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**Teaching Dance from Contextual  
Perspectives in the New Zealand  
Curriculum: Concerns, Dilemmas and  
Opportunities in Theory and Practice.**

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A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in Music, The University of Auckland,  
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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the concerns, dilemmas and opportunities that teachers associated with teaching culturally diverse dances from contextual perspectives. This topic was identified as timely because of the inclusion of a separate Understanding Dance in Context Strand in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum* (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2000). Issues surrounding how to teach, which dances to teach, and who is teaching dance from contextual perspectives, are examined throughout this investigation. Building on previous research into dance education, this inquiry aims to inform and support the development of pedagogy in the teaching of dance in schools in New Zealand.

Drawing on relevant literature from dance education, historical background, theories and pedagogies are examined. Literature from a range of other fields is also reviewed, including anthropology, ethnography, educational philosophy and cultural theory. Attention is drawn to how theories from these fields impact on teaching of dance contextually, in terms of ethical treatment of the traditions of others and how theory and practice interface.

An ethnographic investigation in New Zealand was designed from within an interpretive paradigm to collect data from teachers, dance educators and dance specialists. These voices are at the heart of this inquiry. The methods used to collect data were: as participant observer on an in-service dance education course; questionnaires; and focus groups. The data collected from the dance specialists and tertiary dance educators produced some contrasting perspectives to those of the teachers. Grounded theory provided a systematic process of analysing data using constant comparison.

It became apparent that the theoretical and practical expectations associated with teaching dance contextually differed from teaching creative dance or teaching for skill acquisition. However, the latter teaching strategies were also associated with teaching dance contextually, in what was found to be a complex nexus of concerns, dilemmas and opportunities. Moreover, the difficulties encountered by teachers in this study, as they engaged with this nexus, resulted in some teachers not teaching dance contextually and this does not meet expectations of the Curriculum. A key finding of this inquiry is how creative discovery learning can operate in the teaching of culturally diverse dances from contextual perspectives.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Background to the Study</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Statement of the Problem</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3 Definition of Key Terms</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>1.4 Significance of the Study</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>1.5 Overview and Justification of the Structure of the Study</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>12</b>
2.1.1 Method and Research Questions in Relation to the Literature Review.....	12
2.1.2 Scope of the Literature Review.....	13
2.1.3 Structure of the Literature Review.....	14
<b>2.2 Teaching Culturally Diverse Dances in Dance Education</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>2.3 Theorising Cross-Cultural Understanding of Dance from Contextual Perspectives</b> .....	<b>22</b>
2.3.1 Can Cross-Cultural Understanding be Achieved through Contextual Study of Dance?.....	22
2.3.2 Theorising Cross-Cultural Understanding in the Teaching of Dance Contextually.....	27
<b>2.4 Strategies for Teaching Dance from Contextual Perspectives</b> .....	<b>36</b>
2.4.1 How can Dance be Taught from Contextual Perspectives?.....	37
2.4.1.i <i>Dance analysis and interpretation</i> .....	37
2.4.1.ii <i>Creative (contemporary) dance and other traditional dances</i> .....	41
2.4.1.iii <i>Technique and skill learning</i> .....	47
2.4.2 Who Could Teach Culturally Diverse Dances from Contextual Perspectives?.....	52
2.4.3 Which Dances to Teach from Contextual Perspectives?.....	58
<b>CHAPTER THREE – METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>3.2 The Research Questions</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>3.3 Qualitative Research</b> .....	<b>66</b>
3.3.1 Field Focused - Ethnographic Interpretive Approach.....	67
3.3.2 Researcher as Instrument – Position of the Researcher.....	68
3.3.3 Interpretive in Nature – Methods.....	71
3.3.4 Expressive in Language.....	73
3.3.5 Detailed and Persuasive – Credibility.....	74

<b>3.4 Data Collection Methods</b> .....	<b>76</b>
3.4.1 Data Collection Point One – The In-service Teacher Dance Education Course.....	79
3.4.2 Data Collection Point Two – Questionnaire.....	81
3.4.3 Data Collection Point Three - Focus Groups.....	83
<b>3.5 Ethical Issues</b> .....	<b>87</b>
<b>3.6 Data Analysis</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>CHAPTER FOUR DATA PRESENTATION</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<b>4.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>93</b>
<b>4.2 The In-service Dance Education Course</b> .....	<b>94</b>
4.2.1 The Video Critique Exercise.....	94
4.2.2 The Video Critique Exercise Data.....	97
4.2.3 The Group Planning Presentation Task.....	104
4.2.4 The Group Planning Presentation Task Data.....	106
<b>4.3 The Questionnaire</b> .....	<b>120</b>
4.3.1 Questionnaire Data.....	121
<b>4.4 Focus Groups</b> .....	<b>134</b>
4.4.1 Focus Group Data.....	134
<b>CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b> .....	<b>158</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>158</b>
<b>5.2 Concerns About Teaching Dance Contextually</b> .....	<b>159</b>
5.2.1 Concerns About the Theoretical Expectations Associated with the UC Strand.....	160
5.2.2 Teachers’ Concerns About Themselves as Insufficiently Skilled to Teach Dance Contextually.....	165
<b>5.3 Dilemmas When Teaching Dance Contextually</b> .....	<b>168</b>
5.3.1 Dilemmas Connected with Creative Innovation and Traditional Dances.....	168
5.3.2 Dilemmas Relating to Guest Specialists in Formal Educational Settings.....	172
5.3.3 Dilemmas Relating to the Selection of Which Dances to Teach.....	177
<b>5.4 Opportunities When Teaching Dance Contextually</b> .....	<b>181</b>
5.4.1 Opportunities Relating to How to Teach Dance Contextually.....	181
5.4.1i Opportunities relating to how to integrate theory and practice.....	182
5.4.1ii Opportunities relating to how to include culturally relevant innovation.....	188
5.4.2 Opportunities Relating to Who Teaches Dance from Contextual Perspectives.....	191
5.4.3 Opportunities Relating to Which Dances to Teach from Contextual Perspectives.....	196

<b>CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>6.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>6.2 Key Findings.....</b>	<b>201</b>
6.2.1 Concerns.....	201
6.2.2 Dilemmas.....	202
6.2.3 Opportunities.....	205
<b>6.3 Implications for Dance Education in New Zealand.....</b>	<b>206</b>
6.3.1 How to Teach Dance Contextually.....	207
6.3.2 Which Dances to Teach Contextually.....	208
6.3.3 Who Should Teach Dance Contextually.....	209
<b>6.4 Recommendations for Dance Education Policy in New Zealand.....</b>	<b>209</b>
6.4.1 Curriculum Strands.....	210
6.4.2 Fiscal Issues.....	210
6.4.3 Improving the Quality of Teaching Dance Contextually.....	212
<b>6.5 Recommendations for Further Research.....</b>	<b>212</b>
6.5.1 The ‘How’ of Teaching Dance Contextually.....	213
6.5.2 Who Should Teach Dance Contextually.....	214
<b>6.6 Critical Reflections: Research Methods and the Journey.....</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: In-service Dance Education Course.....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: Questionnaire.....</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: Focus Group.....</b>	<b>225</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: Ethics Documentation.....</b>	<b>228</b>
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>257</b>