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Dance in Physical Education: Experiences in Dance as Described by Physical Education Student Teachers

Hilde Rustad

ABSTRACT

In Norway dance in school is mainly placed within the subject of physical education. This paper is based on a study conducted together with students in physical education teacher education. The main focus is to explore experiences in dance improvisation and contact improvisation as described by physical education student teachers. The study is influenced by phenomenological thinking. The analysis makes evident that the students experienced the subject of dance improvisation and contact improvisation in many different ways. Yet, how the student teachers express their experiences can be divided into the different roles of *student-dancers* experiencing dancing and *student-teachers* trying to decide whether what they do in the dance classes can be used in teaching in schools.

ABSTRAKT

I Norge undervises dans i skolen hovedsaklig i kroppsøvingsfaget. Denne artikkelen er basert på en studie gjort med studententene på faglærerstudiet i kroppsøving. Hovedfokus er å utforske erfaringer i danseimprovisasjon og kontaktimprovisasjon slik de er beskrevet av kroppsøvingslærerstudentene. Studien er påvirket av fenomenologisk tenkning. Analysen viser at det var stor variasjon i studentenes erfaringer. De fleste av studentene har liten erfaring med dans og de uttrykker erfaringene sine både som *dansestudenter* og *kroppsøvingslærerstudenter*; som dansestudenter handler det om hvordan de erfarer det å danse, og som kroppsøvingslærerstudenter har de fokus på vurdering, og hvorvidt det de holder på med kan brukes som undervisning i kroppsøvingsfaget i skolen.

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Introduction

The research upon which this paper is based took place in the autumn of 2008. It is part of a larger project in which I investigate the phenomenon of improvisation in dance both in theory and as lived experience. The here discussed section of the project involved student teachers who were taught dance by the researcher as part of the dance curriculum in physical education teacher education (PETE). The project was underpinned by the question *"what kind of experiences and meanings emerge when student teachers work with dance improvisation and contact improvisation in PETE?"*

In Norway dance has been a part of the PE curriculum since 1939. Whereas in the early years the curriculum was more focused on dance as a cultural and physical activity, it has since the 1960s also been developed in the direction of dance as a creative and aesthetic subject. While L-97, the former national curriculum, gave quite specific ideas of what dance in PE should be, the most recent national curriculum, LK06, is more general offering rather unspecified direction concerning dance (Nordaker, 2010).

The content of the dance classes in the practical investigation could be said to match some of the national PE curriculum, which has play, sports, outdoor activity[3] and dance as its main subjects. In LK06, dance is described in general terms simply as *dance, simple dances, dances from the Norwegian dance culture and other cultures as well as dance from the youth culture* (LK06). The curriculum also focuses on *the creation and making of dances as well as participating in dances made by others*. It includes playing in and with movement.[4] Dance is in most places referred to as "dance" and is at no time specified as one or the other known dance forms: i.e. jazz, ballet and hip-hop. One explanation for using "dance" in such a wide and undefined way might be to give the teacher the opportunity to choose from an open range of definitions and to use whatever dance competencies he or she already has. While already educated teachers are given the responsibility of how to interpret and handle "dance" as one of several subjects integral to PE, today's PE student teachers are taught dance according to the latest national curriculum LK06. However, when the national curriculum describes dance in such general terms, it may be difficult for PETE programs to decide what kind of dance and which dances to focus on in order to offer the students competence and inspiration and thereby enable them to teach dance when they become PE teachers.

Although dance has been part of the PE curriculum for more than 70 years it does not necessarily follow that PE teachers teach dance. Indeed there does not seem to be much research on how much or how little dance PE teachers teach and why they do so. This study aims at investigating whether student teachers' experiences in dance in PETE can communicate something of relevance concerning the content and conception of dance in PE and thereby contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of dance in schools. The main focus of the study, however, is to investigate how the teaching methods inherent to dance improvisation and contact improvisation, that emphasize bodily knowledge in touching, co-operation and building relationships between movers, are perceived by PE student teachers. The project focuses on investigating the student teachers' perceptions of dance and dancing,

3 Outdoor activity/ Friluftsliv

4 The Norwegian word used here is "Rørsleleik". All translation from Norwegian to English concerning the content of the Norwegian national curriculum is done by the author.

and the content of the classes involved was deliberately chosen. The teaching methods were presumably unfamiliar to the students and yet within the framework of the national curriculum on dance in PE. Additionally, outside the semi-professional and professional environment, dance improvisation and contact improvisation, which I chose to work with in the teaching experiment, are usually counted as untypical dance forms.[5]



Class 3BAFKI 2011/2012 doing dance improvisation at the Norwegian School for Sport Science (autumn 2011). Photographer: Hilde Rustad[6]

The Practical Research

The gathering of research material took place in the first term of the students' second year in a three-year long bachelor education to become PE teachers. Dance is part of the national curriculum in PE in schools in Norway and thereby a compulsory subject in PETE. The students have to have 80 percent attendance in order to pass the course.

