Emerging thresholds;

A study of postgraduate dance educators revealing new understandings of teaching in studio dance contexts.

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Abstract

Postgraduate dance students are often presented with alternative pedagogies within their tertiary education. These pedagogies can both affirm and challenge their reality practices as they teach in the dance studio context. The distinction between dance education and dance training is made clear, as these postgraduates reconcile their new pedagogical understandings with years of engrained dance studio practices. With these challenges in mind, this research asks: *How have postgraduate experiences of dance education influenced three dance educators' teaching practices within the private dance studio context?*

Valuing constructivism and threshold theory this thesis examined three postgraduate student's perceptions of teaching in the dance studio context. Of particular interest were the thresholds of understanding that these postgraduate/studio teachers passed through as their studio teaching practices were reflected upon (Meyer & Land, 2005; Buck & Rowe, 2014)

This qualitative research interviewed three postgraduate students who were also teachers in dance studio context. After the semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this study revealed three main themes, being; postgraduates do cross thresholds of understanding that are at odds with dance studio expectations; translating new understandings is difficult when pedagogical agency is withheld; and teaching may be seen as a type of performance. The significance of this study and these findings is found in the realisation that there are challenges in shifting pedagogies when parents and students, and studio managers have clear expectations, and that reflecting upon and changing ones pedagogy is a challenge that needs to be better understood if we are to improve teaching and learning practices within studio contexts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

As a dancer, and dance teacher I have often felt caught between a rock and a hard place.

The freezing and hard wooden floor, the same white walls, outlined with rounded wooden barres and mirrors reflecting the empty room. I can imagine this scene easily. After 15 years, the dance studio has not changed for me. I feel an overwhelming number of emotions and embodied memories linked to the dance studio. I can recall the same dance moves that I am expected to repeat annually, with a bit more advanced technique and performance quality than the year before.

*Imagine this, you spend your whole life dancing and training to become a professional dancer then you get accepted to pursue Dance Studies education at Postgraduate level. You're so excited to learn that everything you have worked for has paid off, and you can research what most interests you. I sat in my dance education class and listened to my experienced lecturers explain how a successful dance class 'need **not** be based on how high your students kick their leg, or how quiet and well behaved they are'. It was a light bulb moment for me. I felt liberated. Learning in an environment where the teacher feels like they do not have control over us is something I have been yearning for throughout my entire private dance studio training. I had a newfound feeling of liberation, this feeling of awareness, that how I had been taught, and how I have taught for most of my early teaching career, raised many questions for me. These questions were real, they were close to my very being, and I felt keenly aware that I needed to research this feeling, this experience, this sense I had of being stuck between a rock and a hard place.*

Now as a dance teacher, I feel trapped in this private dance studio world. I spend so many hours inside and outside of the dance studio walls seeking ways to help my students have the best experience possible. I often get myself into an obsessive 'funk' of prioritising the studio dance world over everything else in my life. I have had many disagreements over the years with my own teachers, and studio owners that I have worked for, about the best ways to teach. Tension arises because there are so many different perspectives on how to teach and sometimes, I am confused about how I want to do it now. I get told "the parents don't pay for their children to just run around" and "your classes look out of control and I need you to look professional". I know however, that this is how I get the best out of my students. I wish I could leave it all and do it my own way. Yet I find myself back year after year teaching the same syllabus and teaching the same routine yearly schedule that deals with the same business ethics and many difficult clients.

This narrative draws from my experience of being a student, for twenty years, and a dance studio teacher, for eight years, within the private dance studio context in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Growing up in the dance studio environment. I have gained many opportunities to train with dance professionals who assisted me with competition dances and supported me to develop my dance technique. However, there were also strict and disciplined teachers who were very passionate about order in the dance classes. It became unsettling and over time, this sense of powerlessness to speak up in the dance studio became detrimental to my overall mental health. I felt trapped between the 'rock' of my desire to be a good dancer, and the 'hard place' of disagreeing with the way to become that dancer.

This research has a focus on teaching in private dance studios in Aotearoa. More specifically, the teachers I'm interested in are those freelance teachers employed at dance studios who have,

like me, experienced a childhood of dance studio classes. They also, like me, have asked questions; enough questions to prompt them to pursue postgraduate dance study in dance. I, and them, want to investigate how else a dance teacher can make a difference in their students' lives, so that they don't have to experience the same challenges we did, or how we can educate other teachers that there might be other ways to teach effectively. I have pondered if another 'rock' and 'hard place' for me is the tension between the studio owner's expectations and the freelance teacher's fresh ideas about dance education. I do feel the tension between tired conventions and new ideas, and new pedagogies in the studio context.

When teaching in the dance studio there are multiple factors that restrict these teachers in terms of how they are allowed to teach. Some of these factors include; syllabus restrictions, dance studio owners' financial needs, and parents' expectations around careers and success. These and other challenges have brought up concerns for me as a researcher, and I think most of these concerns revolve around meanings of pedagogy that these teachers feel. How much freedom are teachers allowed to have in the dance studio? Can we teach the way we want to, or even take the lead from where the learners are at on any one day? Is there freedom to create an atmosphere that allows for teachers' own pedagogy, or can we change the class timetable such that it appeals to ourselves and also teenage girls or boys. These concerns have surfaced for me now because not only have I spent all of my adult working life involved in the dance studio, but now, I have the opportunity to step back and critically reflect on my experience as a teacher, as a student and take on board other's experiences.

The teacher began to lift my left leg and continued to extend it behind me as I lay on the ground. I could feel the pain of what was about to happen, before she managed to lift it just off the ground. It triggered the repetitive words in my head, don't show the pain…don't show the pain,

but instantly my hamstrings tensed and all of the muscles in my leg began to spasm. There is an insane feeling when your body is pushed to its limit. I grit my teeth as the teacher stamps her foot into my right thigh to keep it straight and on the ground. I say nothing, I lay there still I do not want to give the impression that I am weak. Focusing so much on holding my leg in line with the floor, suddenly her voice cracks my concentration. "If you can't get your foot to the ground you won't make it as a dancer." Instantly my head shrunk into my shoulders, and I began to melt away, I felt defeated.

The 'rock': be a dancer, the 'hard place': wanting to hide from the process of becoming a dancer. The 'rock': the need to teach technique in particular ways, the 'hard place' the realisation that conventional pedagogy I'm expected to follow is dangerous to a young person's body. As a twelve year old girl I had no opportunity to say no to the leg stretching experience as stated above. It was the norm. If a dancer is what I wanted to be and if this is what it took, then I would suffer happily and unhappily.

I have grown up learning the New Zealand Association of Modern Dance (NZAMD) and Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) syllabus since the very first preparatory level (aged 5). I know first-hand what pain means and what it is like to be a student trying to negotiate the structured dance class work and trying to find myself as a dancer. To be obedient, to have ambition, to 'suck it up', to be silent. Irrespective of my learner's perspective, it was always the teacher and the way they taught that puzzled me. I often asked myself: why are they treating us children with so much discipline and order? I come to the present research asking; what happens in the teacher's mind when they are expected to tick off the content required by a syllabus, yet attend to students' needs and wellbeing, whilst also accommodating demands of fitting into an existing

business? Is there scope for holding on to any ethics and maintaining the teachers own pedagogical beliefs?

Ironically, ultimately, the dance studio was an exhilarating place for me to be as a student, it was the excitement of perfecting a skill with my friends that kept bringing me back. As a teenager, I was incredibly insecure about my dancing, and making it perfect.

My teacher asked me to demonstrate a simple skill of jumping from my knees to my feet, I could not do it. After repeating the movement, time and time again, tears ran from my eyes. I could feel my peers and the teacher glare at me from every side of the room. I felt a sudden urge of defeat that made me give up on the task and break down. A quick judgement was made from my teacher "leave my class or go to the back of the room where no one can see you." I knew that if I couldn't master this skill there would be consequences. It was a horrible feeling and one of the many studio experiences that would recur on a weekly basis.

When I reflect on my studio experience, I become angry and frustrated with teachers and my own silence. I want to scream STOP, and point out the irresponsibly bad teaching practices, the dodgy ethics that put money before children's wellbeing, the self-interest of teachers/managers over what is best for learners and so on. Rather than harbour this frustration, this research aims to peel back experience and understand what is happening in the studio and focus in on the teacher's perspective. As a child having grown up in this environment it felt completely normal for teachers to have strict pedagogical practices, yet a dance class no matter what genre would trigger anxiety inside that made me push myself to my physical and mental potentialities. As I look back, it was incredibly dangerous for children like myself. I fear that many of us then, now and in the future, have and will experience mental and physical health

concerns. It is not an ideal situation for young people. I wonder, were my teachers aware of their pedagogical choices, and aware of career outcomes, and aware of what dance could offer to a diverse range of dance learners? Did we all have to aspire to be professional dancers, and could there be other ways to achieve this?

After my experiences in the private dance studio, I continued my education, within a Bachelor of Dance Studies, at The University of Auckland. It was here as I completed my undergraduate studies that my questions regarding pedagogy became more real. I took these questions into my postgraduate Bachelor of Dance Studios (Honours) degree and now seek to research the experience teachers like me have had. Dance Studies was incredibly eye opening for me, I learnt from, discussed with, and was educated by dedicated lecturers and likeminded peers. I was thriving, understanding all about dance education and the opportunities for how I could make a difference in the dance world, not only by dancing but in so many other ways.

In my dance education classes, it was special for me to listen to Associate Professor Ralph Buck explain that a dance class can be taught in many ways and a successful class does not always look like a teacher standing at the front of the room. Success in a dance class could look like: having all children participating; it could look like fun and play as children explore ideas at their own pace; and, it could look rowdy where students are on task but making noise. All of these ideas of success may contrast with what the parents and studio owners consider normal and success. All they see is a disaster. I learnt so much more in my tertiary degrees, and have found myself questioning my own dance studio pedagogy, and also questioning the role dance studios play within education contexts. As a dance studio teacher with newly opened eyes, I am curious to understand other studio teachers' experience in respect to having a sense of

independence or freedoms within the studio dance context in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and perhaps how this may have changed after engaging in postgraduate dance education research.

1.1   The research question

When I am the teacher, I am expected to teach my students: a different style every day, a new competition each month, a national competition each year, all twelve to fifteen exercises of syllabus to each age group and a competition item that is drilled into my students' brain and engrained into their muscle memory. The same routine of dance events and structure is enacted every year and continues to run like clockwork.

This research seeks to understand the experiences of studio dance teachers who have completed research focused postgraduate qualifications, such as Honours, Masters, or Doctoral degrees with a focus on dance education. The key question motivating this research is:
How have postgraduate experiences of dance education influenced three dance educators' teaching practices within the private dance studio context?

This question emerges from my own experiences and my observation of other teachers working in studio contexts. This research aims to investigate the complexity of issues, demands and inspirations present within the private dance studio context. Building on the main research question, themes of pedagogy and threshold concepts within the private dance studio have become apparent therefore, three sub questions have emerged.

The first subquery is: ***What are dance teachers' experiences of teaching within the private studio context?*** When considering that all teachers might have values different to myself, it is

interesting to examine other teachers' experiences within the dance studio context. How might such experiences shape and inform how they teach and manage their studio/classroom context?

The second sub query for this study is: ***What dance education thresholds do studio dance teachers pass through within their postgraduate study, and how do these transform their teaching practice?*** This question aims to gain an understanding of thresholds that postgraduate students like myself pass through that may shift their perceptions and practice of teaching within private dance studio contexts. Hearing how the postgraduates navigated the journey of integrating (or not) new practices and new expectations into their studio teaching practice is of great interest to me.

The third sub query for this research is; ***How might pedagogy inform a postgraduate dance educator's approach to decision making in studio dance contexts?*** Issues and tensions concerning teacher freedom have loomed large in my experience, and as noted above have had an impact on my pedagogy. This sub-question explores notions of teacher decision making and aims to examine how freelance teachers lose, gain and manage freedom when they in effect not encouraged to be independent creative actors of change.

