks, can actually move”
- “Developed new talents” (I responded that perhaps they had always had it but didn’t know).

I asked them to put their hand up if they didn’t think they were able to do this before and have now managed to do it. The little girl who was dyslexic as well as 5 others put their hands up. The rest of the class felt that they could do it. I then asked what their feelings were before the course had started and what they were feeling then. Responses included:

- “I thought it was going to be hard but it’s easy”
- “I thought it was going to be boring just using your arms but its nice”
- “I was quite scarred in the beginning but now I feel confident”
- “I can dance” I asked how many others thought they couldn’t dance before but now thought they could. Another 4 hands went up. At this point I felt they had had enough reflection and were getting tired of it so I stopped and said: “ok, let’s dance”.

As I listened to their responses and I tried to make sense of them in order to use them to guide me during the lesson. I sensed a general “heaviness” in the class. Was it the pressure of exams that loomed ahead or were they tired from studying or was it that they had had enough of the lessons and were no longer enjoying them? Once again doubts flooded my mind. I decided to begin the warm up grateful that I had once again chosen a piece of music that was fun (a ‘tangillo’) and would hopefully help to inspire a sense of fun and energy. As the music started I saw a couple of them begin dancing. I felt a sense of relief that at least some were ready to dance and that the music may have been an inspiration.

When I watched the video of the warm up I was aware of others who felt the same lack of enthusiasm that I was feeling. One little boy in front of the camera barely moved until I noticed him towards the end and tried to encourage him to join in. He later told

me that he was not feeling well. Thank goodness for a warm up – it really does help to gently nudge the mind body and soul to try and engage before the real work begins. It was also a time of connection where I tried to assess how I was feeling and how my companions may have been feeling.

The recall period revealed the gaps in learning and I was once again drawn to repeat the basics in order to improve technical skill. I noticed that as we all got down to repeating those movements that required it “again” and “again” the bodies and minds started to become more fully engaged. By the time I was ready to teach the new step there appeared to be a general sense of “readiness”. For this reason I do not teach new work until I feel the mind and body are ready. I noticed how I asked them to merely watch me and do what I was doing and I was so thrilled to see how so many of them were able to pick up the step by doing just that. Had their visual learning skills become sharpened?

I noticed that when I asked them to use the head and turn it to the “right” and “left” that those on the opposite side of the circle were not able to do it. They simply copied me without reversing the direction. So I decided to do what I had done earlier in the course and put them all in a semi circle in order to see clearly as well as face the same direction as me. This proved to be a great success again and the step was learnt very well and very quickly. After numerous repetitions I asked them to do only six. I introduced the children’s game of ‘statues’ and repeated the sequence until the whole class were able to stop after 6 repetitions with no one moving. I did this to encourage the counting and to make sure everyone was counting. It also introduced a sense of urgency and fun to not be the one caught ‘out’.

I then divided them into groups of 6 and went around the semi circle to watch them in smaller groups. I did this for me to see each of them more clearly as well as to give those watching the opportunity to learn from watching others while they rested.

I then taught the new ‘step’ where they had to do a ‘spin’ followed by two stamps. On the two stamps they had to raise their arms and lower them while simultaneously raising the head up and lowering it. The use of the head was challenging for them so I used cue words (“down up”) to help learning. I introduced this step as I knew from experience that most children like to ‘spin’. I noticed that some of them were also very stiff so I tried to ‘loosen’ them up a bit. This was a great success as it really challenged

some of them and yet they seemed to be having fun as well. I anticipated that some of them would turn ‘easily’ hence my initial instruction to do 2 turns if they were a “good spinner” and 1 if they were not.

I did this to enable those who were fearful of turning the choice of doing one. I used the word “spin” and not “turn” as in my experience most children know how to ‘spin’ and often try to turn with less fear perhaps recalling the fun of ‘spinning’ as a small child. To my delight I saw how some of them did in fact try 2 “spins”. Many trained dancers fear turns especially multiple turns. I did not want them to fear turns so I hoped by merely calling it a “spin” they would try with more spontaneity and less fear.

When I added the head movement to the 2 last stamps I did not draw attention to the fact that this is quite a difficult exercise in co-ordination. I merely used repetition and vocals to assist the problems they were encountering. “Spin, down, up” became part of the external/internal instructions of learning where the movements were named according to the action of the difficult movements. For most it is natural for the head to ‘follow’ the direction of the arms so when I asked them to look down as their arms went up while simultaneously doing 2 stamps the demands on their co-ordination became more complex. When they heard me vocalising the instruction many of them chose to do the same. It must have helped them in some way.

When I divided them into groups of 7 to perform the new sequence it was interesting to see how attentive they were of one another’s efforts. In my experience this attentiveness of the other is a valuable learning tool. As they focused on someone else doing what they themselves were attempting to do they seemed drawn to mentally reinforce their own memory as well as self correct through watching what works and what doesn’t in others. During this session I noticed the same little boy who had not been participating in the warm up as he was still not doing very much. I went over to him and put my arm around him and asked if he was not well to which he replied he was not. I then expressed my concern and left him to participate as best he could.