The practical part of the research consisted of 10 classes each of which lasted 90 minutes. All-in-all, the students had 16 x 90 minutes of different dance activities in their second year, and during the three-year long education they received 99 hours of dance. There were 36 students in the class consisting of 25 boys and 11 girls. The classes were split into two groups. The choice to divide the large group into smaller ones was made on the assumption that smaller groups would give me the opportunity as both the teacher and researcher to be in closer contact with the students. Thus I would be able to make better observations on what was going on with the students individually and as a group. I taught the group as a whole for the first and last two classes. In this practical investigation, I was

5 The dance improvisation tradition I teach within belongs to American post-modern dance, which originated in the 1960's and 70's (Banes, 1987). Contact improvisation is another dance form originating in American post-modern dance. It was initiated by Steve Paxton in 1972 and is today practiced by professional and non-professional dancers on several continents (Novack, 1990).

6 Owing to anonymity the photos are not of the students who participated in the practical research. All photos are from a later class I taught the same subject to.

responsible for implementing the research and making observations as well as for planning and teaching the classes.

None of the two chosen dance forms demands special dance movement vocabulary. In dance improvisation, we worked with pedestrian movements such as walking, standing, sitting, lying, and basic movements like rolling, and crawling. We also worked with initiating movements from the hand, the arm or the leg and so on. The students explored different ways of moving and improvised with movements of various kinds based on the tasks they were given and their own former and current dance experience. The teaching could be characterized to have endorsed "an approach which supports everyone's subjective way of dancing" (Siljamäki, Anttila and Sääkslahti 2011, 48). The students had to work with processes and improvise in ways that sometimes led to set material and short choreographies. They had to teach their material to others as well as to show it to the class. In contact improvisation we worked with simple exercises such as leading and following, improvising with physical contact with a partner, leaning on and giving weight into each other, moving through the room, moving down to and up from the floor, and doing simple rolling sometimes alone and sometimes in pairs. We practiced a few skills and did set exercises such as forwards and backwards rolling alone and with a partner. This gave the students a chance to try familiar material in new ways. We also did a few simple lifts. Sometimes we worked with music and sometimes not.

I understand dance and dance competence in terms of "bodily knowledge" – knowing in and through the body, gained through the experience of dancing (Parviainen 2002). In the case of the classes in the study this meant considering dance improvisation and contact improvisation as forms of new movement experience which builds upon and adds on to each students' former experience in movement and dance. Bodily knowledge in dance and contact improvisation enables the student to act and react in the situation of improvisation, providing solutions as to what to do and how. Bodily knowledge may be difficult to express verbally but will emerge in the appropriate situation through bodily action. I wanted the students to engage in movement tasks that could serve as a basis for kinaesthetic and tactile-kinaesthetic exploration, to help highlight sensation and awareness, and inhibit a preoccupation with doing things fastest, highest and best. I considered this possible even within an institutional performance culture where most of the students have a background in sports. To dance in a way that corresponds to a common sense preconception of what dance is and looks like if rightly performed is one thing, but the students involved in the practical research were given unfamiliar tasks in what to them were previously unfamiliar dance forms.

Previous to this project I had taught in an institution that educates professional dancers and dance teachers.[7]The field of dance art and dance teaching is familiar to me from my education and work as a dancer and choreographer. I have worked with school teachers in continuing education focusing on teaching dance in schools.[8] I have also done administrative work in the Norwegian organization Dance in School.[9] Through my different work assignments I have experience in teaching teachers and knowledge of dance as part of the national curriculum, but to teach dance in PE teacher education was a new experience for me. In the first class I told the students that my teaching would be experience-based; that is to say, the focus would be on their own processes, and they would be given tasks to work with in order to have diverse dance experience. In addition, many of the tasks were deliberately chosen because I considered them suitable for dance teaching in PE. The idea was that through the different tasks the students would receive such dance experiences that they could rely on later when becoming teachers and teaching.

7 The Norwegian College of Dance/Norges Dansehøyskole
8 Oslo University College/Høgskolen i Oslo
9 Dance in School/ Dans i Skolen (DiS)

Methods

The methods used to generate information about the students' experience included questionnaires, observation, log-writing and interviews. I observed and taught in the discussed classes, while on two occasions there was an outside observer present.