1.2   Key terms and definitions

Everything that I learnt in the private dance studio could not compare to the contrasting experience of learning dance education research. The dance studio was an overstimulating experience when a teacher would bark commands and dance instructions at me to complete and memorise. Dance education research provided me with my first opportunity to critically reflect on dance and analyse what interested me in the dance industry. Even though I had

negative experiences in the dance studio, there was something that I enjoyed that kept drawing me back to the dance studio, and dance education research gave me the space to embark on that reflective journey.

There are key terms that warrant definition. I initially clarify these terms upfront within my thesis, though, accept that they may morph as the thesis evolves and as my understandings and ideas connect with literature. There are words that may have slightly different meanings in different contexts (van Mil & Henman, 2016), as such, for the purposes of clarification I will define key terms below.

1.2.1   Pedagogy

In this research the term pedagogy is defined as the methods and strategies a teacher uses to enhance the learning of another (Watkins & Mortimore, 1999). In a dance education context, pedagogy is the approach teachers and facilitators may use when guiding their students in the dance studio. In the dance studio, pedagogy may look different for every teacher, as there are multiple pedagogical persona that teachers can inhabit when facilitating a dance class (Sansom, 2009). In this thesis, although there are multiple pedagogical traits that a teacher can possess, I will be specifically exploring transmissive pedagogies and transformative pedagogical styles. This will be further discussed in section 2.6 of the literature review.

1.2.2   Studio dance

In the context of this research, the term '*dance studio'* or *'studio dance'* will be referred to as the community context where teachers and learners share dance knowledge and learners pay the studio for dance instruction (Mortimer, 2020). In literature, there are multiple ways that the dance studio is described and these include; informal, private, institutional, conservatoire,

recreational and after school dance classes or education (Cohen, 2002; Green, 2003; Kerr-Berry, 2012; Mortimer, 2020; Stinson, Blumenfield- Jones, & van Dyke, 1990; Werbrouck, 2004). Dance studio classes can be offered through a privately or independently sustained dance studio, which often operates as a business (Mortimer, 2020). Additionally, the dance studio can prepare students for either industry professional dance training, tertiary dance training or can be purely recreational (Schupp, 2020).

1.2.3 Dance Training

Dance training is a rigorous process that involves learning codified movements and transferring those movements onto an individual's body (Koff, 2000). Dance training enables students to gain physical experience and develop muscle memory and strength to perform technical movement skills accurately, to dance in unison with others, and/or meeting a choreographer's aesthetic (Stinson, 2016). Dance training and mastering dance skills is the core learning objective within the studio dance class (Schupp, 2019; 2020). Ambrosio (2015) articulated the repetitious training instructions, develops the brains neurological processing, in order for learners to grow and produce a high degree of technique efficiency. Training is a teaching and learning practice, in the case of studio dance this is usually through dance syllabi where students replicate and repeat pre-existing exercises for examination through graded levels.

There is another related term that is used alongside training, and that is *'conditioning'* or *'dance conditioning'* (Rafferty, 2010). Dance conditioning aims to achieve a highly developed sense of balance, timing, rhythm, and orientation in space (Franklin, 2003; Rafferty, 2010). Moreover, dance conditioning will endeavour to improve students cardiovascular fitness, strengthening muscles, balance, flexibility, improving coordination, alignment, and imagery in order to achieve a particular aesthetic and or expressive need (Franklin, 2003; Rafferty, 2010).

1.2.4 Dance Education

There is a distinction between dance training and dance education. Koff, (2000) noted, "dance education does not seek to prepare children to become performers" (p. 27). Dance education situated within tertiary dance contexts is more aligned with movement exploration and thinking in, about and through dance (Buck, 2003). Dance education is characterised by a focus on inclusion, participation, diversity, expression and each learner's creativity (Koff, 2000). Dance education curriculum is mostly offered within formal education contexts such as government funded schools, and these programmes allow opportunities for students to explore the possibilities of movement (Koff, 2000; Stinson, 1988). This exploratory style of dance education, opens opportunities for students to express their creativity through movement exploration (Buck, 2003), whilst learning in an environment where teaching and learning is shared.

1.3 Contextual Background

It is important to acknowledge the contextual background in which my research is situated. Following is a brief overview of dance studios and tertiary dance education research.

1.3.1 Dance studio contexts

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, a dance studio is a space in a community where learners and teachers share dance knowledge (Mortimer, 2020). Dance studio owners run the business and are heavily involved with marketing the studio, teaching students, organising administration and organising employees who work within the dance studio. Within the dance studio class, the students will learn syllabus content that puts emphasis on dance technique, competition

routines and dance choreographies for presentation at yearly dance concerts or recitals (Dei & Simmons, 2010; McCarthy-Brown, 2018; Mortimer, 2020; Posey, 2002). There are many types of syllabi used around the world including 'Royal Academy of Dance' (RAD), which is one of the largest dance organisations offering a structured ballet training programme. RAD is offered in 79 different countries (Royal Academy of Dance, 2021). Specifically, in New Zealand there are less syllabus options but the commonly used options include; 'New Zealand Association of Modern Dance' (NZAMD); 'Asia Pacific Dance Association' (APDA); DanceNZ Made; and 'Royal Academy of Dance'(RAD).

In association with syllabus, students need to learn a multitude of exercises that place an emphasis on learning technique. Technique demands are bodily aesthetic demands that can in turn inform expectations around the learner's weight, height, race, gender, looks and even hair (Burnidge, 2012). Alternatively, some dance studio classes may also incorporate dance activities that do not focus solely on training but also include dance classes that foster creativity and self-expression (Koff, 2000). Dance styles that are predominantly taught in dance classes stem from a western influence and may include ballet, contemporary, jazz and tap (Kerr-Berry, 2012; Risner & Stinson, 2010).

In New Zealand, there is no qualification needed to start your own dance studio business (Cohen, 2002). This statement alone speaks volumes about the culture that may dwell in private dance studios in New Zealand. The owner does not need any form of tertiary qualification or certificate in dance education to teach children, nor does the business need to meet any industry standards. As a tertiary educated dance educator and postgraduate research student, I have become increasingly aware of diverse pedagogies that may better serve dance studio learners and also better serve dance studio businesses. The fact that in my mind little has changed over

the years in my own small experience causes a deal of frustration and motivates this present research to ask why? Why is there little change, and what are ways to move forward and improve the dance studio teaching and learning experience?

1.3.2   Tertiary dance education research

Within New Zealand, there are few institutions that provide tertiary dance education research opportunities. At the University of Auckland, University of Waikato and University of Otago students can study dance education research not only as an undergraduate student but at a post graduate level as well. These are the only research led tertiary institutions across New Zealand, where dance education research exists. Tertiary dance education used to look like mastering a dance style such as, Martha Graham, but now over time dance education has developed considerably (Leijen, Lam, Simons, Wildschut, 2008). Furthermore, at these institutions learners are able to develop their postgraduate study into whatever most interests the individual, by completing written or practical dance education research topics.

1.4   Theoretical Frameworks and Constructivism

I was in my first year of postgraduate study when I was called in to assist a dance class because the behaviour of a senior contemporary class (aged sixteen to eighteen) was described to me as "chaotic" and "rude". I came into the class and sat in the corner of the room to play the music and observe what was going on. All of the students were standing silently at the back of the studio waiting in anticipation for the next instruction. As the teacher screeched instructions over the loud deafening music, I began to feel the room shift. The teacher, sitting in the front right corner of the room watching them and screaming out more instructions "your legs are not straight enough, you need to work harder". Suddenly she came over and stopped the

music… it was silent, she glared at her students with a look of disgust and disappointment. She spat at them "my twelve year olds can do this better than you lot, that's a bit embarrassing isn't it?" Astonished by the lack of respect she had for her students, my head snapped as fast as it could to meet the teacher's eyes. I felt defensive for those students and appalled.

This narrative is one experience where I have witnessed behaviour from a dance teacher that I disagree with, and is one of the many experiences that has led me to undergo this research. Unfortunately, this is not the only experience I have felt since becoming a postgraduate student at the University of Auckland. In the hopes of opening up conversations about this research topic, I will be utilising qualitative research methodologies to interview three postgraduate participants. Within the paradigm of qualitative research, constructivism will be used as a theoretical lens that will enable an examination of three postgraduate students' meanings of their experiences.

As this study accepts that there will be multiple meanings drawn from the narratives, it is noteworthy to remember that all humans have diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, and they will experience and make meaning in different ways (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism accepts such diversity as a reality and that personal experience will provide insights into how these three teachers construct knowledge but also how they remake meaning of their experience. Constructivism is key to this research, as it allows me to have conversations with the research participants, to value our experience and to draw upon this knowledge as we seek answers to the research questions.

1.5   Thesis Overview

The present thesis has been structured into six Chapters. Chapter one provided an introduction to the research question, key terms and definitions, contexts and noted how my personal experience in the dance studio environment informed the focus for this study.

A review of literature in chapter two outlines relevant debates and issues raised in the literature. This chapter aims to provide a clear indication of where my research is situated within dance scholarship. Some of the key themes that will be analysed in this chapter include dance education and dance training, transmissive and transformative pedagogies and threshold concepts.

Chapter three discusses the research methods selected to answer the research questions. The methodology chapter provides a discussion of qualitative methodology, post-positivist theory, and constructivist methods, and the data collection and analysis details.

Chapter four will outline the results or the data in terms of teachers' narratives. This is followed by Chapter five, where the dominant and emergent themes arising will be discussed against the literature. Chapter six provides a conclusion and makes recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: A Review of Literature

This literature review is focused by the research question: ***How have postgraduate experiences of dance education influenced three dance educators' teaching practices within the private dance studio context?*** For this study, the literature review will aim to gain an understanding of current debates that relate to the research question (Hart, 2018; Torraco, 2016). The context and the specificity of this research question, lies within the dance studio context, and therefore the literature is concerned with pedagogy, curriculum and syllabus, teaching and learning in dance studios and meanings of dance. Through the process of examining the literature, I may begin to understand gaps in the current research and be better prepared in examining emergent issues and findings (Hart, 2018; Torraco, 2016).

2.1   Meanings of Education

This section discusses a diverse range of education categories and outlines a contextual background for where and how education may be delivered in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Each of these education categories is outlined by the International Standard Classification (ISCE), under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

2.1.1   International Standard Classification UNESCO

In analysing and comparing dance studio education offerings, it needs to be acknowledged that education systems and access to education differ and vary widely in terms of structure and curricular content. For the purposes of understanding the education sectors that exist in Aotearoa/New Zealand, I will be referring to the International Standard Classification to

describe the framework of different education settings. In November 2011, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) devised a systematic criteria and framework for describing education offerings (UNESCO, n.d.). The ISCED 2011 describes this as "a widely-used global reference classification for education systems that is maintained and… revised…" (UNESCO, n.d., para. 1). UNESCO (n.d.). categorised education as formal, non-formal and informal. These categories will help to understand what dance education and training looks like in a tertiary context and across dance studio contexts.

2.1.2 *Formal Education and Informal Education UNESCO*

Formal education is that which is institutionalised and planned through public and regulated organisations (Dib, 1988; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). It is recognised by relevant national education or equivalent authorities (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) noted that institutionalised education (Formal) occurs when an organisation provides structured educational arrangements, such as curriculum and syllabus that assist in student-teacher relationships and/or interactions, that are specially designed for education and learning (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Formal educational are mostly designed to provide full-time education for students in a system designed as a continuous educational pathway (Dib, 1988; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

It is important to acknowledge that formal education, may also include assessments that are required in the workplace to give learners qualifications and final assessments that will advance students to the next level of education (Dib, 1988; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). There are clear learner requirements for formal education settings such as; attendance and institutional structures that teachers have to follow (La Belle, 1982). Arguably, by teachers

obeying the strict structures, formal education may fail to stimulate the students creatively and may lose sight of the learners needs (Dib, 1988).

Informal learning as distinct from formal education, is defined as, forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate, but are not institutionalised (Dib, 1988; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Consequently, informal learning is less organised and less structured than either formal or non-formal education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Informal learning includes activities that are learnt within family contexts, workplace, local community and daily life, on a self-directed, family-directed or socially-directed basis (Dib, 1988; La Belle, 1982; (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2012) acknowledges that incidental or random learning might be confused with informal learning, however they are different and not classified under this section.