When I then decided to divide them up into smaller groups I realised that the whole class “backing” was too loud for the smaller group of dancers and so I decided to use only 7 dancers and 14 clappers. This was a good idea, as when the sounds made by the dancer are inaudible because the “backing” is too loud this balance needs to be

adjusted. This also enabled the clappers to have a rest as one of them mentioned that they found clapping very tiring. I used this as an opportunity to tell them just how important it was to clap well and that in flamenco there are professional clappers whose full time job is to clap for and 'back' others. They found this very surprising. When I reduced the number of people clapping it also enabled some of them to watch and observe.

Some of them expressed their nervousness at doing the sequence in a smaller group. The teacher then reminded them that they were not being given a mark and that they were to just enjoy themselves. Had their joy of learning been affected by the constant threat of assessment and evaluation which they had come to expect? Did her words serve as a reminder to all that while marks were a part of their lives they should not be seen as all of it? I began to question whether the rewards of individual satisfaction of participation and skill acquisition had not become lost in the continual practice of marks and assessing?

When I watched the video I was also aware that as we progressed through the groups that each group was better than the last. Was this 'progress' due to the fact that the latter groups had benefitted by watching the previous groups? Later when I asked for comments one of them mentioned how they had learnt from watching the others in the class. The first groups were very unsure and this may have been because they were the first ones to do the sequence but it may also have been the fear of being 'marked'. There is also the possibility that they simply did not have the benefit of watching others to reinforce their own learning. I merely reassured them once more not to worry and that they were here to learn and that in actual fact I thought they were doing very well.

I often had to remind the clappers to watch the dancers "speed ups" and "slow downs". I used my usual "sign language" by pointing to my eyes as the noise levels were too high to shout above. I also realised that it was important to start the clapping first and to then cue the dancers so that there was some sort of co-ordinated start. When the clapping started to dominate I reminded the dancers to identify the problem and why they were battling to dance to their backing. One managed to do so when they replied that the backing was "too fast!" This suggested that the clappers were 'leading' instead of 'following'.

I also noticed that very often I would allow a group to continue for as long as possible before stopping them. The reason I did this was that I only really wanted to stop them when it was virtually impossible to continue. If the 'flow' of recall is constantly interrupted it seems to 'fall apart' and slow progress and learning. When it was absolutely necessary I danced with them in order to keep the 'flow'.

I was also pleased to note that many learners had really grasped the concept of sensitive use of 'jaleo' and that they were not afraid to experiment or use it. In fact it seemed to come quite naturally to them. 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.

When I asked for comments after this session I was not surprised to hear the following:

"It was great it felt nice"

"I liked the new steps"

"It was very difficult and confusing"

"Your arms get sore from clapping"

"You learn from watching others mistakes" (I responded that they learn from others mistakes and that's why I encouraged them to watch one another.)

"Enlivening"

These seemed to cover a wide range of experiences. I asked if they had experienced any difficulties and they responded:

"Nothing"

"The clapping"

"Remembering the steps"

"It was hard to turn after the other steps as you are still recovering"

"The up down is confusing"

"Remembering is hard but some people are really doing it well"

It was interesting to note how comments now included experience of technical difficulties. Had the technical aspect now become more demanding or were they now becoming more fully aware of them?

After their comments one of the boys (Mr Einstein) asked if the video camera had been there the whole time and that he had only just noticed it, I was happy to hear that he had not noticed and then reassured him that the video was purely for my own learning. I told him it was not 'important' and that it was purely for me to look at to see what they did in order for me to learn. I then described the ways in which I would be learning by asking myself "what am I learning from watching these guys? What did I do that I could have done better?" I then told them that "I'm not looking at what you could have done better but more what I could have done better." The teacher then intervened and reminded them that we all learn from one another and that age makes no difference. I then continued by saying that I was learning from them all the time and that I was merely questioning what this learning was as I worked with them. I reminded them that the focus was my learning in relation to them. "Oh, I could have done that better, oh, that didn't work, oh, they weren't into that or they didn't enjoy that or get that. How can I be a better teacher, that's basically the thing." He then asked me if I was going to make a DVD to then sell it. I then laughed and assured him that I wouldn't. Another learner then asked me if they really liked this dancing how they could continue doing it? How could they have more lessons?

When I asked them if they would like to do the sequence one by one, they elected to do it two by two. Perhaps they were not quite ready to have the intense exposure that comes from performing solo? We had graduated from performing as a whole group to two big groups then groups of 7 and now in pairs. I wondered if perhaps next lesson they may be ready to try alone.

When some of them chose to do it on the stage the video camera did not follow them so I had the opportunity of observing the intense concentration of the spectators. I wondered if their focus was due to the fact that they knew what was coming and wanted to see how successful their peers were in performing it correctly.

I then gave them a brief history of flamenco and I was aware of how well they paid attention. I did not use notes or teaching aids as I hoped my direct eye contact and informal delivery would ensure their attention. I was pleased that I did not give this lesson earlier. I think it was more fun not knowing what to expect than giving them the specific context and origins before we began. This may then have led to preconceived ideas of how to respond to the classes and I did not want that.

I reminded them in the 'history lesson' that my aim was to allow them to interpret the steps in their own way without having to 'conform' to a specific ideal.

"I don't want to teach it how they do it there I want to teach it how we want to do it here".