When the students started their second year of PETE, they had various backgrounds in dance. Some had completed their first year at the Norwegian School of Sport Science, where the research study took place, and some in other institutions. Either way they all had experienced dance as part of their first year studies. When I first met with the class all students were required to fill in a questionnaire about former dance experiences gained in school and elsewhere. Some of the students claimed to have had very little or no dance activity in school. Some reported having had some folkdance, social dancing and aerobics. For instance one student answered that his outside school dance experience had been "when being drunk, techno times" and in school "one class, the school ball".[10] Only one reported having had creative dance and one having experience in dance making. In other words, hardly any of the students reported that they had had similar dance experience to what they would be encountering in the classes. This was paradoxical when considering the students' ages – most of them were born between 1985–88.They had all been in school for many years after L-97 was introduced, and L-97 contained quite a lot of dance activity both in the subjects of PE and music. The fact that many students said they had hardly been dancing in school suggests that their teachers had not been teaching according to the national curriculum and that they had fewer opportunities to dance than they were supposed to. This situation resembles that of other countries such as Scotland and England where it is reported that "dance has suffered serious neglect in many schools" (McLean 2007, 100).

On the basis of the students' questionnaire responses it seemed likely that they would receive new dance experience in the classes. This was confirmed by many of the students. Jan[11] , for example, wrote in her log: "The class consisted of new and unknown exercises and gave me new experience and ideas I can use later on in a teaching context." Regarding experience in this course's dance classes as compared to dance classes in the first year of their education another student reported:

> *This kind of dance (dance improvisation and contact improvisation) was different compared to dance classes in the previous year where we learned polka, reinlender, swing and such dances. These are the basic steps. It is possible to improvise with what comes before and after, but it's all more set. And a bit more technical. (John)*

This student remarks on the differences between dance forms by actually referring to specific ones. In doing so he reveals a general knowledge of dance and an understanding of how it is different to improvise with set material in folk dance and social dancing from doing so in dance and contact improvisation.

The writing of the logs was voluntary. Nonetheless 136 student logs were "handed in" electronically. During the teaching period the students received information about the purpose of log writing, examples were provided. I suggested that they should write about what they did in the classes, whether they became more interested in some exercises than others, and to reflect upon that. There was large variation in what and how much they wrote. Some logs were very short.

Three students were interviewed individually within two weeks of the last class. I did not interview them myself. I considered it likely that the students would talk more freely to another person than they would to me as I had taught the subject they were being questioned about. The interviews were semi-structured and the interview guide was based on the teaching and the student logs. I constructed the guide in collaboration with one of the interviewers.

10 The quotations from logs and interviews are translated from Norwegian to English by the author.

11 All of the students gave their permission to use the interviews and logs in research contexts. Two male students and one female student were interviewed. In order to maintain their anonymity in such a small group, I gave all three male students pseudonyms and called them John, Peter and Stuart. The other students quoted are given different pseudonyms.

Van Manen (1997, 54) claims that "an interview text contains recollection, reflection and description of experience – or rather of transformations of experience". In other words, an interview will never be identical to experience. It merely produces interpretations and transformations, which in turn, will constitute a base for continued analysis and interpretation in qualitative research.

The next section of this paper will focus on information given in the interviews that is supported by the logs and teacher-researcher observations. The interviewed students were asked about their experiences of dance and dancing closely connected to the classes. The interviews included questions such as: "How do you know when you are dancing and could you say something about movement experience in dance?" Suggestions as to what to write in the logs included: "Could you describe and say more about some moment(s) in the dance class?" and "Was something you did more to your liking, stupid, difficult or otherwise – write about this..."

A Phenomenological Perspective

Theoretically my methodical perspective is informed by Max van Manen (1997, 1, 30, 31) and his book *Researching lived experience*, which primarily deals with pedagogically oriented research. This means that I have chosen a phenomenological hermeneutical approach to analysing and interpreting the empirical material that is based on the assumption that human experience makes sense to those who live it (Cresswell 1998, 86; McLean 2007, 102). In his methodology van Manen draws ideas from phenomenological philosophy and relates them to the practice of qualitative research. His approach considers writing and rewriting a part of the method and regards the researcher to be actively involved in the research project. In the piece of research this paper discusses this translates into an approach that examines the students' verbal and written accounts of their experiences and reflections concerning the dance classes. The research data was gathered through observations, log writing and interviews. The analysis and interpretation of this material looks at the participants' personal experiences and how they describe the phenomenon of dance improvisation in PETE classes. My analysis and interpretation will stay closely connected to what the students express in the interviews and in their logs.