Incidental or random learning may occur as a by-product of day-to-day activities, events or communication that are not designed as deliberate educational or learning activities (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Examples of incidental learning includes learning that takes place during the course of a meeting, whilst listening to a radio programme, watching a television show or potentially reading a text message (Dib, 1988; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012).

2.1.3   Non formal Education UNESCO

Non-formal education is education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education to assist in providing life-long learning to individuals (Dib, 1988; UNESCO Institute for

Statistics, 2012). Non-formal education caters to people of all ages but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway structure; it might involve short courses, workshops or seminars (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognised as formal or equivalent to formal qualifications by the relevant national or sub-national education authorities or to no qualifications at all (La Belle, 1982; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). La Belle (1982) introduced a model that shows examples of non-formal learning and states that these can be extra-curricular activities, out of school learning or parent instructions. The dance studio is an example of non-formal education as it is situated and offers out of school extra-curricular learning.

Depending on the national context, non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development (La Belle, 1982). It can include training in a workplace to improve or adapt existing qualifications and skills, training for unemployed or inactive persons (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012), as well as alternative educational pathways to formal education and training in some cases (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Even though private dance studios still offer examinations and syllabus they are considered as an example of non-formal learning, as it is not organised through a higher education system such as a university or school.

2.2   Understandings of Dance Studios

Dance studios facilitate dance classes for different ages and in diverse styles (Green, 2003), they are a business and the learners (mostly children) are the paying customer. The customers

are seeking a specific outcome or 'dream' enabled by the learning of dance techniques. Within this supply and demand business model that is extremely competitive (Schupp, 2020), a myriad of stereotypes and ideologies (Green, 2003) have emerged.

In Aotearoa/New Zealand, a dance studio is a space in a community where learners pay teachers to share their dance knowledge (Mortimer, 2020). Dance studio employees and owners rely on each other for how a dance studio is managed, it becomes difficult to have one without the other. Rogoski (2007) said that it is increasingly difficult to find teachers that are qualified to hire dance teachers that are knowledgeable and qualified teachers. It intriguing to see that some dance teachers that are working in the industry, or who are looking for work might not have the qualifications to teach this job, yet still seek out employment in dance studios.

Dances styles taught in a studio context vary. The genres most predominantly taught in dance studio contexts stem from Western (Eurocentric) dance and by and large include ballet, contemporary, jazz and tap (Kerr-Berry, 2012; Mortimer, 2020; Posey, 2002; Risner & Stinson, 2010). Some dance studios have a focus on specific styles, such as Latin dance offering styles such as salsa, tango, cha-cha because this is what is considered popular (McMains, 2016) and hence financially rewarding.

According to Green (1999, 2003) a typical dance studio setting sees the teacher standing at the front of the room, directing students who are standing in lines, facing the mirrors and staring at their own reflection. Within the dance studio context the prevalent pedagogical styles of facilitating a classroom may not necessarily be concerned with helping diverse students understanding of how to dance. The focus is upon training learners to be dancers, and the most common pedagogy employed to do this is an authoritarian pedagogy (Green, 2003). The dance

studio is often a room lined with mirrors, with ballet barres on the wall and a flooring that is safe for students to dance on. Students attend classes to learn specific dances and dance steps, taught by a teacher who is considered the expert (Green,1999, 2003).

There are a multitude of stereotypes that the dance studio industry creates. Dancers are often judged by their looks, based on the correctness or look of their movements and their physical body attributes including their height, weight, size of various body parts and so forth (Burnidge, 2012). Mirrors in the dance studio offer the learner the opportunity to watch themselves dance and for teachers to correct the technical aspects of the dancer (Radell, Adame, Cole & Blumenkehl, 2011). While considered a useful learning tool, mirrors also might serve to further encourage dancers to view themselves from a third-person external perspective (Radell, et., 2011). That is, to disassociate what they see in the mirror with how they feel. Such disassociation can lead to an obsession with training, leading to injury. It could lead to students viewing their body image as negative and eating disorders and a lack of appreciation of how they feel when they dance (Burnidge, 2012; Green, 1999; Radell, et al., 2011).

In the context of this study, the interviewees participating in this research were dance studio teachers and have either completed or were undergoing postgraduate study. The interviewees were not studio managers, but more akin to being casual staff members.

2.2.1   Curriculum and Syllabus

Within studio dance training context, specific curriculum and syllabus are designed to guide the teaching and learning experience (Nunan, Candlin, & Widdowson, 1988). Dance syllabi are designed to create a structured and systematic programme for dance studios. Nunan, et al (1988) argue that there has been confusion over the term 'syllabus' and its close relative term

'curriculum'. According to Finney (2002) "curriculum is synonymous with the term syllabus…it refers to all aspects of the planning, implementation and evaluation of an educational program, the why, how and how well together with the what of the teaching-learning process" (p. 70). Syllabi mostly provide a selection of tasks and activities that will be taught over a period of time and then graded in an examination process (Finney, 2002; Nunan et al, 1988).

Generally, different organisations have set specifications and mission statements that align with their values and ethos of the company. Prickett (2004) articulates examples of syllabus goals; "to promote knowledge of dance" and "to provide, through its syllabi, techniques upon which to train dancers for the profession" (p. 2). Andersson & Thorgersen (2015) describe syllabus in terms of "dance as a field of knowledge and dance as an art form" (p. 6). Furthermore, Andersson & Thorgersen (2015) contend that there are three working aspects of dance as knowledge, being; "working environment, career paths, and training" (p. 6). Whereas dance as an art form consists of four subsections that syllabus attends to, being, "concepts and terminology, basic technique, historic and cultural context, and analysis" (Andersson & Thorgersen, 2015, p. 6). Arguably, dance knowledge and dance as an art form make up the syllabus content and provide direction for what exercises need to be achieved and the knowledge that students should develop during the course of study (Andersson & Thorgersen, 2015). However, not all dance studio syllabus are clear nor follow such advice (Andersson & Thorgersen, 2015).

A dance syllabus incorporated into the majority of dance studios in Aotearoa, is the the New Zealand Association of Modern Dance (NZAMD) syllabus. This dance syllabus has provided a definition and goal for the syllabus that informs students what the NZAMD aims to achieve.

According to the New Zealand Association of Modern Dance (n.d.) webpage their "syllabi is versatile, applicable to both the recreational and the elite dancer… NZAMD provides access to a complete range of disciplines… " (New Zealand Association of Modern Dance, n.d., para 5). As stated on the official website, "the choreography and variety of examinations, assessments, performance awards and teaching programme should provide inspiration to every student who wishes to dance" (New Zealand Association of Modern Dance, n.d., para.6). Notably, the aims and objectives within the statement are bold and claim to contest that the syllabus is inspiring and accessible to all students and teachers. My questions from literature around syllabus are; how can a syllabus be inspiring to a student when the choreography has not been updated since the year 2011, and when some exercises even date back to 1997? How can a syllabus be accessible to all teachers when the resources given to them are on a CD or DVD and when a syllabus book has notes that are hard to decipher and contradict what is shown on the DVD? How are teachers delivering such syllabus, and how are the casual teachers getting guidance on how to deliver the syllabus?

2.2.2   Expectations of Studio Owners and Parents

This research is not examining expectations of parents and dance studio owners, however it is important to acknowledge their involvement with students and teachers in the dance studio. This section will outline some of the external factors that inform the decision making of teachers within the studio and the subsequent pressure that is being placed on the learners.

Parents are overwhelmingly concerned about their children succeeding in the competitive world of dance (Patterson-Price & Pass, 2021), and if their child is not deemed successful enough, they are often either pushed until breaking point or pulled out of dance activities (Patterson-Price & Pass, 2021). In the dance studio context, parents place much pressure on

their children, which means that dance is not about recreation, fun and exploration but on winning. (Patterson-Price & Pass, 2021; Purdie, Carroll, & Roche, 2004; Schupp, 2019).

An example of such pressure and disruption is found within choreography classes (Schupp, 2019). Often parents complain that the choreography is not exciting, meaning full of tricks, and demand changes, irrespective of the student's choreographic intent. In a competitive dance studio environment, there are parents who simply cannot disengage from the children's learning experiences. Dance shows such as the reality TV show *'Dance Moms'* illustrate this point (Cardinal, 2013; Schupp, 2019). This show focuses on the dance mothers of young girls aged 7-16 who compete all around the United States, these girls wear provocative costumes, dancing to over sexualised music, and trained by their teacher with technical abilities that are well above their age level and maturity (Cardinal, 2013). This show reveals teachers who are screaming incredibly negative comments at the children, while the mothers observe and tacitly approve this abuse (Cardinal, 2013). Should a young teacher be involved in the dance studio syllabus world they have to negotiate their involvement with parents and studio directors' expectations (Schupp, 2019). Today's dance competition studio culture is mimicking the dance on reality television where it is common to see young people, particularly young, thin, athletic, and adolescent girls, strive to achieve professional status through competing (Schupp & Clemente, 2010).

This attitude is incredibly difficult for the young teacher to manage, as they more than likely will not have the experience nor authority to confront the parents' poor attitudes and demands (Schupp, 2019). Dance competition events in combination with televised programmes have rapidly exaggerated dancer's technical expectations (Schupp & Clemente, 2010; Schupp, 2019). LaPointe-Crump (2007) strongly believes that merging dance and competition in any

type "Cheapens dance, reducing it to a kind of crude commercialized combat" (p. 4). The literature, suggests that parents and studio directors place unreal and inappropriate expectations upon the children in their classes. Of relevance to the present study, is the question, how are young casual teachers prepared to deal with these expectations and how does tertiary dance education contrast or complement these expectations?

2.3   Investigating Dance Training

Training in a dance studio is often the prevalent learning strategy within dance studio contexts (Stinson, 2016). Dance training is commonly involved in the studio because it enables students to develop physical strength to allow the students to gain new technical dance abilities (Stinson, 2016). The majority of research has revealed that dance training is the common and 'normal' way of learning within dance studio contexts. Additionally, a number of studies articulate what dance training entails, and why it is one of the commonly used learning strategies. Schupp & Clemente (2010) have recognised that technical dance training in studios is often desired as a means to improve one's ability to complete a specific dance technique and skill set. Agreeably, Koff (2000) defines dance training as aiming to master skills and develop specific motor skills enhanced by dance trainers that teach using strategies and dictated movements. These recent studies have begun to provide insight into understanding dance training in the studio contexts.

Aspects of dance have become historically important and passed on from culture to culture through generations (Xin, 2021). Xin (2021) describes dance as the most "intuitive and intense way of expressing feelings and human body movements…" (p. 1), supposedly, 'the intense way' as coined by Xin (2021) refers to the vigorous training and difficult movement dancers execute. Conversely, Stinson (2016) articulates that regardless of the training, dance, to

audience members, has an effortless looking aesthetic, and it is this grace that they come to watch. Such grace and effortlessness does not come from nothing, but can be attributed to the incredibly hard work gained from the dance training that was drilled into students in their private dance studio. The twisting of limbs, pushing of flexibility and effectively counterbalancing what the human anatomy is designed to do (Xin, 2021), is somewhat of an alternative learning method that has been passed from teacher to teacher for years. If dance training is the core studio practice amongst teachers and students (Stinson, 2016; Van Rossum, 2004), then how do we best understand the effects and outcome of using dance training in the dance studio? According to Xin (2021) dance training is the most effective way to translate the history and context of dance from a teacher to the student, and hence dance training becomes most effective in the dance studio because children are watching and mimicking their teachers to understand dance movements.

Dancers are athletes, they, much like any other athlete, push their bodies to extremes, attempting to improve their physical strength and limb flexibility. Dancers can be seen rehearsing long hours, to complete comprehensive dance movements and perfect each move (Angioi, Metsios, Koutedakis, Twitchett, & Wyon, 2009). Stinson (2016) articulates that dance training requires discipline and effort in order to achieve the attainable goal of being a dancer with flawless technique. The intensity that is involved within dance training can have several implications for children and individuals, these may include injuries (Bowling, 1989) caused by attempting advanced movements that not all dancers can complete due to individual skeletal structure, biomechanics and muscle types (Hamilton, Aronsen, Løken, Berg, Skotheim, Hopper, Clarke & Briffa, 2006). However, dance training provides an efficient pedagogy for students who are entirely focused on becoming a dancer, even if that means enduring pain, or devoting their whole childhood life to becoming a dancer (Stinson, 2016). These results

contribute to the growing body of evidence where Van Rossum (2004) insinuates that dance training is the most efficient form of learning style for students. However, it does not cater to every student because of the incredibly difficult and strenuous movements that are often beyond many body types and especially beyond a child's developing body.