One then asked again about dancing to music and I said I would think about it. I reminded them that I wanted them to show me that they were sure of their steps before I considered it. I then asked if we should do the sequence a few more times to which they agreed. As we were preparing to do this a couple of them decided to 'perform' for the camera. This was the first time it had happened until now. Perhaps Mr. Einstein had drawn their attention to the camera and they were now more aware of it.

We repeated the sequence slowly and finished to shrieks of delight as they were so happy with their ability to do it. They eventually managed to do the whole sequence very fast and very well. I then asked if there was anyone who wanted to do it solo. I hoped that at this point there may be one or two who might want to. The bell then rang but they did not want to leave so we watched two groups of two, (no one was ready for solo just yet). The first two rushed to the stage and did it perfectly. They finished to a round of applause and shouts of "bravo, ole, ole, ole". I too praised them enthusiastically. The second group of two then went up but unfortunately the tape ran out at this stage.

Class 8

I began lesson 8 with a brief enquiry of how everyone was feeling. The response was "fine" so I decided to begin the lesson straight away. I did not want to waste too much time as I was aware of what had to be accomplished in one lesson. The focus of this lesson was on 'performance'. The reason I included a class focused on performance in my course was because I felt that it offered valuable opportunities for lessons in self knowledge and understanding of the other. It also allowed me to better assess the quality of learning that had taken place. I see 'performance' as another opportunity to learn. In the 'private performance' skills can be tested and gaps in learning identified before the option of 'public performance' is considered.

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. The value of the 'private performance' lies in its learning opportunities still within a 'safe space'. This type of performance allows for feedback from others who have shared the learning experience and are often therefore more informed of the difficulties and challenges involved. The opportunities for a more empathetic and informed response are often more available as those who are offering critical feedback have experiential learning which can inform their responses.

The reason I try to encourage 'solo' performance is that when this happens the individual is given the opportunity to develop skills that do not develop when performing in a group. Solo performance requires high levels of confidence and skill. Qualities of 'leadership' are also encouraged to develop. The focus on self is undivided and the 'pressure' to succeed is intensified. The individual has no one to 'blame' and nowhere to 'hide' if performance fails.

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.

This lesson I decided to place the camera at the back of the hall as I wanted to be able to capture all that could possibly happen during the lesson. I knew from previous lessons that the class would probably want to perform on the stage and I would not be able to capture that in the previous position of the camera in front of the hall. I was however worried that I would not be able to hear or see everything due to the lack of light on stage as well as the distance of the camera from the action. I did manage to get most of what happened in the hall but as I suspected the light on stage was not good enough to really see as clearly as I would have liked to. The camera was also far away from the stage but I did not want to risk drawing attention to it by moving it closer. I decided that the compromise I had had to make was worth it in order to keep the performance as 'private' as possible.

While I tried to keep similar movements in the warm ups I still kept a spirit of 'improvisation' where I allowed the music to inspire and my body to guide my choice and speed of movements. Because I am aware of my own body feeling different every time I warm up I assumed that this may be the case for others. For this reason I did not require that learners fully engage in all movements. This was the time for them to begin an 'internal dialogue' with their body to see how it was feeling and how they were going to be able to work together. I did not expect learners to do all the movements "full out" but allowed them to use the time to make a personal connection with their body and mind and soul while at the same time becoming aware of others doing the same. I chose a piece of 'modern' flamenco music for the warm up. I tried to give students exposure to a variety of styles of flamenco music. It takes time to develop an understanding of this musical form and I wanted to show how varied it is.

We began the 'recall' exercise straight away in order not to waste too much time. I reminded them to "put your feet together...hold yourself tall and strong". I tried to keep the tempo slower as I noticed that not all had fully warmed up yet so I allowed the 'recall' to double up as 'warm up' and 'recall'. Their recall showed improvement every lesson and today they were almost perfect. They concluded the exercise with shrieks of delight at their own 'successes'. As always it also revealed the gaps in learning and skills development. We then focused on the steps that needed clarity or greater technical skill.

I decided to take them back to basics and to "shake their right foot" in order to begin the 'drilling' session. I noticed that some were not keen to 'work' and were putting minimum effort into their movements. I reminded them that some of them were not using any "power". It was a hot day and I acknowledged that I knew it was hot but that I still required them to put effort into their movements. I told them that the 'fans' were on and tried to encourage them to continue to work. I reminded them of how I like to 'work' at the beginning of the lesson as it "gets your heart going". The activation of the cardio vascular is essential to ensure an 'energised' performance later.

I then repeated all steps that I felt needed technical improvement. I reminded them of the 'details' that I had asked them to include. I clarified the movements of the head, arms and even eye movements. 'Counting' and 'sequence' were clarified as well. I

asked how many of them had decided that they were a good ‘spinner’ and that they could spin twice if they felt confident. As I suspected Mr. Rhythm was also a good spinner and managed two fast spins with ease. In general the boys really seemed to enjoy the ‘spins’ and seemed to approach them with great enthusiasm. I was also thrilled to see how many of them could “spin” so well.