In what follows I will explore what the students had to say and what basic features constitute the lived experience of learning to dance as expressed in the interviews.[12] I have chosen to include the students' own words by quoting them quite extensively in order to give the reader the possibility of witnessing the students' actual words and expressions. I will additionally provide suggestions as to how to interpret and analyse the contents of the quotations (van Manen 1997; Engelsrud 2010). The relatively small number of interviews was chosen because I wanted to give examples of unique dance experience and to have the possibility of going into each interview more in detail. In the tradition of phenomenology, while experience is understood to be unique, an individual's experience is also considered as the possible experience of others (van Manen 1997).

12 Van Manen (1997, 36) writes that "lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research" and that the term "lived experience" refers to experience as we live it and as something that cannot "be grasped in its immediate manifestation, but only reflectively as past present".



Class 3BAFKI 2011/2012 doing dance improvisation at the Norwegian School for Sport Science (autumn 2011). Photographer: Hilde Rustad

Findings

From reading and re-reading the interviews and the logs several themes (van Manen 1997, 78) of interest concerning student teachers' perceptions of dance in PETE emerged. Some appeared in all three interviews, some in two, and some only in one. All of the themes were in different ways addressed in the logs. I have chosen to write about five themes in this paper. They are described and discussed under the following headlines: (1) Untypical dance and "new" movement, (2) Competency and self-image, (3) Positive experience, (4) "It's like it's not sports…" and (5) Relevance to teaching.

1) Untypical dance forms and "new" movement

John gave this answer when he was asked to say something about the dance classes:

> *I have never done this kind of dance before. These kinds of movements. In the beginning I thought, as did many of the others, that this felt like it maybe wasn't dance, that it was very much like – we were just rolling and. Yes – felt that it wasn't dance. (John)*

From what John said it is clear that the students have discussed whether the content of the classes can be categorized as dance or not. This is a point mentioned by many students. In itself it is interesting that the subject taught made them discuss what dance is. It indicates that through experiencing dance improvisation and contact improvisation they have changed their dance concept. What they did in class is clearly not what they would have labelled as dance previous to this experience.

In contact improvisation the students were most of the time exploring movement possibilities and improvising while being in physical contact with another student. To the question "Did you experience that you were dancing in the classes?" John answered:

> *Yes, I did. Maybe especially when we were in groups and we had (physical) contact with each other and moved. And played with weight. And the bodies against each other and such. You feel a certain, what should I call it? You feel as if you move in a dancing way. What else could it be named? (John)*

This comment that describes that contact improvisation is experienced more as dance than dance improvisation was surprising to me as researcher. I had assumed that the students' answer to this question would be more related to dance improvisation since I understand its movement material more often to look like what most people associate with dance. The student's answer proved my assumption wrong and suggests that contact improvisation is the preferred dance form to some students – even to students without previous experience with this rather untypical dance form. To Peter, however, contact improvisation brought about quite different feelings:

> *Some exercises were scary. We did it, but we tried to do them as fast as possible. We had one exercise where I was together with a girl. And I picked her on purpose. I have some I know very well, and I thought now it's stupid to be together with someone I know very well, when I have a chance to get to know someone else. So I came together with a girl I did not know at all. And we were supposed to sit and in a way lie down on the other one's thighs – and we were supposed to push the other one forwards and backwards, and that's almost like a boy – girl, lie down and move, and it was unpleasant. At the same time we of course are grown up enough to do this kind of exercise, without… At least many of us. Eeh. But it was a bit unpleasant, I have to admit, and I think she thought so as well. (Peter)*

It is clear that being a young man the student is uncomfortable doing this exercise together with a female partner. He seems to associate it with movements of a sexual character. The unpleasantness of the boy-girl situation became the foreground for him, and it highlights the issues of gender and sexuality. The student characterizes the exercise as scary as well as unpleasant. To be a dancing subject in contact improvisation makes Peter experience himself in relationship to others in a way he did not expect to. When answering another question he said:

> *… the thing with physical contact is that it often is a sort of treatment. Aromatherapy – such things. Many human beings need it. It is at the same time very – it is frightening. You get so close to another person. (Peter)*

In relating this quotation to the previous one, it is observable that Peter associated the physical contact in contact improvisation to aromatherapy and sexual activity. However, Peter did not view contact improvisation entirely negatively. At another point in the interview he not only said: "…contact improvisation is excellent in building relationships between students", but also:

> *I will probably use some of these exercises to get a group together and because there is a lot of good exercises for creating cooperation and just to feel each other. Exercises where you should put weight on one another and walk across the floor, right, you've got to be there, you've got to… hm yeah, things like that. (Peter)*

In other words: Peter's experiences in contact improvisation are of ambiguous character and depend on the nature of the exercise in question. They led him into fear and unpleasantness as well as to cooperation and better relationships.