In most private dance studios, teachers role is important to have to have as an inspiration for their students (Van Rossum, 2004), yet nearly all dance teachers are seen as being an authoritative figure in the dance studio with an "intolerance for ambiguity" (Lakes, 2005, p. 4). Children learning in dance studio contexts are not invited to question the authoritarian teaching style (Burnidge, 2012). In the main dance training has involved turning up to class, kicking your legs high, and doing whatever the teacher says (Burnidge, 2012). This pedagogical practice has been passed on from teacher to teacher, wherein the new teacher is sometimes an ex-student, and often those ex-students are the ones who did not make it as the 'professional dancer'. As noted, each studio may have its own flavour and teaching routines, however in short they are all exercising authoritarianism and are doing this quite ruthlessly (Burnidge, 2012). Stinson (2016) affirms this point noting that, "[d]ancers typically learn to reproduce what they receive, not to critique or create" (p. 35). Children and students are learning from reinforced ideologies inherited from their teacher that contribute to authoritarian characteristics (Stinson, 2016; Xin, 2021). Authoritarian teachers demonstrate both dominant behavioural and psychological control, restricting students' autonomy (Aunola, & Nurmi, 2004; Uibu & Kikas, 2014). In the dance studio, the authority of teachers is not questioned, and because nothing is questioned nothing changes (Burnidge, 2012).

Children who are trained under authoritative teachers are not speaking out and in some cases have a 'suck it up' attitude when in the dance class (Burnidge, 2012). Effectively, dance

training involves individuals understanding how to follow directions from their teachers, and the traditional model for dance training is authoritarian (Stinson, 2016).

It is clear from the literature that dance training has positive and negative impacts on learners. To my mind there is nowhere near enough research that unpacks the issues arising within the Dance Studio pedagogy context. As such, this study aims to speak to some of the concerns raised in the literature.

2.4 Dance Education

This section of the literature review examines research surrounding dance education in tertiary contexts and dance education research. In an effort to sharpen the focus of this literature, this section will focus on dance education research situated in tertiary institutions that offer dance education in Aotearoa. Where possible I draw on available literature specifically relevant to this context.

Dance education incorporates learning in, through and about dance (Koff, 2000; Rowe, Martin, Buck & Anttila, 2018). Moreover, dance education is the exploration of time, space, energy and movement in such a way to allow an individual to express one's self (Koff, 2000). A large number of existing studies in the broader literature have examined dance education and compared that to dance training as the two main means for learning dance. A contrary position is taken by Koff (2000) stating that dance training and dance education is non comparable, one approach (dance training) is learning codified movements, drilled and trained into a student, another (dance education), explores the awareness of the human body and how that body moves in comparison with others and their environment. In Koff's (2000) mind, one cannot compare

these approaches to learning and teaching dance. However, understanding differences and similarities of dance training and dance education is especially important as both pedagogical approaches are extremely relevant to this study.

In dance education there are accessible opportunities for dance classes to challenge people of all ages, and as a result increase their self-confidence, and build vocabulary as well as community (Chappell, Craft, Rolfe, & Jobbins, 2009; Stinson, 2015). Children's development includes movement exploration, which is a precursor to learning how to communicate. Children are already exploring the environment, people and objects around them (Koff, 2000) and movement and dance education can contribute to this vital stage of learning. Koff (2000) confirms that, "before a child can name an object, the object has already been fully explored" (p. 28). As a child is growing the world is expanding and a child finds more to explore. Dance education invites and fosters the development of self-expression and interpretation through movement (Koff, 2000). The evidence suggests that there are various positive implications arising from the delivery of dance education as opposed to dance training. The question that arises from this is, how might freelance dance teachers implement dance education into their teaching practice within private dance studios?

2.4.1   *Dance Education in Tertiary Institutions in Aotearoa/New Zealand*

In New Zealand/Aotearoa tertiary dance education provides qualifications in higher professional education that prepares students for careers in the dance field (University of Auckland, n.d). Dance education is a specific learning style offered in Aotearoa/New Zealand in few institutions, where students are taught dance education courses (Sööt & Leijen, 2012). Presently in NZ there are tertiary courses that offer, what might be described as 'Liberal arts

education' for example, Dance Studies, University of Auckland and those who offer a 'conservatoire arts education', for example, New Zealand School of Dance (New Zealand School of Dance, n.d.).

A liberal arts education highlights 'diversity' and 'difference', and is a way "to develop knowledge and understanding that are of intrinsic value, and rationalize how this knowledge has relevance for ... understanding the self, of others, and of the world" (Early, 1986, p. 245). Bonbright (1999) emphasised that in order to have a quality dance program it is essential to have qualified educators in the field of expertise across education platforms. Leijen, Lam, Simons, & Wildschut (2008) highlight the importance of the teacher's pedagogical practices in tertiary dance education, where the teachers' emphasis should be on student-centred learning (Smith-Autard, 1994). Arguably a contributing factor to students view that they feel valued within such degrees is that the pedagogy purposefully includes their perspectives and concerns. On also suggests that student-centred learning practices within this context is a key reason that distinguishes dance education from dance training?

Student centred learning or experiential learning (Burnard, 1999) is widely used in tertiary contexts and dance teacher education (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005). Student centred learning encompasses the idea that the students construct knowledge and the teacher or lecturer is more a facilitator and guide (O'Neill & McMahon, 2005). Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven, & Dochy (2010) further explain that constructivist learning is another closely related term that identifies how students construct their own knowledge, by building on their existing knowledge and re-making meaning and understandings ongoingly. These learning approaches stem from Carl Rogers (1957) person centred theory where all humans possess the desire to grow and to achieve their potential. Rogers (1959) articulated that for an individual to grow they need an

environment that stimulates them, and provides them with genuineness, acceptance and empathy. For me, the University of Auckland provided this environment that facilitated this type of learning. Student centred learning is vital for growth in student development in dance (Buck, 2003), and is crucial for individuals to access full potential in understanding dance education.

Dance education calls for dance educators to recognise that students need support from mentors and teachers to access the learner's full potential and guide the student to be an individual (Leijen, et al., 2008; Smith-Autard, 1994). Similarly, Rowe, Buck and Martin (2015) articulate that dance education allows for teachers as well as students to question how and why they dance, which in turn leads to new opportunities in the dance industry. Accessing full potential for students is crucial for learners to develop a deeper understanding of dance at tertiary education (Smith-Autard, 1994). Dance education within tertiary contexts is aimed towards graduates fostering creativity as well as developing a deeper understanding of all dance disciplines such that they, the young pre professional teachers can go on to prepare younger students for their future diverse career pathways (Leijen, et al., 2008; Smith-Autard, 1994).

2.4.2   Dance Education Research

Research in dance education can offer opportunities to consider critical questions about the ways in which we learn dance and what we learn about dance as a subject (Bonbright, Bradley, Bucek, Faber, Gibb, Hagood, Koff & Press, 2004; Bradley, 2001; Risner, 2010; Rowe, Martin, Buck & Anttila, 2018). Dance education research is necessary as it reveals, "various layers of the dance process, its constituents, and their meaning and function in society, thereby contributing to the understanding of people and their means of expression within the framework of a socio-cultural community" (Giurchescu, & Torp, 1991, p. 7). Furthermore,

dance education research can acknowledge the multitude of issues and concerns that students may pursue in their study (Giurchescu, & Torp, 1991), and in doing so improve the evolving world of dance (Giurchescu, & Torp, 1991).

Dance education has become increasingly more popular to study in higher education (Smith-Autard, 1994), with undergraduate and postgraduate degrees focusing on dance education more readily available (Smith-Autard, 1994). While dance education offerings have increased, they are still dwarfed by the number of dance degrees that focus on performance and choreography. A dance education degree allow for a focus on pedagogy, teaching skills, curriculum development, aesthetics, history, cultural studies and the sociology of dance (Smith-Autard, 1994). Risner (2017) noted that leading universities have increased their focus on pedagogical teaching practices, giving students experiences in dance education that cultivates creativity and cognitive skills. A more student centred approach is championed by such Universities as they increasingly recognise that diverse dancers and diverse dances all matter equally (Risner, 2017; Smith-Autard, 1994).

2.5   Understandings of Threshold Concepts

This section outlines a definition of threshold concepts, contextualising this further by explaining what it means in a dance studio and dance education settings.

Meyer & Land (2005) define threshold concepts, as "conceptual gateways" or "portals" (p. 375) that lead teachers to a "previously inaccessible" way of thinking (p. 375). Threshold concepts can spark a new way of understanding, interpreting, or viewing an idea that transforms a way that the subject is presented or viewed (Meyer & Land, 2005). Furthermore, Meyer &

Land (2005) suggest that threshold concepts as conceptual gateways provide a transformative learning process that shifts the perception of a subject or topic or idea. As Meyer and Land (2005) suggest, crossing thresholds can be seen as transformative and changes the learner's awareness of a subject, it can be irreversible as in something cannot become unlearnt without effort and attention and it can be integrative in that it exposes previously hidden related topics.

Buck & Rowe (2014) noted that threshold concepts can be applied within diverse curriculum areas, and they help us look at new conceptual and metaphorical ideas that help teachers and students tune into new ways of thinking to understand a curriculum subject area such as dance. Threshold concepts reveal "boundaries of our understanding of a subject" (p. 172) and draw attention to the thresholds to cross in order to shift those boundaries. Threshold concepts have been described as those "Aha! moments: [threshold concepts] the realisation of a new and important way of seeing the world that allows a student to move forward with their own learning in the subject" (Buck & Rowe, 2014 p. 173). The theory of threshold concepts may be useful in the present study as a means to examine what thresholds the postgraduate dance students are crossing as they broaden their understanding of teaching dance in studio contexts.

2.5.1 Threshold concepts and teaching dance

Dance educators Buck & Rowe (2014), discussed what their dance classes look like metaphorically, and describe themselves as being akin to Dr Who and Indiana Jones, as they step into teacher roles within tertiary education. Using these avatar metaphors Buck and Rowe (2014) note what they aspire to achieve in a lesson and how they flex to meet diverse students' diverse needs. They speak of the thresholds that they present to students and how they play with pedagogies, using their avatars, to help students cross thresholds of understanding. Buck and Rowe (2014) describe the thresholds they present to the learners, such as everyone is a

dancer, and all dance matters, and then they reflect on how the tertiary students played with ideas and crossed thresholds and or resisted a threshold. The reflection process is key in helping tertiary students own their education and own their values that support or inhibit their willingness to see and cross thresholds of understanding.

In the private dance studio, dance students learn from a syllabus that has a focus on learning defined dance techniques. From a young age, studio dancers are familiar with lesson structures and dance styles that focus on technique. They learn very quickly what is considered as 'correct' and incorrect dancing (Schupp & Clemente, 2010). The thresholds of understanding in the studio context are mostly different to those in a school classroom context. The idea that "everyone can dance" (Buck & Rowe, 2014, p. 173), as championed in a school, is not necessarily what teachers in a dance studio are advocating. Context is important to consider when establishing goals and 'thresholds' for learners to achieve. When the teacher enters their dance class with a mindset that divides the world into those who can dance and those who cannot, they have specific boundaries around their understanding of who is a dancer. Challenging these assumptions may be known as presenting troublesome knowledge (Buck & Rowe, 2014) to these teachers. Such troublesome knowledge requires unpacking of values and assumptions and takes time in order to actually cross a threshold of understanding. It is important to note that the learners and the teachers should identify thresholds together and also reflect on how they may work at crossing a threshold should they want to.

Of relevance to the present study is, how do postgraduate dance students experience their awakening to new knowledge and then how do they translate such new understandings into their work place when teaching young dancers in the dance studio. As noted from the outset of

this thesis, I personally have struggled with this process of translating what I have learnt, and the thresholds I have crossed into the dance studio context.