I had to give a gentle reminder to them not to laugh at one another’s attempts to spin even though they did look funny at times. I decided to take them in smaller sets to see how they were doing the spin because they were bumping into one another and I was not able to see how well they could do them. This was a good idea as it gave them space and me more of a chance of correcting any problems. I was also interested to see how so many of them latched onto my “phonics” when I reinforced the head movement with the sounds “pah pah”. Perhaps they had found it helped in their learning process or perhaps it was just fun to do.

Once the ‘drilling’ was over and I was satisfied that there had been sufficient repetition to ensure success I repeated the sequence ‘from the top’ once more for consolidation. I reminded them that they would soon be able to see the “fruits” of their “labour”. I told them how we were going to perform the sequence 2 by 2 or solo in order to see how much they had learnt and how they had improved.

I then sat them all down to enjoy the “fruits of their labour”. I had decided before the class that I would allow them to do their sequence in pairs or one by one but when we finally sat down to decide, many asked if they could go in threes and fours as well. I realised that while some enjoyed the ‘group feeling’ possibly some were not ready for the ‘high exposure’ of duo or solo performances. My decision was based on my instinct not on my lesson plan. I think in retrospect this was good idea because it allowed for different groupings. Those who preferred to have the comfort and safety of the group could have it. Those who may not have been included in a group were also able to perform without feelings of ‘being left out’ which may have intensified their sense of isolation. It felt better to allow them to enjoy their final day in the way that they felt ready for or comfortable with. At this stage none of us knew what was about to happen, including me.

I asked who would like to go 'solo' first. Mr. Einstein volunteered but I soon realised that some of them were not ready to perform solo. When I agreed to allow different groupings they responded with shrieks of joy and applause. I then said we would begin with those wanting to go 4/4. I did this to enable those who were going to go 'solo' more time to prepare themselves.

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'. 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.

I began by asking the clappers to start clapping. I did this because they needed to establish a unity in sound and it also then gave the dancers the opportunity to 'lead' by deciding if the clapping was too slow or fast for them and to 'lead'. I was thrilled when the dancers did just that. As they began the audience began to 'jaleo' in all the appropriate places. This particular group being the first was not the best. When they finished I asked the class for comments on the clapping. I did this because I felt that the clappers had not been able to keep a steady rhythm throughout and that this had led to the 'break down' in performance.

I knew this to be the problem but by asking the class to problem solve I was hoping to see if they were able to and also felt that if the correction came from their peers it may have been more meaningful. One observed that "they started off good but then they went down". I was satisfied with this response and asked the groups to swop over.

The next group of four girls started well and really 'led' the clappers. They performed wonderfully. I responded with "fantastic!" I asked the class for comments on the clappers. The response came: "they were very good". I repeated their observation in agreement. I then asked what they thought of the dancers to which they replied: "very good". For me this is what I call 'informed praise' which is rooted in personal experience. I then confirmed their praise by adding mine: "excellent!"

At this the third set ran up eagerly and began clapping. It consisted of four boys clapping and three dancing. I had to remind the audience that the performers deserved their respect by not making "back ground noise" and I reminded the performers to wait

for that respect. I asked for the audience responses to the dancers. This comment was forwarded: “good but they looked nervous”. I then asked about the clapping: “the clapping could have been louder”. Both these comments were very valid.

When they swapped over the next set of clappers described them self as “confused” as they went a “bit wrong”. The clappers expressed their difficulty in following the dancers because they didn’t know which person to ‘follow’ as they were all different. I then pointed out how difficult it was to clap for a group of dancers when they didn’t ‘keep together’. I asked the dancers what they thought and they told me that they “forgot”. The reason I asked for comments from different perspectives was to encourage awareness of self and sensitivity to the other. I also hoped to encourage continued focus on multiple levels.

After this group of boys there seemed greater enthusiasm to participate and there were more volunteers to go and clap for the dancers. I got a sense that they were enjoying themselves and ‘nerves’ seemed to diminish. The fourth set of boys was not that sure of their steps. I watched from the side and decided to refrain from “helping”. I then became aware of a small group of boys who were watching deciding to clap for them.

At the end I asked the performers to identify their own problems. The audience probably saw them too but I was more concerned that the performers themselves were aware of what went wrong in order to encourage them to identify their own problems. I went over to one dancer and asked how he felt to which he responded “confused”. I then assured him that I did not think he was ‘alone’ in that sentiment. Another said: “I forgot my steps”. I then asked the clappers what they thought of their own performance and the spontaneous response came: “perfect!” I decided to leave them on a positive note.

I noticed in all the groups that it was a good idea to allow them to have a ‘leader’ in the group of dancers as well as clappers in order for some sort of unison start to be achieved. While some of the observations were being given I noted a lack of attention from some learners so I quickly reminded them to listen to one another’s comments as they could learn from one another.

Mr. Silence came up to ask me privately if he could do his own creation once more. I told him that he could if time allowed. The next set of six girls danced at a tremendous pace. I asked them at the end to comment on their own performance. The response came: “we were too fast”. I agreed that they were too fast for on another. I asked the three clappers (Mr. Rhythm and his clappers) to comment on their own performance to which they replied confidently: “We were too good!” I allowed their self confidence to remain unchallenged. All these responses were wonderful as I saw them as an indication of their ability to identify problems through observation and to learn from watching others as well as an indication of a rise in levels of confidence.