The student experiences in contact improvisation, as described in the logs and interviews, show big variation. The three students interviewed all claim to have had a good time and to have learnt a lot. For two of the three in some situations doing contact improvisation entailed a clear problem with physical contact. It came as a surprise to what extent some of the students found it difficult to be in physical contact with each other and how some of them linked exercises to gender and sexuality. PETE in a school for the sport sciences is clearly a different environment from that of dancer and dance teacher education. PETE students have different limits concerning touch and physical contact from dance students.

Peter expressed more enthusiasm and was less ambiguous about dance improvisation than contact improvisation. He said:

> *The thing of giving initiative and following initiative – that was exciting. And fun…It was very interesting to see how the persons I have good relations with, the ones I spend the most time with, how they could just follow each other without saying a word. Whenever I did something suddenly another made the same movement. Such things. Whereas others – you had to try really hard, but still got no response. Or you try to follow them, while they – suddenly they were doing something else because they never understood that someone was trying something in connection with what they did. (Peter)*

Here Peter describes how some of his fellow students were not aware of what was going on whereas he himself believed he understood the situation. He touches upon important themes of group improvisation such as awareness and listening through the body, mutual understanding and communication, immediate response as well as the necessity of acting in the here and now according to the situation. He shows that he recognized many of the basic components of improvisation.

The students identified the kind of movements they did in improvisation as "new" ways of moving, or rather as ways in which they had never moved before.

> *In my opinion we got to know each other much better through this course, and I got to know myself better, because I moved in many new ways. Ways I haven't been moving before. And that's exciting. Because that's what we learn about, in the subject of physical education, to give the students movement experience. (Peter)*

Although several of the students were aware they had moved in new ways in the classes, Peter is the only one who links his experience to the possible experiences of his future pupils. In making such a link he sees his experience in a meta perspective. Being a student teacher learning new material in dance is a similar situation to what his future pupils will be in when he introduces them to new material. Through making a bridge between his experience as a student teacher and the situation of his future pupils he is taking steps to be more prepared for teaching. Peter also reflects on how he learned to know himself better through the lived experience of dancing. This relates to notions by Sondra Fraleigh (1987, 26) who describes how we through dance become "acquainted with that which cannot be known through any other means" and considers dance experiences as important "avenues for self-knowledge".

The interviews and logs are informative on how the subject that was taught in the classes and called "dance improvisation, contact improvisation and technique" was experienced by beginners whose backgrounds mainly were in sports, who were involved in PETE and who had to attend because the course was compulsory. As a teacher it is good to be reminded that different students may have a variety of experiences that are quite other than expected. It is also good to be aware that what the students express about their experiences does not necessarily correspond with the observations done by the teacher while teaching.

2) Competency and self-image

> *If you use it (the dance material given in the study) for instance with teenagers, then it's not about being the best one….Whereas when you dance swing everybody knows "he is good at leading", "she is a very good swing dancer", that's how it goes in a class – everybody knows within the class… (John)*

This quotation shows how John reflected upon how it is not about being the best one in the kind of dance taught in the teaching experiment. He considered this to be positive from a teaching perspective. He finds this to be very different in swing dancing in which, according to his experience, everyone always knows who the best dancers are. To another question John answered: "I haven't done so much (contact), so I don't know what's good and what's not. What I liked about it was, like I said, about acting in the moment. Need not think". Here too, John is busy with the theme of being good at doing something, but this time he talks about himself. John had a clear understanding that *there is something to be good at* in contact improvisation. Although he did not know what it was, he still liked doing it.

The theme of *competency and self-image* was present in different ways in all the interviews and in many of the logs. The three interviewees all said something like *we – the students at the Norwegian School of Sport Science – like most to do what we are good at* when asked about which activity they liked to do in PETE. In teacher education one may expect the students to answer quite the opposite: that they want to do activities they know little about in order to have more to choose from when they become teachers. If it is so that what the students prefer to do is what they already are good at, they may not be too interested in creative dance subjects such as dance improvisation and contact improvisation. This might be so since they have no previous experience of them. They feel uncertain about what being good at means and doing this kind of dance makes some feel uncomfortable. All the same, John liked doing contact improvisation. It seems that the students' experiences in dance and contact improvisation challenged their conceptions of sport and PE activities, as well as those of different dance forms such as swing dancing.

The students are busy with competency on many levels. They refer to competency and being good at doing things when it comes to teaching situations. They find it positive that dance improvisation is not a question about being good. However, they themselves prefer to do the activities they are good at in PETE. When comparing themselves to their fellow students, they find it is important to be good at doing things and perform well. Not to be good, even to be bad, in the sense of functioning well or poorly, is difficult especially for these students who belong to a sporting culture and whose self-image seems connected to and possibly dependant on performing well in PE-activities. Good performance may in fact partly explain why they chose PETE altogether.