2.6   Pedagogy

This section briefly outlines a range of pedagogies found in the dance studio context. Pedagogy may be defined as the art, method, and practice of teaching (Mortimore & Watkins, 1999; Walus, 2019). In addition, the term pedagogy is a widely used term that specifically refers to the interplay between teaching, curriculum and learners (Koff, 2015; Walus, 2019).

There are few pedagogical practices that teacher's value while teaching (Walus, 2019). Some teacher's contest that some pedagogical practices are superior than others, however this is entirely up to the individual and their beliefs (Walus, 2019). Rowe, Xiong & Tuomeiciren (2020) contends that even if teachers were to change their teaching pedagogical style, it would rely on multiple stakeholders to embed this change, and such stakeholders are beyond the control of the individual teacher themselves.

The literature reveals two dominant dance pedagogies: transmissive and transformative pedagogy. Transmissive and transformative pedagogies provide contrasting pedagogical styles that teachers value within different dance contexts.

2.6.1   *Transmissive Pedagogy in Dance*

Transmissive pedagogy is the transmission and transfer of knowledge and technical skills from the teacher, the authority or expert, to the student (Burnidge, 2012; Dyer, 2009; Novak, 2012; Stinson, 2016; Walus, 2019; Warburton, 2008). In dance, transmissive pedagogy has been the

primary method of 'instruction' for centuries, where the expert, in this case the dance teacher, demonstrates choreography or syllabus exercises and the obedient student is to repeat the skills until successfully attaining the skill (Dyer, 2009; Walus, 2019). Shapiro (2016) voiced her concerns about transmissive teaching styles and the detrimental effects on student experience in dance training. She continued,

> Students learn to silence their own voices, obey authority without questioning, and follow accepted traditions. We ask students to become 'bodiless beings', or 'nobodies'. We ask them to alienate themselves from their feelings, from their aesthetic or bodily experiences with an emphasis on cerebral knowledge. (p. 9)

In Aotearoa New Zealand, it is common for children learning dance in the studio context to learn dance through a transmissive pedagogy. Studio syllabus outline the technical skills required, how the skills are to look, and how they are to be done effortlessly in order to meet professional standards (Graham, 2002). The over emphasised role of the professional standard is exacerbated through media portrayal of dancers, and this aesthetic dominates the learners (young girls) educational, biomechanical, social, and health realities (Graham, 2002). Transmissive pedagogies can and sometimes place the 'dance' before the learner, and in so doing assuming the dance is more important than the dancer, and hence the dancer becomes a disposable commodity (Walus, 2019).

Why might teachers adopt a transmissive pedagogical approach to their teaching style in the classroom? Are teachers concerned with what is being portrayed in the media and believing that the only way their student will look like a 'dancer', is by drilling the student to learn and repeat a few technical skills, and in so doing becoming proficient in that set of steps. In this respect, the teachers gaze and authority within the studio dance class is paramount, as it is their opinion and gaze that determines who is successful and therefore who is not successful and who is being marginalised (Green, 2007; Risner & Stinson, 2010; Warburton, 2008).

Authoritative teaching practices can lead to unhealthy behaviours within the dance class, especially between children (Shapiro, 2016). When the students are training long hours and being taught under an authoritative teaching style, children can develop mental health concerns, serious body image issues, become self-obsessed and produces anxiety and stress for dance classes and competitions (van Winden, Van Rijn, Savelsbergh, Oudejans & Stubbe, 2020). Authoritarianism is the imbalance of power between the teacher and the learner, and this power imbalance eventually trains the dancer to become susceptible and obedient (Walus; 2019). The impact of this style of training lasts beyond the dance training experience. When young women leave the dance studio and leave dance training, they can be damaged, having low self-esteem, eating disorders, anxiety and sometimes a hate of dance (van Winden, et al., 2020).

Transmissive pedagogy in its most extreme, can sometimes be akin to military training. In this context trainers in authority utilise fear, competition, degradation, abuse and unsafe body practice to produce a product, the soldier (dancer) (Stinson, 2016; Walus, 2019; Warburton, 2008). Lakes (2005) speaks to how dance teachers in some studio contexts can develop authoritarian personalities, leading to such teachers being tyrants and not tolerating individuality and an "intolerance for ambiguity" in the studio (p. 4). Lakes (2005) notes the importance of relationships between the teacher and the learner, however when the teacher is seen as the unquestioned authority, there can be no meaningful relationship.

There is a prioritisation of skill acquisition that comes hand in hand with transmissive pedagogy. Studio dance in New Zealand reflects this skill-based priority in the studio and in the syllabus documents. Arguably, however, the loss in depth that occurs with a focus on skill only endangers dance as an art form, and choreography has suffered in recent times due to the

lack of diversity (Walus, 2019). Further to this, one can ask which skills, steps, techniques matter most and why?

2.6.2 *Transformative Pedagogy in Dance*

Dance pedagogy should incorporate schemata helpful to not only gaining dancing proficiencies but also the student's own discovery of self and understanding of their body (Hobi, 2014). Moreover, performance opportunities and dance composition being at the forefront of their dance journey can be highlighted, giving students the opportunity for expression in numerous ways, so that students have their own voice when creating dance (Hobi, 2014).

According to Ukpokodu (2009) transformative pedagogy is defined as an,

> activist pedagogy combining the elements of constructivist and critical pedagogy that empowers students to examine critically their beliefs, values, and knowledge with the goal of developing a reflective knowledge base, an appreciation for multiple perspectives, and a sense of critical consciousness and agency. (p. 1)

Ukpokodu, (2009) argues that it is important for students to feel as though they can have a creative outlet during learning experiences, and students feel empowered to make decisions. Mezirow (1991) argued that individuals experience personal and intellectual growth when they grapple with disorienting dilemmas because they ultimately acquire new knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Transformative learning helps students examine their experiences, and review their experience in complex situations, for this investigation it would be, such as a dance classroom, where different factors such as skill development, friendships, fun, personal well-being, personal aspirations are vying for attention (Cummins, 2000; Meyers, 2008).

Sansom's (2012) narrative research of early childhood dance teachers' experiences and viewpoints of dance, found that transformative pedagogy can offer the opportunity to

understand how dance can potentially contribute to creating an empowered teaching and learning experience for both teachers and children. Consequently, dance can act as a transformative agent in teachers' and young children's lives. Ultimately, it is important to highlight the empowering and transformative exchange between dance teachers' and young children and the relationship that these two parties can create (Sansom, 2012). Research with young children is beginning to show that children understand pedagogy and competently accept their own agency within the teaching and learning environment. As stated by Oliveira-Formosinho & Araújo (2006), children's recognition of their own knowledge and conscientiousness "can be a stimulating input for transformative pedagogy" (p. 30). When learning is an empowering process, the potential of dance education is promising, not only at an early age, but life-long (Sansom, 2012).

Transformative pedagogy creates an inclusive, student centred learning environment that opens space for student growth (Meyers, 2008). Giguere (2014) reminds us that the study and practice of dance is, "not merely learning new ways to move...it is also about embarking on a personal journey to explore and reflect the changes in yourself and in the world around you" (p. viii). In dance studio contexts, students regularly face issues that challenge and inform personal decision- making. Transformative pedagogy provides a bedrock of trust and relationships between teachers and learners, and learners and learners, that in turn helps an individual to make important decisions (Kane, 2014). However, it is recognised that fostering transformative pedagogical relationships in the dance studio context is ongoingly difficult to maintain, as the influence of social media, competitions, TV reality shows and parents expectations all place expectations upon the teacher and Studio management (Graham, 2002).

Ultimately, being able to determine and devise the nature and qualities of our studio dance interactions and relationships can help us achieve both operational and aspirational goals. Understanding the dance studio environment this way can help us to identify and reach our goals, both artistically and in life (Kane, 2014). Creating opportunities for ongoing support, guidance, and growth for youth in dance is the ultimate aim, and the teacher plays a very significant role in achieving this aim.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

A research methodology aims to outline the research tools used to answer a research question and investigate the researcher's findings (Borja, Izquierdo & Montalt, 2009). This chapter outlines the methodology used to answer the research question: ***How have experiences of dance education research influenced three dance educators' teaching practices within the private dance studio context?*** It includes an outline of the aims, theories, the data collection method and the processes of my investigation. Lastly, I highlight my position as the researcher, ethical issues encountered, and overview of challenges and limitations in this study.

3.1   Ontology

Ontology refers to how individuals know what they know. In a broader sense ontology refers to the theory of existence (Lee, 2012), and offers insights into methods concerning multiple realities, being, becoming, and reality itself (Goertz & Mahoney 2012; Lee, 2012).

Lee (2012) explains,

> There can be two distinct interpretations of 'multiple realities'. One interpretation…is that there is just one reality 'out there' and we live in it. Therefore, there are no 'multiple realities' in any literal 'multiple universes' sense… In contrast, another interpretation of 'multiple realities'…suggests that the very raw stuff of our world created by one cognitive agent is different from that of another agent. In this sense, it is not simply the categories but the realities that are multiple (p. 406).

The ontological stance taken in this thesis is that there are multiple realities and multiple ways to know our world (Lee, 2012). As such, dance, music, physics, mathematics, literature are all different and valid ways to express knowledge and examine how we come to know diverse

aspects of reality (Goertz & Mahoney 2012). Within qualitative research, discussions are open to multiple conversations around what we know (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.1.1 Epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge that explores the relationship between the researcher and the participant, or between the knower and the respondent (Lee, 2012). Epistemology asks, how does the participant come to gain or build knowledge (Goertz & Mahoney, 2012; Lee, 2012). Another way to understand epistemology is to ask, how do individuals know what they know (Goertz & Mahoney 2012; Lee, 2012).

Lee (2012) states that epistemology, "depicts knowledge as the outcome or consequence of human activity; knowledge is a human construction, never certifiable as ultimately true but problematic and ever changing" (p. 407). Within the present study the epistemological position that knowledge is a human construction, supports the valuing of an individual's experience and the telling of that experience.

3.1.2 Constructivism

Constructivism offers a philosophical and methodological approach that helps understand and examine people's individual meanings of their experiences. Savery and Duffy (1996) note that, "constructivism is a philosophical view on how we come to understand or know" (p. 135). In this research, constructivism explored how freelance dance teachers come to understand their knowledge of teaching in dance studio contexts. When the dance studio teachers in this study were interviewed, their individual accounts of experience were valued. As Savery and Duffy

(1996) note, while the cases (interviewees) may be similar their meanings and understandings from prior experiences will create variances in their answers.

The importance of placing myself in the world of my participants, in order to construct meaning and understand the participants from their perspective was vital to my research. Bogdan and Biklen (1997) reiterate this view by discussing the process of the researcher guiding and making meaning to understand the participants' experiences instead of being outside of the experience itself. As a research 'insider' (Taylor, 2011) that is, a studio dance teacher and post graduate student with experience in teaching within New Zealand dance studios, I have insights that allow me to relate to the teachers experiences in context. A constructivist approach values the researcher's experience and recognises that within a constructivist research process, the researcher plays an influential role in gaining, examining, and interpreting data.

3.2   Qualitative Research

This section outlines the methodology used within the present research in order to gather qualitative data. A post-positivist qualitative methodology provided the framework for examining the research question.

Qualitative research recognises that there are multiple factors that influence individuals' perceptions and their construction of meaning (Silverman, 2013; 2016). A qualitative research methodology values personal stories and lived experiences (Silverman, 2013; 2016), enabling the present research to gather detailed personal descriptions of teaching dance in studio contexts. A qualitative research methodology does not measure or count but rather values

teachers' experiences and their words that serve as valuable data (Mays & Pope 1995; Silverman 2013; 2016). Qualitative methodology allowed for these postgraduate dance students to offer and reflect open descriptions of how they felt, how they made sense of experience, how they found or lost freedoms and how they negotiated new understandings against their past experience of teaching and learning.

3.3   Post-Positivist Paradigm

This study allows for multiple truths in seeking a diversity of answers in response to the present research focus (O'Leary, 2004; Ryan, 2006). Post-positivist research respects that there is no one singular truth and diverse teachers will offer diverse accounts of teaching and learning in studio dance contexts (O'Leary, 2004; Ryan, 2006). Moreover, post-positivist research, values each individuals' experiences as told by them to serve as information for the study (Ryan, 2006). Collecting a range of narratives that speak to lived experiences provides opportunities for in-depth data that speaks to felt details.

