

Investigating inclusive teaching practice

Introduction

Through the work with CandoCo Dance Company, Stine Nilsen and Charlotte Darbyshire have independently developed their ideas and wish to share their experience with dance leaders, who are eager to make their classes accessible to disabled students. Trained at Northern School of Contemporary Dance, Charlotte was a member of CandoCo from 1992 to 1999 developing the education program at the forefront of integrated dance development. Stine (trained at Laban) joined CandoCo in 2000, continuing the CandoCo teaching methodology; facilitating excellence for all participants by encouraging responsibility for own body, challenging one self and making individual decisions. The underlying ethos is about providing an inspiring creative dance experience where everyone achieves their physical and creative potential. In the last few years there has been an increase in interest regarding inclusive dance technique classes, which both Charlotte and Stine have delivered for Independent Dance and Greenwich Dance Agency, and Charlotte regularly teaches at Laban.

This paper is a response to the Delving Deeper Integrated Dance Weekend, initiated by Independent Dance and led by Stine Nilsen and Charlotte Darbyshire, where many interested participants indicated a need for guidelines. This paper presents and discusses class format and teaching methodologies based on our experience in inclusive practice. We also believe that inclusion is a process and that this paper is most useful in conjunction with a practical session on teaching inclusive technique class. In this instance, 'technique' refers to all classes that make use of set material/forms as opposed to choreographic workshop teaching that may pursue different training and educational aims. Inclusion refers to the practice in education where services includes all marginalised groups, and where teaching aims to relate to each individual student's learning needs, *see note 1 at end of paper*.

In accordance with current legislation, the last phase of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) of 1995 all public services need to make reasonable adjustments to provide for all, disabled and non-disabled users. Our understanding of the responsibility the teacher has for making his/her class accessible for all is based on our belief in the social model of disability, *see note 2 at end of paper*, where it is society that dis-ables a person from accessing services. This is exactly what the DDA addresses, and what we are researching in a practical way through our approach to teaching.

With our particular focus on the provision of dance education and training our aim is to provide a framework, which dance technique teachers can use for their own teaching and class structures. In the short term we hope to support and encourage many practitioners in a process allowing them to approach inclusive teaching practice with confidence and clarity. In the long run we hope that this paper will lead to an exchange of ideas and questions that will further our investigations

Notes

1) The term inclusion has been defined in education as;

‘...related services for each child’ www.ascd.org

‘...includes all marginalised groups, requires change of orientation...’ www.eenet.org.uk

It is now used instead of the term ‘integration’ because integration is seen as only making the student fit with the current status quo, rather than making reasonable adjustments to make sure the student’s learning needs are met.

This paper is specifically looking into teaching technique class in inclusive environments, using Adam Benjamin’s (2002) definition of the term ‘inclusive’;

“...to distinguish a group that have moved away from segregated dance structures and that is open to disabled and non-disabled practitioners.” (Benjamin 2002, p.13)

But we also propose to take this term further and include all students, regardless so disability or non-disability, and focus on the individual’s learning needs.

2) The use of the term ‘disabled’ in this paper is based on the social model of disability as opposed to the medical model. The medical model views disability through a medical lens and places the disabled person as the patient or recipient of treatment, whereas the social model identifies society as dis-abling the person by “...its organisation of society, its material construction and the attitudes of individuals within it...” (Benjamin, 2002, p.12), taken from Brisenden, 1998, p.23)

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