The interviewees all somehow bring forth the idea of "feeling like a fool" that relates to their experience in the dance classes. John, for one, was concerned that feeling like a fool was *not* what this kind of dance should be about:

> *It's not about making a fool of oneself. Not about that. Even though many feel as if they are… but I don't feel like that. It's more about doing it. It's not about doing it right. (John)*

Whereas Stuart said:

> *It's positive that it's been very nice with the class…we dare to do strange things and make fools of ourselves, no one cares if one looks strange. (Stuart)*

In the classes the students worked with structured improvisation, composition and making dances. On several occasions they had to show their work to each other. Demonstrations were performed as solos, but always in groups, duets, and trios. Demonstrations are situations where the students are conscious about being looked at by others. Sometimes they make them feel uncomfortable. Van Manen writes about "feeling looked at" form a teacher perspective and points out that being looked at

> . . . may make it difficult to behave naturally and to speak freely. . . All of a sudden all eyes are on me and these eyes rob me of my taken-for-granted relation to my voice and to my body. They force me to be aware of my experience while I am experiencing it. The result is awkwardness. (van Manen 1997, 35)

This statement can be transferred to being looked at while performing dance improvisation. It is also transferable to the PE situation where the teacher is leading a class talking and perhaps demonstrating exercises to the pupils who will be looked at and maybe judged by their classmates. For the student teachers however, it might have been a long time since they last were embarrassed or "felt like a fool" in physical activity. Most of them are used to performing typical PE activities successfully, and now they had to face the challenge of learning something new. It is therefore possible to understand their awkwardness, embarrassment and clumsiness as well as the described sensation of feeling like a fool as particularly useful, important and valuable experiences in their teacher education: to not be good at may make student teachers more able to understand their future pupils. Watching does not only occur in situations set up for observing others. In PETE as well as in PE watching and being watched may occur at all times. However, it seems that in the dance classes the student teachers were concerned about both looking at and being looked at.

3) Positive experience

Stuart described good dance experiences that were related to moments *when the body feels soft, flexible and fluid* as well as to *feeling flow and having fun*. We have already observed that for the student teachers positive experience has to do with mastering and being good at movement tasks. Positive dance experience creates enthusiasm. It is particularly important in the PETE context where the students, as future teachers, will have the responsibility for teaching dance in schools.

To the question "can you say something about movement experience in dance?" John gave the following answer:

> *Yes. I think it depends on how you feel that particular day – you don't always feel good – sometimes you feel stiff and you feel that you cannot move the way you would like to. But sometimes, for example when we have been rolling in class, the sort of rolling where you put your feet backwards and roll backwards – things like that. If you are flexible you can do it better, and it flows better than when you for instance have muscle pain or back pain. (John)*

As we see, the student considered experiencing rolling backwards to be connected to the general feeling and physical state of the body one particular day. He clearly speaks out of experience and points out how the state of the body can colour and influence experience. Of course, the body is what constitutes the place where the feeling and the flow occur as well as the site of the rolling movement. In the above quotation John analyses and evaluates performing a backward roll. In this case it is practiced in contact improvisation. Yet it is an exercise the student certainly has encountered many times in other situations. It is a familiar movement task, but now part of a new context. I interpret the student to be concerned about whether his own performance is good or not. Positive experience in doing dance exercises seems to be connected to kinaesthetic experience as well as to competency.

Flow was mentioned in all three interviews. This shows not only that flow is a familiar concept and frequently used by the students, but that it is something they relate to movement activities such as dance. John said: "In my opinion a lot of what we have had with the teacher has been about flow, and not much about technique, a lot about to live oneself into – living the movements." (John)

Used in this way, what the student means by flow is not a meaning given for movement in dance class. It seems that John used flow in quite a conventional way. He relates to a feeling of flow in movement and to movement quality. To the question "Did you discover anything about your movement patterns in these classes?" Stuart answered:

Yes, I thought I learned a lot during the time it lasted. I did. I have been watching others, I watched the teacher, I got to try out this, rolling that way, it was… and then combine it to get flow, a little experience of flow. (Stuart)

Interviewer: You got this?

Stuart: Yes – I don't know. When it comes to flow you have to be interested. Especially in this genre. (Stuart)

Stuart impulsively answered that his dancing gave him a flow experience. Yet, when questioned further, he diminishes the positivity of his own answer. This he does by pointing out that in order to have a flow experience you have to have interest in the subject in question. Stuart seems not to be willing to admit that he has an interest in this kind of dance. As became apparent in another of his answers, he actually considered this kind of dance to be weird. However, how Stuart used the term flow is more consistent with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (2008) use of the concept of flow. He relates it more to a state of consciousness than to a movement quality. It also has to do with transformation and growth of the self (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). As none of the students specified what they meant by flow and because of the various meanings the term can have, the word flow could be understood to veil meaning. If the students were further questioned about what they mean by the term, its use and significance might have become clearer. John used the Norwegian word "flyt" (flow), whereas Peter and Stuart both used the English word flow. The way in which they used the word in the different languages might indicate its different meanings.