The next set was Mr Rhythm and his clappers. He provided the solid leadership that his two friends needed in order to successfully perform the entire sequence faultlessly and at pace. When I asked for comments the response was “Fantastic!” which indeed they were. One's natural skill had assisted two others to achieve at his side what they might not have achieved alone. The spontaneous grins on their faces were evidence of a sharp rise in self esteem and pride. When asked how they would comment on their performance they replied “excellent!”

I found it wonderful how so many young folk were able to praise their own performance with such ease. I began to question what happens to so many when this confidence in own ability often diminishes with maturity. Even the headmaster (who had come to watch the performances) laughed in response to their confident self appraisal. The clappers also described their performance as “very good”. I left it there as I was enjoying their youthful confidence. I noticed how many of them volunteered to clap over and over and how many requested to perform again. I saw this as an indication of their enthusiasm and enjoyment.

The next set of four girls was very weak. The shock of the contrast was evident within moments of their beginning and there was an awkward silence as this realisation began to dawn on the class. It was at this point that the lesson transformed from performance and critical evaluation to something far more profound.

This set of girls was the last group remaining to perform. They were the ones who I had noticed throughout the course as ‘struggling’ with learning the steps and to keep up with the pace of the majority of the other learners. I had anticipated that some learners

would struggle with certain movements or with co-ordination and speed recall of steps. However I know from experience, that sometimes the learners who may not seem to have natural ability when given more time or encouragement often go further than expected. When they ended up being the last group I was not surprised. Perhaps they felt they needed as much time as possible before trying.

They seemed to start well but not long into the routine they started to flounder as they battled to remember and perform the steps at speed. I decided to let them continue 'trying' for as long as possible with out my assistance. Up until this point they only had a group of volunteers to clap behind them. However as they began to struggle to continue despite my verbal encouragement the rest of the class who were sitting watching them spontaneously 'sensed' their need of 'support'. As they struggled to continue a small group of boys sitting on the side began to clap in unison and shouts of "bien! bien!" broke the awkward 'silence'. I was completely astounded at their sensitivity and immediate response to these girls 'cries' for 'help'.

These girls managed to complete the sequence with their support and encouragement and finished to enthusiastic applause from the whole class. I responded by expressing my approval and acknowledgement of their sensitivity: "how sweet of you to clap for them.....well done to the dancers too. I know you didn't find it easy. Well done! "

In one moment what could have been embarrassing 'exposure' of lack of skill had transformed into an expression of profound empathy for the other. I was speechless. I had restrained my impulse to help but others had not! Instead of possibly laughing at them those boys had chosen to help with such sincerity and genuine caring.

This was a turning point in the class and a turning point in my perspective of the potential of the course. I had thought that this course would be all about giving a series of dance classes which could possibly help to inspire teachers to include more dance classes into their learning programmes. What it had evolved into was a mutual discovery that this was about so much more than the exploration of the skills in dance. This was also about the potential of developing a sense of empathy which goes beyond the mere transference and development of dance skills.

But this was only the beginning. The ‘solos’ followed and Mr Einstein volunteered to go first as he had chosen to do the sequence alone and not in a group. He began with great enthusiasm but soon discovered the ‘pressure’ that came with performing alone. Many went up on stage ready to clap for the solos. He managed to get as far as the end of the claps and then had a mental ‘blank’. When they saw his struggle to continue the entire class decided to clap for him. He seemed to become overwhelmed by the focus on him and the pressure to succeed. (After all he was the ‘clever’ one and surely he would excel at all he attempted?) He put his hands to his face almost in embarrassment and asked if he could begin again.

I then reminded the class of how “nerve racking” it was to perform on ones own and I praised his efforts and encouraged him to “keep going”. We pressed ‘pause’ on the ‘video’ and allowed him to begin again. The whole class began to clap and he managed to slow them down to the pace at which he was happy to dance at. He was truly ‘leading’ them.

The second time he realised that he had begun the dance too far forward on the stage and ran out of space half way through. The class by this stage had become totally supportive of his efforts. This was the self same boy who the teacher had told me the class had often shunned because of his ‘intelligence’. Perhaps now they had begun to see him in another light. Here was the so called ‘genius’ struggling to remember the steps and to complete the dance. The whole class immediately began clapping in support of him as if their clapping would give him the courage to continue.

He then struggled to complete the sequence on his third attempt. His timing was erratic but the clappers followed him and shouted encouragement. I wondered if the entire classes’ immediate rally to support him had assisted him to successfully complete the dance. Had their perceptions of him and his of them shifted? Had this so called “fun” environment of dance turned into an opportunity to provide new perspectives of one another? It certainly looked so to me! He completed the dance to their roars of approval and appreciation and applause.

The next boy to volunteer was Mr Persistent. He had already danced in a group but perhaps he had found courage from the support that the class had given Mr Einstein which then enabled him to volunteer to do the dance solo. This was a boy who I had

noticed from the beginning as having very little co-ordination and limited rhythmic ability. I had watched him struggle to assimilate what I gave them each class. I assumed he would just “blend in” as one of those learners who had limited ability but that at least he was ‘trying’. Well was I about to be proved wrong again. Here in this environment he seemed to feel empowered and safe enough to ‘risk all’ as he attempted to ‘go solo’.