3.4   Narrative inquiry

Connelly & Clandinin (1990) explain that narrative inquiry is a research method that supports the articulation and analysis of personal experience. In the present study not only were the teachers' experiences providing data but my own voice was part of the narratives. Narrative inquiry respects the inter-relational role of the interviewer and the interviewee (Clandinin, Caine, 2013). As an insider to the world of dance studio teaching, I was able to discern details and arguably probe more deeply than another researcher. This 'strength' of my position enabled me to gain deep and rich data. I was also aware that my 'voice' required management, as the

narratives in this study were constructed (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). My 'voice' relates to the stories I have, however, in order to understand the rich and unique experiences of the participants their 'voice' needs to be just as loud as my own when crafting these stories together (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

A narrative method supported this research aim of reflecting on stories from the three different teachers' lived experiences and understanding their specific contexts of teaching in the dance studio. Another rationale for using narrative inquiry was that the story sharing and the critical reflection would appeal to teachers who examine their practice through storying their experience (Clandinin & Caine, 2013).

3.5   Methods of data collection

This section provides an outline of the data collection method of semi-structured interviewing utilised within the study.

3.5.1   Semi-structured interviews

A Semi-structured interview process was used to collect data from the three interviewees in the present study. The strength of collecting data through the use of semi-structured interviews was that it allowed me to interview the studio dance teachers in an informal, flexible and open manner. The advantage of this was that the three teachers could relax and take time to answer questions carefully, and also raise new topics (Longhurst, 2003; Weiss, 1995). Patton (1990) noted that semi-structured interviews are especially useful in drawing out information from

each individual's perspective. I liked the fact that semi-structured interviewing allowed our conversations to move around and flex with the topics and memories raised (Longhurst, 2003).

Horton, Macve, & Struyven (2004) noted that semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to have freedom to share personal stories and highlight their thoughts about their experiences in greater depth, and not answer questions with simple 'yes/no' answers. Fylan, (2005), Longhurst, (2003), and Whiting (2008) all spoke to the importance of this flexibility and the importance of participants feeling comfortable as they talk.

I carried out a one hour interview with each of the three dance studio teachers. The interviews were held at locations chosen by the participants. Due to the timeline of covid alert level changes (further discussed in section 3.9) I was able to conduct interviews in person with 1 participant. The other interviews needed to be conducted via zoom.

3.5.2 *Participant selection*

Purposeful sampling was used in selecting the research participants. Purposeful sampling was valuable in maintaining the research focus on part time dance studio teachers with some postgraduate dance experience. Suri (2011) noted that purposeful sampling can help maintain the quality of the research, especially when there are time limitations. In addition to maintaining the quality of research, purposeful sampling is identifying and selecting individuals who are especially knowledgeable or experienced in a specific interest (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, & Hoagwood, 2015). Beneficially, purposeful sampling creates space for the participants "to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner" (Palinkas, et al. 2015, p. 2). Consequently, purposeful sampling does have its disadvantages, there can be an issue with bias and experiences that

relate specifically to the individual so the data collected cannot be generalised beyond the sample (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013; Palinkas, et al. 2015).

Each of the three research participants have undergone and/or are currently studying within a Postgraduate Diploma, Honours, Masters or PhD research degree at the Dance Studies Department, University of Auckland. These participants are also dance studio teachers who have been teaching within private dance studios for more than five years. The teachers have come from diverse regions of New Zealand and taught diverse dance technique based syllabi offered through; Royal Academy of Dance (RAD), New Zealand Association of Modern Dance (NZAMD), Asia and Pacific Dance Association (APDA). As such, the interviewees experience was diverse, and yet they were familiar with tertiary education.

Each of the participants was well known to me, due to the very small community of dance teachers who have pursued postgraduate dance education research. I ensured that the interviewees were well aware of the focus of the research and ethical issues in respect to anonymity and opportunity to withdraw from the study.

3.6   Data Analysis

After gathering the data from the participants, I went through a thematic data analysis process endeavouring to establish key themes and issues.

3.6.1   *Thematic analysis*

Thematic analysis analysed the three interviewees' narratives. A thematic analysis allowed me to sift the data for emergent themes, issues, and gaps. Thematic analysis is a method for

systematically identifying, organising, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) emerging across a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2012). After transcribing each interview, I created narratives that collated the main ideas, contexts, feelings, experiences from each interviewee. Writing the narratives was the first step in sifting the data for meanings (Clandinin, 2006). I began looking for any patterns that emerged across each of the dance teachers' narratives.

Braun & Clarke, (2006) noted a strength of inductive data analysis is that the findings are driven by what emerges from the data, and does not have to meet any hypothesis or expected outcomes. The process of sifting for data followed a constant comparative model (Maykut and Morehouse, 2002). All data was chunked and then coded. The chunks of data were then collated into groups that spoke to similar ideas or issues. These were sifted again to find the most pertinent quotes that spoke to that pile of data best. The constant sifting for key themes continued until each pile of data was clear in its focus. I found that this process forced me to consider all of my ideas, and question how and why I was clustering and grouping certain quotes into themes. Finally, I could make a propositional statement that summed up the thematic pile and then identified the best quotes in that pile that illustrated or spoke to that theme best (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Joffe, 2012).

3.7   Position of the researcher

I recognise my position within this research from an insider's perspective, as I am an individual who has completed postgraduate study in dance and have over eight years teaching experience in the studio. It is important to discuss my positioning and to acknowledge any related ethical considerations, as these have the potential to impact my research significantly.

3.7.1   My background

I have taught contemporary dance, jazz and ballet for the NZAMD (New Zealand Association of Modern Dance) and RAD (Royal Academy of Dance) syllabus in New Zealand for a total of eight years. An insider's perspective is described as the researcher having an insight to similar experiences of those in the research study, as they belong to the same group (cultural, biological, occupational, etc) (Loxley & Seery; 2008; Naples 2003; Taylor 2011). My years of dance teaching have provided me with a myriad of experiences within the dance studio industry.

Alongside being a dance teacher, I have been a dance studio student my entire childhood life. I then continued my dance education at a tertiary level, completing my undergraduate degree in Dance Studies. Shortly after completing this qualification, I gained my post graduate degree in a Bachelor of Dance Studies (Hons) degree.

3.7.2   Insider perspective "I am"

I will be an insider in the sense, that I have been a dance teacher within private dance studios and lived a life as a very enthusiastic dance studio student that has experienced the highs and lows of learning dance in a studio context. Working in the dance industry as a New Zealand dance student and teacher has meant that I have gained insights into what is involved to run, teach and participate in selected dance studio classes. Having a shared understanding of syllabus content, studio expectations and so on, gave me a degree of insight and expertise. Insider researchers share a professional identity with their participants (Chavez, 2008). Each professional freelancer (along with myself) has an identity, that identity is a reflection of experiences and social interaction that has shaped the individuals understanding of the self

(Andrzejewski, 2009). Therefore, dance teachers have an identity, and this identity is constantly evolving and informing their construction of how these individuals view themselves as a dance teacher (Andrzejewski, 2009).

Alongside being a teacher, having also been a student, I know first-hand what it is like to be a student trying to negotiate the structured dance class work and trying to find myself as a dancer. Through these experiences of being a dance teacher, a dance student and a graduate from a tertiary dance education programme, I will be able to relate to the participants when they share their personal stories and experiences.

3.8   Ethical Considerations

The main ethical consideration was the protection of the research participants (Nespor, 2000). Within the present research, the three teachers' identities and any third party names that were mentioned, were replaced with pseudonyms. According to McLeod & Francis (2007), the use of a pseudonym in place of a name allows for participants to have a "safety net" over information being shared (p. 108). A safety net will allow participants to feel as though their identity is protected so they can share any details while having a sense of confidentiality (Lancaster, 2017). The same considerations have been established with any third party names of locations or any external details that relate to the dance teachers for example dance studios that may be mentioned or locations.

The research participants selected their own pseudonym and they were also given all transcripts for checking before I began the process of creating the narratives. I also then shared the final narrative for each teacher, before I began the thematic analysis process. I gained ethical

approval from the University of Auckland Ethics committee and with the approved forms ensured that all protocols regarding participation and withdrawal from the study were clear. It was important for me as a researcher, to consider how to appropriately, and ethically interview these participants (Frosch; 1999, Taylor; 2011).

Additionally, the participants were offered a research topic guide a week before the interview. This pre-planning allowed the teachers time for preparation, and then again reminded of the topics for conversation before going into the interview. This preparation helped to ensure that the participants were informed about the purposes of the research and what would be required from them during the research process (Scott & Garner, 2013).

3.9   Limitations and Challenges

On March 11, 2020, The World Health Organisation declared the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) outbreak as a worldwide pandemic (COVID & Team, 2020). After overcoming the 2020 lockdown disruptions, the New Zealand government mandated another level four lockdown, on the 19* of August 2021, meaning that all residents had to stay at home for at least 6 weeks.

The COVID-19 lockdown had completely changed the way that I had to work and live. I was teaching dance in several dance studios, and also at the University of Auckland. I had to learn quickly how to teach dance online, offer pastoral care online, manage classroom behaviours or absences online and so on. This was all very stressful and time consuming. Heyang & Martin, (2021) spoke to the global need for dance education and dance training to be moved on line and the disruption this caused. They also spoke to positives and negatives of teaching dance on

line. COVID interrupted my study directly by limiting my access to libraries, and also my research and study space. COVID, however, was most disruptive to my health and well-being. I suffered a great deal of anxiety caused by lack of income, and general fear of illness. Moreover, I could not network with my peers nor liaise face to face with my supervisors. Finally, the pandemic caused me to do my interviews on line through ZOOM, which was fine as we were all used to it, however, a zoom conversation is never as good as a face to face conversation.

Chapter 4: Narratives from Three Postgraduate Dance Education Students

4.1   Allow Me To Introduce

This chapter includes the interviews from three dance teachers that participated in this study. Due to word limitations of this study, each interview has been filtered to summarise the main points and have been presented in this chapter. The participants share their experiences of being a postgraduate student and a studio dance teacher, and all participants have been issued a pseudonym for their own name and any third party names to protect their identity (Nespor, 2000).

4.2   Cynthia *(she/her)*

We began this interview by sitting in the comfort of Cynthia's lounge, on beanbags, surrounded by snacks and refreshments. It was the perfect place to create a relaxed environment for us both. Cynthia and I have similar journeys, so I was excited to sit down and discuss her experiences and understand her views of teaching dance in a studio context while also being a postgraduate Master of dance student.

We dived right into her childhood and her first experiences of dance. Growing up in a small town, Cynthia was introduced to dancing at a young age. Her mum enrolled her into local dance classes and she explained these as creative dance classes for young toddlers and children. She described her earliest memory of dancing,

> *…I just have a distinct memory of putting on butterfly wings and just flying around this giant hall.*

I was intrigued to hear more about what feelings she had towards dance at that age.

> *I remember being that age and thinking this is the best thing in the world. It was the first memory of me being creative and having a giant space to do whatever I wanted instead of just dancing around in my bedroom. I wanted to do this forever. I loved dancing.*

As she grew up, she danced and experienced the highs and lows of studio dance. At her dance studio she learned lots of different styles and decided that this is something that she wanted to do more and more. As she moved through the years of learning dance and grew older, she jumped at every opportunity to take on as many teaching positions she could within her dance studio.