Another matter of interest is how John in the first quotation used the words "to live oneself into, living the movements" which indicates an understanding of movement and dance being a part of life. His expression positions dance improvisation in an existential manner, in a way that can be understood to relate to Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow. "Living the movements" also relates to how Parviainen writes about bodily knowledge as something which can only be *lived* (Fraleigh 1987,15; Parviainen 2002, 14).

4) "It's like it's not sports…"

In answering the various questions Stuart at different times said the following:

The classes are nice, but it's difficult for me to relate them to PE ...it's scary to touch each other. It's too weird for them (the pupils) to roll around each other, they see – there is no meaning in it. … it's like this is not sports, it's an art form, it's another subject than sports.…But dance has always been something that is a little, I don't know, a little weird. (Stuart)

As mentioned the dance subject in the Norwegian national curriculum in PE has changed through the years and includes what in the field of PE is often referred to as "aesthetic dance". This area of dance contains creative dance, composition and choreography and is connected to dance as an art form. It also includes folk dance and social dancing. According to Nordaker (2010) there is a struggle going on concerning dance in PE in Norway. One view is that dance is unsuitable for PE when it is based more in arts than sports. Nordaker writes that this is the view generally presented by the Norwegian PE-journal *Kroppsøving/Physical Education* which addresses dance mostly as physical activity and a way to get fit. This view is apparent in Stuart's statements. The other view is in favour of dance as an aesthetic and creative subject. This is the view generally presented by *Arabesque*, which is the former journal of Dance in School, and by *På spissen,* which is the magazine of the professional dancers' organization and which only occasionally publishes texts on dance in schools (Nordaker 2010). Of the three students interviewed only Stuart relates to this struggle. The attitude Stuart sometimes showed in the interview can be interpreted to relate to recent research that shows that many PE teachers are reluctant to engage in dance and dance teaching in Norway (Nordaker, 2010; Jacobsen, 2003).

Stuart expressed more ambivalence towards dance in PE than John and Peter. He referred to the dance in the teaching experiment as being weird. However, he also said that the methodology was good and that he had a lot of

fun in the classes. He said he explored new ways of moving, learnt new things about himself and found the material good regarding building relationships. At the same time he reported that his class had discussed the relevance of and priority given to the dance classes by the large amount of classes when compared with the number of classes in other activities in PETE. He even said: "…there is so much of it (dance) here, it is more like becoming a dance teacher". To me as a teacher and observer Stuart looked eager, engaged and involved in class. He energetically settled into doing any given task. He was present in most classes and it seemed important to him to actively participate. His more critical view upon dance in PE and PETE, which he expressed in the interview, was not visible in class.

5) Relevance to teaching

The relevance to teaching is a theme, which is apparent in all interviews and in many of the logs. The students are busy with whether the material taught in the dance classes can be material for teaching in PE. On this theme two of the students wrote in their logs:

> *I have never done anything which resembles this before – it's a little bit strange doing it, and I can't really see how we can use this when teaching. (Jasmin)*
>
> *Lately and today included, we have done things which look like dancing, and which I can use in my teaching in the future. This was not so in the first classes. (Andrew)*



Class 3BAFKI 2011/2012 doing dance improvisation at the Norwegian School for Sport Science (autumn 2011). Photographer: Hilde Rustad

It is hardly surprising that these future teachers have the practical usefulness of material in mind. Yet it is paradoxical how several students expressed doubts as to whether the material they themselves enjoyed doing can be used for teaching in PE:

> *Even though I still cannot imagine this as part of my teaching, I am more and more beginning to see the sense of it. You get in contact with each other through these exercises. (Maren)*

To Stuart, however, it is not logical that something which has worked well in PETE should work well for children or even for teenagers some three to five years younger than most of his classmates.

> *It's positive that it's been very nice with the class…we dare to do strange things…That's very good….I think it's difficult to teach this at gymnasium level. Because they maybe don't have such a relaxed atmosphere in the class. (Stuart)*

When interviewed, Stuart did not count positive experiences as having relevance when it comes to deciding what sort of dance to teach in PE.