At this point there was a mad dash by the majority (approximately 18) to go up onto the stage to clap for him. I heard one shout aloud: “were supporting you!” as they rushed to support his efforts. I then echoed this shout of encouragement by repeating that we were indeed supporting him. It was wonderful to watch.

This could have been the point at which he may have regretted ever having volunteered as the reality of the situation of going solo sank in and he may have had an overwhelming desire to run and escape. I imagined this as a possibility as this is often how I feel before a performance. I immediately sensed his courage and wanted to support him as well. The vocal support from the whole class was astounding. He must have ‘felt’ it and his sheer delight at managing to complete the dance with their overwhelming support was beyond description. He finished to shrieks of approval and applause.

And so it continued. The class then began to shout for Mr Silence to dance. Here was the self same “isolated, shunned” boy being encouraged by his class mates to do the dance alone. One boy went to take him by the hand to lead him to the stage. I too went to him and spoke privately to him to see if he was ready for what they were asking him to do. He asked me if he could do his own dance and I said he may but after doing the class sequence first. I did this because I felt that sufficient ‘support’ was evident to risk him trying.

He started slowly and may have been feeling fearful of attempting something he was not sure he wanted to do. As he got to the section where he could walk and make a ‘pose’ the class began calling his name in unison followed by “vamos” as they saw him struggling to complete the dance. This seemed to give him courage and his poses became more and more confident. He extended his arm above his head in a ‘fist’ of ‘power’. He managed to complete the dance far better than I had ever imagined he was

capable of. I too had learnt never to underestimate how much can be achieved in an environment of support.

Unfortunately the video is quite dark and it does not show the expressions of support and empathy all over their faces. He did not show the same degree of skill or speed recall that many others did but his face showed his absolute delight as he felt the power of their 'inclusion' propelling him to exceed his and others expectations. Words cannot describe how I felt as I witnessed this power in operation. I felt overwhelmed to the point of tears. So this is what it was all about.

I began to realise the impact that this boy had had on all of us. The confidence that he seemed to have begun to experience due to being 'included' and 'accepted' seemed beyond belief while his courage to be different was an inspiration to watch. This was the self same class who at the beginning of the course had sat and 'sniggered' at his first attempts to dance for them. I began to wonder if they had come to the realisation that being different was 'ok' and in fact something to support not shun.

I was so thrilled when the next learner to volunteer to go solo was a girl. Perhaps this time had been a time for the boys to empower themselves but I was none the less delighted when one of the girls expressed her desire to go solo. What a beautiful girl she was too, not only in her outward appearance but also her inner beauty which she radiated as she moved. She seemed born to perform solo: she danced with skill and the rhythmic accuracy of a musician, as well as an innate ability to perform and express through her entire body. She was a sheer joy to watch and finished the 'performances' on a note of excellence.

She was one of those who expressed an interest in continuing dance classes and asked for more information. I felt that more of the class would have liked to have performed solo but time did not allow it and I still wanted to sit them down for their last comments on what they had just experienced. The class wanted me to dance and I probably would have if it wasn't for the lack of time.

I then managed to get them to all sit down for our last reflection together but before we began I felt impelled to thank them:

“Before we go any further I just want to thank you sooo much. It’s been the most fun I have had in ages. I have just LOVED working with you....I’m sorry its gone so quickly, because it has, and can I ask you one last time for comments?”

This is what followed (the responses were often quite ‘soft’ so I repeated them for the class to hear. I was astounded at how generous they were with sharing their thoughts.) I have written responses in a way that approximates what was said:

“This has been the ‘best practice’ you’ve ever had.”

Mr Persistent felt that he had really improved. I responded by saying: “You know what I’ve just said that to Mr Spiteri. You have really improved, and I’m so proud of you for being able to go from being a little insecure to doing it on your own. Wow!”

“It really helped you learn as a team- aah I’m so happy to hear that.”

“You want me to carry on doing it because it brings the peoples inside out”

The little dyslexic girl said she was “very sad” that it was over.

“We’ve learnt to set aside our differences and we’ve learnt to support one another and to clap for one another and we want to thank you for that.” (Whole class burst into applause.) I respond: “Thank you SO much! That’s what dancing should be. We should all get together and have fun.”

“We really found we started to work as a team”- “I’m happy you saw that and it is such fun.”

I then turned to include the headmaster who I had noticed slowly coming closer and closer until he finally ended up sitting on the floor with us.

“Don’t you agree with that?” I asked him.

This is what he replied:

“I think there’s things that they understand that they don’t even understand that they’re understanding....they don’t even realise they’re understanding, today that I saw that

you saw ...there were people dancing today that you clapped for that as a team people were dancing that slowed down and I watched people dancing and while clapping you actually slowed the clapping down to follow them without ever looking at them and that's a connection that you've developed over these weeks with the people who were dancing without even realising it. That's an empathy. Do you know what an empathy is? It's a connection that you developed with the dancers, such a close connection that you were able to follow them and not be involved in yourself while you were clapping but be involved with the dancer and follow them for their sake not your sake."

I then agreed that it was about "caring".