I was excited to hear what it was that made Cynthia decide to teach and what it was about studio dance that she enjoyed. She shared with me her memories from her first ever teaching experience;

> *It was horrific!! I remember taking a ballet class… Spent the three weeks leading up to the class stressing finding all the music I needed, counting all the music, knowing exactly what music was what exercise and then I taught it and forgot everything I had planned anyway. I wrote it all down in a book and scheduled everything. This is what I'm doing for three minutes of this class…they will do this for five minutes. Yeah, it was totally planned but not executed according to the plan.*

> *But at that age I liked having a job and… I jumped at the opportunity to teach, I wanted to take every opportunity I could.*

We both laughed and reminisced about our first classes that we had each taught. After discussing this memory of her first dance class ever taught, I remembered how similar my and Cynthia's teaching experiences were. It brought me back to the feeling of being in full control to create and structure the dance class in my own way. I wanted to hear more about her dance

teaching experiences in the studio before she decided to study in a tertiary education at a postgraduate level. She explained;

> *I've been teaching for a while now and I have learned things where I can just show up and take a class because of the experiences and education I have now… It is not really a big deal. When I first started, I was thinking about so much like counting music, and this kid's running away, so you have to go get that kid. But then, there's seven other kids over here that you have to make sure are still doing what you need them to do…Some parents bring their babies and their baby is crying. Just a lot is happening and you don't get taught how to manage all of that. I had no idea how to deal with that when I was 14.*

After completing high school, Cynthia decided to enrol at a tertiary education to study an undergraduate degree in dance studies. She began to teach at more dance studios, formed connections with her lecturers and peers, and became a full time student and a part time dance teacher so she could make ends meet. Cynthia described to me that something had clicked for her and made her want to do postgraduate study

> *I really loved third year second semester, I think that was my favourite part of undergraduate. Maybe it was some point in third year that everything clicked for me. I kind of felt like I understood it at once and I was like, yes, I know what I'm doing. And I get why we're doing this…it made me interested in maybe more the research side of it…it made me want to stay within the university because I still had more to study.*

Cynthia enrolled in postgraduate studies straight after the undergraduate programme and graduated with her honours degree and then enrolled in the Masters programme at the same tertiary education. I was curious to hear about any revelations Cynthia had in her postgraduate classes that informed her teaching practices.

> *I remember my lecturer in my education class saying some of the best classes that he's taught, is when he could leave the room and go grab a cup of tea, and come back.*

This comment stuck with me and I wanted to hear more about what it was about her lecturer saying that to her that made her remember it so much.

> *My teaching style was always, do the thing with the kids or, especially when I first started meticulously planning everything, so I know what I'm doing. But as I got older, and also off that comment, I've come to learn that, some of this sounds really cheesy, but some of the best teaching that you could do isn't coming from you.*
>
> *If you give a group of nine year olds a creative task, and they need to work together, then therefore building an atmosphere that's not just dancing, it is problem solving. They're also learning from each other, team building and it doesn't always have to come from you. Then maybe you become more of a facilitator...To be the teacher, it doesn't revolve around you all the time. Sometimes you can just give them a little nugget of something and then walk out the room and everything's fine.*

It was fascinating to listen to how a comment could shape the way a teacher teaches, and this nugget that Cynthia has mentioned could be the 'tool' that teachers use to access students' creativity in the classroom. Cynthia mentioned more about what this comment meant to her and it shifted her teaching practice.

> *I was kind of taking little ideas from university and trialling them in my classes always, in terms of more creative work. There was something there in that comment that I did take back into studio teaching.*

Our discussion began to close, I asked Cynthia the final question I had about how she felt overall about being a dance teacher in a studio today.

> *I enjoy teaching in specific scenarios...I'd say because I've been doing it for a fair amount of time, teaching at quite pivotal growth moments of me being a teenager, and then into a young adult I've gotten to a point where I have learned a lot.*
>
> *I guess my favourite part about my job is knowing who people are and getting to know them, not just in the dance studio, they're not just dancers, they might play football or what school they go to. My favourite classes to teach are older students, Who I've had for quite a while, because you get to see them grow up and get to learn who they are. I experienced that with my dance teacher who now employs me and we have a different relationship. I want to be that for my students.*

4.3   Molly (*she/her)*

Molly is a well-known dance teacher and choreographer that works all around her hometown. Molly and I have known each other for ten years. Molly became my contemporary and jazz teacher at my dance studio and she continued to be one of my dance teachers for seven years. She has taught at numerous dance studios, danced, and performed in various countries around the world. She has started her own company and she has graduated with a postgraduate diploma in dance at a tertiary institution in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

I remember telling Molly about my research topic when I was first brainstorming my research question and for participants to be involved in this study, and with delight, she responded that it had aligned with what she was thinking about recently and that she would love to take part. I messaged Molly with all of the details of the ethics forms and we organised a date to meet as soon as we could.

Molly and I were under lockdown restrictions and had to take our meeting to an online platform, so decided to meet using zoom. We logged on and laughed about the unbelievable fact that we had been in lockdown for two weeks already. We gathered some snacks and made ourselves comfortable in our own homes and started the interview.

I began to ask her questions about her childhood dance experiences and why she decided to get into becoming a dance teacher.

> *My dance teacher at my dance studio was like 'hey can you teach this class'? I need someone to cover it. It was a performance group class. There were like 15 of them and they were doing competition work. I choreographed these dances with them because I think I'd already been choreographing stuff for Stage Challenge at school. I*

have been choreographing since I was in fourth form. I really enjoyed it. Even though the age difference was something like two or three years.

Throughout the last 10 years Molly has taught at multiple dance studios but she would consider two different dance studios as her main places of work, and for the purposes of this study these two studios will be known as Pink Studio and Yellow studio. She discussed what it is about these two studios that she valued so much, and why she kept coming back to teach.

[A]t one time, I definitely valued teaching at Pink studio higher than Yellow studio. However, Yellow studio has an incredible reason for why they teach the way they do. I don't think I saw that until I was older… Yellow studio has different teachers every year. That's part of their motto is that they get a variety of teachers so that kids can learn from different tutors and teaching styles… So I did have to work a lot harder in terms of discipline at Yellow studio…

Then at Pink studio, the kids wanted to be dancers. So it was a different teaching style.

Yellow studio I was mostly trying to develop good habits, safe dance practices, and discipline, and Pink studio I'm trying to install creative ideas, different ways of thinking…Pink studio kids have grown up with such a strict way already… Pink studio kids were always going back to the ballet basics, and I was there saying you can move your body differently.

I then began to ask Molly if she believed in one teaching style more than the other and if she had a preferred class structure.

I don't know, I think I don't necessarily have an ideal class structure. I like things to be different. I myself don't have very good routines. There are some things that I do in specific ways, but it is always open to change… I think I'm really good at coming into a class and …always being able to read a room… [S]ometimes the kids aren't there to be the world's best dancers. They're just to have fun…I enjoy chopping and changing what I'm teaching because if I'm just delivering the same thing all the time. Then I get bored.

Our conversation was flowing at this point as we shared memories and looked back on times where she was teaching me at our studio. Because Molly has had years of experience teaching

all around New Zealand, I wanted to hear more about what she finds most challenging when teaching at these different studios.

After laughing hysterically about a horror story of her music accidently flicking over to an explicit song while teaching a young class. Our discussion moved on to what made her decide to study at a postgraduate level.

> *I had talked with a friend of mine about phenomenology. I had no idea what that was so I thought. "What is that?" I started reading up on it and I think I'm really driven by people's motives. I'm driven by why people do the things they do. It is really satisfying to me that I can over analyse everything I need. I also wanted to prove to myself that I wasn't just a dumb dyslexic person, or a dumb dancer. Even though I knew I wasn't. I felt like I always have something more to prove. I never really feel like I'm good enough for what I do.*

Molly had learned a lot in her postgraduate journey, one of the things that Molly had learnt about was her teaching pedagogy and other styles of pedagogical approaches. I asked her if she knew what her teaching pedagogy is;

> *I think it changes honestly. I don't think I have one strict style. I like to think that there is a humanising pedagogy in everything that I do, that I'm looking after the whole person and that includes not allowing a student to do a dance move that you know is way too advanced for them and keeping them safe. Then there are times where I have to be authoritarian. I have to be there standing at the front of the room, giving the instructions because that is what I've been paid to do especially for younger ones. Within that there is room for bleed of other pedagogies. I have to assume that dance teacher role.*

> *I also think that when I was a student I would suffer in silence if I was going through physical or mental pain. I would never have said anything. But I allow the conversation to be there with my students, sometimes just saying you've all got resting bitch faces, they are all like "what? Okay, we can have these conversations". Nothing is off topic with me as a teacher, so you shouldn't be able to not say anything, because then we're just perpetuating this toxic cycle that can't talk about life stuff.*

Molly then shared a memory with me about how her ideas around her teaching pedagogy became clearer through her education training at higher education;

> *I think it definitely came through like conversations with you and I sort of found out and then doing dance education classes, there was a way that my lecturer delivered a class to us. He delivered the content in a different way to us…*

I provoked Molly's thought process more to see if she ever had an epiphany moment in her postgraduate dance education classes that she took back into her dance studio teaching practices. She shared a recent memory with me when she was trying to teach a studio dance zoom class, under the lockdown restrictions

> *I was just trying to do 50,000 zooms a day, supporting kids that were already struggling because of the first COVID lockdown... It was when we were doing our own teaching I did my zoom class silently cause I was doing sign language stuff. Everyone on the zoom was like, you're on mute, you're on mute. I wasn't on mute. Realising the impact that because I've done that, plenty of times I've taught silently. Especially when kids piss me off. I just started doing it, silently, but just like rewiring their brains to get into it.*

In our final conversation topic, I wanted to hear more how Molly feels about being a dance teacher now, after learning in an institutional context. She continued to explain that the dance teacher role in this current industry is;

> *Very character building. I've been in situations that I felt completely out of my depth in, but I knew that I was the adult in the room and I was the role model. So I have to decide very quickly sometimes, how I am going to deal with the situation. Most of the time, the situation has got nothing to do with dance. Being a dance teacher is great, I can share my love of dance and do it in that way. But situations with kids who don't feel good enough, because they someone else is really good in the class and they won't try, because they don't want to fail, or bullying, or there is people being rude people being disrespectful, and you have to decide in that moment what is the best thing to do and I don't think I was taught how to deal with all of that.*

In the last moments of our zoom conversation, it was incredibly refreshing to hear that Molly has been thinking about how she copes with multiple circumstances that are happening in the dance studio. Whether it be dealing with syllabus complications, how dance studio owners run their business and in turn affects what and how Molly teaches, or the student's wellbeing. She further explained some parting revelations and outlined her perspective on what she values the most about dance teaching. She explained;

> *There are things that the kids are going to remember and they aren't going to remember all of the moves, but they are going to remember that time that you pulled them aside and go, What the hell is going on? Right there, those are the things that they're going to remember how you treat them, is number one. Dance teaching has put me in a lot of different situations, some that have been not great and some that have been so awesome to be a part of. Watching kids at competitions and just being like, I'm so proud of you, I'm crying, because I don't know how else to express the amount of energy you put into someone and they dance the way they did, holy crap, they are amazing. There are times it can be like I don't want to go to teaching but I have to do it because it is my job…*
>
> *For ages, I would teach as if I was just trying to get their* (the business owners) *approval, so that I was easy to work with. I would do it their way as it was easiest for them but then after studying at university I realised that it doesn't serve me at all. I teach because I love dancing and teaching, but I want to do it my own way, Yeah, that is all I got to say about that.*

Molly has graduated with her postgraduate diploma in dance studies and is continuing her dance research education by doing a Master's degree.

4.4 Grace (*she/her*)

On day 56 of a 107 day lockdown in Aotearoa/New Zealand, I was waiting in anticipation with excitement to have some social interaction with Grace on Zoom. I was nervous but enthusiastic to talk about our shared interest in dance studio teaching and research. I had not seen Grace for a few years now, she was once a jazz teacher for myself and my peers during my undergraduate programme dance studies degree. I logged on to zoom to see Grace formally dressed in the comfort of her own home ready to go. Unknowingly that we were only halfway through a lockdown we both joined the zoom and talked about how complicated it has been to stay motivated and teach our students online. We were both blindsided by how our postgraduate study was affected by these lockdowns and how we teach on a zoom platform. It seemed all so surreal, but we were excited to talk about my research topic so we continued with our discussion.

Grace shared with me how long she has been teaching, she exclaimed;

> *I've been teaching since I was 16. I started with one tap class a week, then when I became a senior student I started to teach more things, sometimes with other teachers. I found my niche…with senior students, and I've probably been teaching seniors mostly NZAMD syllabus classes and open classes…ever since… I also teach adults.*

After hearing about Grace's vast experience with teaching all sorts of students varying in ages I was interested to hear what Grace was like as a teacher before stepping into the dance postgraduate program at higher education. She spoke about her memories of teaching her first dance class in the dance studio.