Conclusions and Further Thoughts

This paper is about my research into student teachers experiences. I have explored their observations on perceptions, sensations, movements, relations and thoughts in dance classes in PETE. The research makes evident that the students experienced the subject of dance improvisation and contact improvisation in many different ways. Yet many had similar experiences regarding the themes the interview questions addressed. The students who participated in the teaching experiment had limited dance experience prior to PETE. Through the study they expanded their concept of dance and experienced moving in ways they had not done before. While the students considered some exercises good for building relationships and for cooperation, they felt uncomfortable with or even scared in other exercises. Several of the PE student teachers, mainly with a background in sports, perceived being expressive and creative in dance as something that made them feel and look like fools. They also thought it likely that they would make fools of themselves in future dance teaching situations. Some students questioned whether dance was a sport or not. There seemed to be a mismatch between the student teachers' taken for granted perceptions of sport and PE and their experiences of dance and dancing in the teaching experiment.

Moreover, there is a lack of confluence in the different contents of the empirical material gathered. The interviews and logs follow two main lines of thought. One of them addresses and considers the student as a dancing subject, shows the student having a good time, learning new material and gaining in new dance experience. This is the line that best matches my impressions as a teacher and observer. The other line relates to the student as a PE teacher to be, who in logs and when interviewed constantly negotiates whether the material presented is relevant for teaching. Whereas the *student dancers* experience dancing bodily and socially, cooperate with each other and have fun, the very same persons, now in the role of *student teachers*, write logs and reflect. Here their main concern seems to be acquiring useful teaching material. The two lines exist separately and parallel to each other. It is around them that the students negotiate the different meanings of this dance subject.

One factor which might have influenced the gap between the student dancer and the student teacher is the log writing and the fact that I as teacher and researcher read the logs. One student wrote: "The act of writing a log to someone has forced me to think through and reflect on what we are doing in these classes." As an afterthought it seems appropriate to ask whether the log writing, which was intended both as a tool for the students' learning as well as a means of gathering research material, interfered negatively with the process of learning. It might be that the students in the dance classes did enjoy what they were doing while in action, but when they were to write logs a shift occurred. To sit down, reflect and write about recent dance experience might have made them see what they just had been doing in a different light.

Various thinkers have noted that lived experience first of all has a temporal structure: it can never be grasped in its immediate manifestation but only reflectively as past presence. Moreover our appropriation of the meaning of lived experience is always of something past that can never be grasped in its full richness and depths since lived experience implicates the totality of life (van Manen 1997, 36). Van Manen points out that a person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience. She can do so only on the basis of that which has already passed or been lived through. Might it be that the students were still too much in the process of digesting their experiences and in a process not yet fully lived through when reflecting in writing?

It is worth considering if the students, rather than comfortably exploring and experiencing dance in the dance module, constantly are busy with the theme of *relevance to teaching* in a way that disturbs their process of learning. Is it possible that in PETE the object of the education, which is to be a teacher, becomes the dominant figure and focus and pushes the actual process of learning as the subject of knowledge into the shadow? To try to perceive dance material constantly from the perspective of being *useful – not useful* in what may be understood as a too early stage in the learning process within a field where the students have little experience, does not create a good atmosphere for exploring and experiencing dance. It is paradoxical if the role of *student teacher* is perceived by some students in a way that actually prevents them from acquiring the experience they need in order to teach. If this is the case, this problem might occur in other teacher education programs as well as in other PETE programs.

A small part of the data gathered directly corresponds to the idea that PE teachers are reluctant to teach dance. However, the majority of the data shows that the student teachers have a range of different experiences, including positive ones, and thoughts about dance's relevance to teaching PE. Nonetheless, it seems that the students do not trust their dance experiences to be transferrable to their teaching. This might be because they are aware of and sensitive to what they view as the "lived reality" of teaching a presumably unfamiliar activity (dance) to a potentially difficult group (pupils).

For teacher educators it is impossible to know what the students will take further of what they have learned and how they will use it. This of course relates to whether it is possible for any student teacher, while still in education, to know what he or she will find interesting and relevant for teaching when he or she finally is a teacher. However, this part of my research has shown that by the time the students reach teacher training they already have surprisingly clear ideas of what PE teaching involves and what should be taught.

The variations in dance experience expressed by the students can indicate that there is a change going on within the field of PE in the direction towards more dance teaching. If so, this is a process that might be propelled forwards by various dance programs on television and the current popularity of dance genres such as hip-hop among youngsters and young adults. It is possible that given some time after having finished their education the former students, now in the role of teachers, will find a way to bridge the gap between their different experiences as *student dancers* and *student teachers* and transform their dance experience into teaching material. Only further research will be able to establish whether this proves to be true or not, and whether future PE teachers will link the content of their teaching more directly with the content of the national curriculum and teach creative dance subjects as part of PE.

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