Then more learners followed with further comments which I repeated for all to hear.

"It's a memory that you grade sevens will never forget... I'm SO happy! It's a nice way to finish your year in primary school and I wish you so much success and happiness not only next year in high school but in your life. Take the little spirit that you might have got here and confidence and the joy and just make it grow. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't do because you can".

One of the learners then pointed out that Mr. Under the Radar (a name I had given to a little boy who always seemed to 'escape' having to dance and who the class said had not danced at all.) I responded: "some people are just not confident enough and that's ok. When you plant your seeds in the garden do all the flowers come up at the same time?" "No!" "No. some people come up a bit later than others [some never]. The seeds are planted. When they're ready to bloom they will."

I said this because I believe that everyone should be allowed to participate voluntarily in my dance class. I do not believe in 'forcing' but rather in 'encouraging'. I see my responsibility as teacher to provide every opportunity for talents to develop and grow. This requires me to 'water' and 'feed' the soil in which these talents are expected to grow. This 'nurturing' is my responsibility when teaching and as 'gardener' I do not expect the same results from all 'seeds sown'. I trust that when and if individuals are ready they will take 'root'.

I had chosen to allow Mr. Under the Radar to 'escape'. I did not feel that eight lessons was sufficient for me to delve into the possible reasons why he had not wished to participate but I 'felt' that I should not 'force' him. I myself had been "Ms Under the Radar" at school when it came to P.E lessons or extra mural sport. I had no desire to participate no matter how often I was encouraged. I believe there will always be those who do not want to participate. As far as I was concerned he was still witnessing and watching others and in his observation was also 'learning'.

He had watched and participated in groups and that was enough for me.

Then there were further comments.

"Together we can achieve more."

"People who didn't speak much spoke through their dance....Isn't that beautiful! Yes I agree. You know you guys are unbelievably perceptive. Do you know what perceptive is? In other words you know and you can see things below the surface. You are very intelligent and perceptive. You can see more than most people would imagine."

At this point Mr Silence asked me if he could perform his creation for the class to which I responded:

"He's been asking from the beginning if he can do his own dance. Shall we let him do that?" "Yes!" came the reply. I then ask him where he wanted to perform it.

"Do you want us to make a circle here or do you want to go on the stage?...on the stage. Ok." To which the class applauded.

He then proceeded to go on stage dance another new creation of his own in total silence. I, the class, his teacher and the headmaster sat in silence as we witnessed this boy 'speaking' with his body. I felt it was a privilege to watch. He held us all completely transfixed with what I felt was a performance that was both astounding and profoundly moving. At the end of the class one girl said that what she felt they had learnt was that even though some people "don't speak much" they can "speak with their body". I was amazed at her depth of perception: who dares to say that learners are

empty vessels which we are there to be filled? My response was to thank Mr. Silence with all the sincerity I could express.

At this point Mr Rhythm asked if he too could show his 'new creation' to the class. He had continued developing it even when I had not asked him to do so. I was thrilled. He jumped up with his 'company' of two clappers to back him. He organised them to sit on chairs and give him rhythmic backing for his dance. I was so impressed with his innovation. I could hardly believe the level of initiative I was seeing him express.

When he stopped at one point because his 'backing' did not have the rhythmical accuracy that he wanted I decided to offer him assistance. He then went on to complete the most amazingly complicated rhythmical sequence with such accurate rhythm. I immediately felt that this was the sort of talent that could and should be developed. I believe that if talent is left to its own devices only a certain level of proficiency will develop. All skills or talents need 'nurturing' and encouragement to 'grow' and develop into excellence.

As we sat down again after watching his performance one of his peers made this astounding observation which I repeated for the class to all hear:

"The focus that he's putting into his dancing he's also focusing in his class. So it's kind of gone from the dancing to the classroom." I was astounded to hear this.

I responded: "I'm so happy to hear that. I promise you that's what happens when you are dancing you learn to focus well and then don't let anybody tell you can't focus, because if you can learn what you've learnt in eight lessons you can all focus."

I believe dancing offers wonderful opportunities to develop 'focus.'

Here seemed to be 'proof' that what I had always believed was in fact true at least for Mr. Rhythm. Flamenco in particular requires tremendous concentration due to its use of the body as both medium for emotive expression or 'voice' as well as its use of the body as 'musical instrument'. These physical emotional and rhythmical demands are woven almost seamlessly into an activity that embraces the whole being. These complex demands on the performer require intense focus and I have found that these skills can often become transferable to other activities. It certainly had seemed so to one of Mr. Rhythms peers.

What an amazing day it had been. It had once more confirmed that while I as teacher will continue to plan for my lessons with as much vigour as I can, there will always be unexpected 'detours' which I must be prepared for and willing to take. Often my greatest 'discoveries' and my most meaningful learning take place at these times.

This study had an originally been intended to arrive at another 'destination' but we had been 'led' along another path. It took us into completely unexplored and unexpected territory and for a 'moment' we shared an experience of profound 'connection' which it seemed none of us would forget.

Was this the "chemical change" that we had spoken of in our study group on Fridays: when different chemicals are forever changed as they come into contact with certain other chemicals? Is 'living theory' self study the recording of that change? I know I will never view my teaching in the same way ever again. I thought I was there to teach dance when in fact I was there to let dance teach me and others. Perhaps dancing and learning are one. As I dance I learn and as I learn I dance.

I was left after this lesson with a profound sense of awe and humility. I had been privileged to witness individuals make personal leaps of faith beyond their expectations and I can only express my deepest gratitude for this.

Teacher report back

Week 1.

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.

The warming up exercises to the music gave the children a feel for Spanish dancing.

It was interesting to note how some children battled with the clapping of hands and at the same time tapping their feet - but they soon managed to master this skill. When they managed to master the skill, their faces broke out in huge grins. What a boost to self-esteem! This indicates that this type of dancing is so beneficial to help develop co-ordination.

The enjoyment was clearly visible on their faces and they were soon allowing their bodies to move with the music. I was also taken aback by the sheer concentration and focus of the children - they were totally swept off their feet!

They did not realize how hard they were actually working because they were having so much fun! They all mentioned how they looked forward to their next session and this enthusiasm was clearly shown at the next session when they had remembered the steps and some had reported that they had practices on their own! That is definite proof of enjoyment!

I really feel that if this type of dancing was introduced into the school curriculum, the concentration levels of the learners would improve! What gets into the muscles, gets into the minds!

Week 2

You can see by the way the children rush to the hall that they are enjoying the lessons. When they do their dancing, I feel as though I am being drawn into their dance just by their involvement, enthusiasm and movement.

I am amazed to hear their input and thoughts about the dancing - they are so open about their feelings.

When the group were split into two groups - they did not realize at first that the clappers had to work just as hard at focusing as the dancers. Some battled with this. This was quite an intense workout!

Only when I tried one of the stepping movements did I realize how difficult it was to remember and to master - this made me even more impressed with how the children have coped and done so well!

I am so amazed to see how some of the learners who have experienced learning a difficulty in class but here in dancing, have actually excelled! Wow what a boost to their self-esteem!

Firstly, I was impressed at how keen and willing they were to volunteer to dance in the small groups and then how the 'spectators' encouraged and helped the dancers by giving hand signals ~ true teamwork.

Lovely to see that all are participating fully in the lessons even if they are battling to master some of the movements! Again - their self confidence has grown!

The vocal involvement really stirred them up!

Week 3.

This form of dancing for learners is such a good exercise/regime for the whole body. **Physically** – the movements can be quite demanding and tiring – and the sessions have shown that some of the children are not ‘fit’ and not so agile – this quite scary for their age – they tend to lead such sedentary lives nowadays! – **Mentally**- the thinking, recalling and memorizing.

It has been so apparent that some learners have seldom been involved in an exercise/routine where free movement of their bodies is encouraged, and therefore are very stiff in their execution of the dance steps. Creative thought in some learners has just not been developed. They are in a rut!! No deviation from a set path.

Whereas some of the children thoroughly enjoyed the chance to break free and experiment with their own ideas. Lovely to see how they encouraged one another.

One boy really attracted my attention – Zothaba.

Zothaba does not always feature academically and his physical build restricts his success on the sports field. He then tends to seek attention in other ways normally in a negative way and therefore is often in trouble.

During the free creative period, he focused and was doing some amazing rhythmic steps with arm movements as well. He has a natural way in his dancing. When asked to show his steps his grin stretched from ear to ear – what a positive boost to his self esteem!

The children were really excited to learn the new steps and clearly showed their joy and self satisfaction when they had mastered them.

Week 4

This session was the cherry on top of the cake for me!

The children are so much more confident. They come out after a dancing period oozing confidence and as one learner mentioned, this confidence has overflowed into other lessons.

One good aspect that has definitely developed is the support for one another. This support was visibly shown when the group of girls, who battle to remember the full routine, performed. At one stage they had lost the sequence and at that moment the group of boys sitting on the side joined in with the clappers, and this encouraged the girls to continue and they were able to complete the dance. This spontaneous action brought a lump into my throat, I was really touched.

The comments from the children show how much they have learnt and gained. The comment "the dancing has allowed the inner person to come out" really sums up the true value of the lessons.

I am so pleased that the dancing session did eventually get under way for I can see how these children have benefited and have gained so much. A big thank you to you Linda for your perseverance and determination - you have brought into the Grade 7's fun enjoyment and most important factor:- you can work hard and still have fun!

APPENDIX 4

PERSONAL INTERVIEW WITH RAMON FERNANDEZ (20 OCTOBER 2010)

Lynn Fernandez: Ramon how do you feel when you dance and when you play tennis?

Ramon Fernandez: When I dance I feel part of a family. I don't feel I have to take on everything on my own. Dancing allows me to express my feelings ... it makes me feel good about myself ... on stage I feel something inside me taking over and filling my body with happiness. When I am angry I can express it through the way I hit the ball ... but its more a rush of adrenalin ... I feel great when I hit a good shot ... but you can't show it as much in tennis ... it's a different kind of feeling in dance...in tennis I need to feel tense and tough ... I'm there to win ... fight ... dance is not a fight ... its becoming one with yourself ... dance is being the best you can be ... tennis is trying to be better than the other ...

APPENDIX 5

VIDEO CLIPS 1-77

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