> *I was really young and I'd been thrown in the deep end a bit to be honest…Something had happened and the teacher had to disappear for a bit. They just said oh Grace you've got to teach these people this stuff because so and so can't come or whatever…I don't remember being scared of it or anything but I do remember the people being quite a*

similar age to me… So I just taught them what I knew, there was nothing fancy going on with the pedagogical strategies, because I did not know what that was at the time.

We began to laugh at how many teachers have felt as though they have been thrown in the deep end when everyone first becomes a teacher. Agreeably, we laughed and compared our very first teaching memories and shared some stories about how our friends and colleagues have also had similar experiences. After this conversation, I was curious to understand what Grace valued the most in being a dance teacher now. I asked her, what are some of the highlighted moments she has had as a dance studio teacher.

I really enjoy the progression that you get to experience with the students. Particularly my senior students,… you get to enjoy their company as humans, as opposed to I'm here to do this dance move.

Particularly with lockdowns and everything where we've had a lot more time to like talk to each other. Dancing has not always been as easy to do over zoom. When you just get to get to know them a lot more and build relationships with them and they tell me all about what is going on in their lives like getting their driver's licences…they're progressing from these little people that I met a few years ago that their mother dropped them off…to now fully independent humans that they drive themselves…So yeah, I just enjoy I enjoy the progression of seeing them, develop both in their dance form and as people…

Grace was extremely passionate about the importance of building relationships with her students. She spoke about some of the teaching pedagogies and strategies she currently uses when teaching a studio dance class. She noted new knowledge she has gained from her time in postgraduate study.

I use quite a few different kinds of tactics… I don't want to be a super authoritarian, but also I don't want to give them so much freedom that they (the students) *go off topic, and say unrelated gossipy conversations in class...*

So I try to be a balance of the two of those, I guess, somewhere in the middle, if we call it a spectrum. Instead of telling them the answer, I've been trying to kind of adapt my language to suit individual student centred learning. I used to say all the knowledge and let the students comprehend that in their own time. But now I'm trying to… get

them to feel it instead of making it a visual thing. But I'm still learning and not 100% certain I've grasped that concept yet.

I could not help but question whether her valuing of building relationships with her students and her teaching pedagogies in the dance studio context was influenced by her time spent in postgraduate study? I was intrigued to understand why she chose to study postgraduate dance education and what future journey she wanted to take in the world of dance academia. Grace shared why she had chosen to come into the postgraduate space, she answered;

> *I have been thinking about it for a while… It was really my work in the dance studio. With the syllabus it made me think, is this the best way for me to be teaching my students these moves? Is this the best use of my time with them…should I be incorporating other kinds of activities into my class. I want to make sure that I was doing a good job for the kids that I was teaching, particularly when I started to get more classes, with COVID it seemed like a good time.*

She raised an interesting point about studying to understand if what she is currently implementing in her teaching strategies in the dance studio around syllabus is the best thing for her students. Grace understands that there is something missing. I moved on to asking if there was a moment when she had this revelation of what else of what dance education study was doing for her to assist some teaching strategies used in the dance studio.

> *In postgraduate studies, I've picked my area of research and since I've been out of university for nine years, I've found the specific area that I'm really interested in… All of the papers that I'm reading relate to my research questions and topics. I can bring in the experiences that I'm doing in dance education classes and bring it back to teaching, dancing and choreography…*

The importance of learning through postgraduate dance education classes is prevalent throughout the conversation had with Grace. The conversation naturally flowed on to discuss some of the ideas Grace has had learning through postgraduate courses from her lecturers, and how she is actively obtaining strategies within her dance studio classes. She continued to

acknowledge that she is beginning to implement student centred learning strategies through understanding movements and techniques in the dance studio;

> *At the beginning of teaching my students, I might ask them, "What does fouetté mean?" they have no idea. Then you ask that question at the end of the year or later on, and they can all answer in various different ways about what the action of a fouetté would be, what the literal translation is, when it happens, and all those kinds of things…because I allow them to embody it instead of just giving them the knowledge…*

As our discussion began to close, I asked Grace the last question: what does she see for her future in the world of dance research? I was trying to grasp what dance education knowledge Grace had gained and any revelations she has had about her own teaching strategies. She replied,

> *The more I researched syllabus work in the sudio, the more I realised that it is important…I just feel like there seems to be a missed opportunity. It could be beneficial and way more interesting for kids and way more likely to prepare a dancer or tertiary education or career in commercial dance that hasn't quite reached…Long term plan, would I create a syllabus? Potentially, maybe... I want to get some research that proves that or disproves that jazz syllabus training could be better and could do more things… Then use that research to help me create or facilitate some kind of syllabus situation. Yeah and eventually, kind of weave that into some more study…I say with a question mark at the end.*

Grace continued to articulate her internal debate of being open to many possibilities of dance education, and what she could do to bring in some education strategies into syllabus learning in a dance training context. Grace is still finalising her honours degree in the hopes of continuing on to Masters of dance research.

Chapter five: 'Aha' moments, Analysis and Discussion

Chapter five examines three postgraduate students lived experiences of working as freelance dance teachers in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of how their postgraduate dance education may have influenced these young dance teachers, and how their postgraduate study has provided a platform for them to challenge their teaching practices within the dance studio context.

The thematic analysis of the three narratives has revealed several dominant themes. Firstly, the teachers all crossed various thresholds of understanding pedagogy differently. New understandings enabled better teacher experiences, but also provided some personal tension wherein their new awareness of pedagogical possibilities contrasted with what was expected in the studio dance teacher role. The second main theme related to teachers agency in making pedagogy decisions in the studio, and the final theme revealed that each of the teachers felt that their teaching was to various degrees performative.

5.1   Translating Dance Education into Dance Training Contexts

Cynthia, Molly, and Grace were studying postgraduate dance education, and they each commented on their experiences of translating new understandings of teaching and learning dance into the dance studio (training) context. These teachers all commented on what it was like to be a learner, comprehending new teaching approaches, and their experience of attempting to teach differently in their dance studios.

5.1.1 Experiences of being a learner

"I had no idea what that word pedagogy meant"- Molly

Postgraduate study can be daunting (Al Fadda, 2012; Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006). As noted above, Molly recognised she had limits in her education. Molly continued, "I knew it was going to be hard…to slot into this academic world when I'm so used to being so physical, and explaining everything through movement, sometimes words and me are not friends". Molly admitted to the overwhelming feeling she had, but being honest about ones strengths and weaknesses is a key first step in learning (Shahsavar & Kourepaz, 2020).

Grace and Cynthia had a different experience to Molly as both of these students had completed an undergraduate degree in Dance Studies. Grace explained that postgraduate study challenged her "in a good way…I don't find it overwhelming. It is nice to get my brain working in a different way again". Similarly, Cynthia noted that in the first few weeks of postgraduate study "..everything clicked for me. I kind of felt like I understood it finally, it was a feeling of relief I was like yes! I know what we're doing, I get why we're doing this."

As adult learners, these women were opening themselves to learn new ideas and test long held assumptions. Beyond the courage to do this, these three postgrads recognised the shift from being a teacher to being a learner and experiencing new ways of teaching and learning. This realisation, I believe, was important as it allowed them to see and cross thresholds of understanding.

Some key 'aha' moments felt by the three postgrads were gained by simply being in the postgraduate classroom, experiencing student centred learning (Leijen, Lam, Wildschut, &

Simons, 2009; Smith-Autard, 1994) and being asked to reflect on their past learning and current teaching experiences. Cynthia commented on a key 'aha moment' when she walked into the postgrad classroom at university,

> I remember thinking, have I gone to the wrong class? This is not a dance class... we weren't getting taught at, we weren't standing in lines, and we weren't learning dance technique...it didn't feel like a studio dance class, which is the only thing I knew at that time".

Cynthia felt, saw and understood the modelling of a more student centred pedagogy, based around flexing with learners diversity, using teaching spaces differently, and the teacher relating to learners as colleagues rather than subordinates. Buck & Rowe (2015) speak to the value of recognising the learners' needs and the value of encouraging students to think reflexively. This and offering experiential learning opportunities (Råman, 2009) helped Cynthia construct a new understanding of dance education.

When Cynthia walked into that very first dance education class, she was aware that this type of learning was new and interesting to her, she was curious about what the possibilities were. She further explained, "I don't even know if I spoke too much on that day, I was just in awe of this new type of teaching and learning that I was observing". Incorporating an experiential learning experience for students such as Cynthia, can, and did, present a threshold of understanding that caused Cynthia to see new pedagogical possibilities (Buck & Rowe, 2015; Meyer & Land, 2005).

Molly also spoke to her experience as a postgraduate learner and described how she felt, "I straight away noticed that my lecturer would deliver things in a different way... after he taught he would explain why he delivered this content differently and it made me realise oh I sometimes do that when I teach!" Watching the lecturer teach, and watching him reflecting on

his own teaching as a way to teach us postgraduates, was very inspiring and made Molly think of her own teaching. Molly commented on this in terms of it being new territory for her. She continued to further explain this memory; "seeing him teach in real time, and saying *'just dance, doesn't matter how you look, just fucking go'*. I was concerned if it was the right or left foot. He didn't even give us time to think, *"just go, do it, just dance*." Placing an emphasis on just doing it and not worrying about which foot to lead with, was a small but profound teaching strategy that caused Molly to reflect on her own teaching. This shift in what matters in the dance lesson was a very real 'Aha' moment (Buck & Rowe, 2015) for Molly.

As previously mentioned thresholds are defined as portals or gateways into understanding new knowledge, it is a realisation of understanding a subject and the 'aha' moments that individuals might experience (Buck & Rowe, 2015; Meyer & Land, 2005). Cynthia and Molly both experienced threshold moments when they became learners and saw teaching (and their own teaching) from a learner's perspective. They were excited and intrigued. Thresholds are transformative, meaning that the new insights change the way an individual perceives a subject (dance education) and how they will carry that understanding forward (Buck & Rowe, 2015; Meyer & Land, 2005).

In the context of the present study, it remains however, how well new understandings can be, and actually are, translated into a dance studio context. Cynthia reflected on her new insights, "can I be a dance educator in a dance training context". In this small statement, Cynthia is revealing a core tension between the two dominant pedagogies and the dilemma of taking different pedagogies into different contexts.

Grace also commented on her experience of learning strategies in a dance education class and using them in a dance studio context, "I have been taught in so many different ways…I can take the parts that really worked for me…and kind of translate that over to the stuff that I'm doing in the studio." Grace is taking the knowledge that she acquired in postgraduate studies and transforming that into some of the strategies she uses within her own classes in a dance studio. Both Grace and Cynthia understand that they can comfortably translate and incorporate new ways of teaching in their studio dance classes.

The postgraduates all expressed benefit in learning about various dance pedagogies and how this provided them with 'Aha moments'. It remains to understand how these postgrad students translated their insights into their studio dance contexts. According to Cohen (2002), there are significant disconnects between the private dance sector and tertiary dance education and teachers within the private dance studio context are teaching choreography and technique that has been passed on from one teacher to the next. Alternatively, dance educators are highlighting the students' needs and value time and space for them to explore their own movement (Cohen, 2002; Koff, 2000). How did these three postgrad students translate their skills and knowledge learnt within a dance education context and teach these skills in the private dance studio sector?

Cynthia described her experimentation of transferring a small strategy into the dance studio teaching context. "I removed myself from the middle of the room a bit more each time", Cynthia wanted to start taking herself out of just teaching and choreographing for the students. She continued,

> It was a hip hop class and normally the structure of it is, you stand at the front of the room, and you do a five minute warm up, and then you teach a dance for 40 minutes… just standing at the front the entire time. Then you put people into two groups and then they perform to each other. But one day, I just stood at the back of the class, and taught from there. They loved it… they loved the fact that they were standing at the front of the class.

When Cynthia removed herself from being at the front of the room the children were already beginning to learn new skills of developing critical thinking and spatial awareness. For example, the students began to not automatically copy the technique of the teacher in the front of the room (Råman, 2009). Cynthia acknowledged that

> I know that removing myself from the front teaching technique isn't going to work for everyone in the room, but in that specific class the kids were saying *"Yes, I get it, I know what I'm doing",* so that solidified to me it was working. So I trailed it in as many places as I taught because I know that it gives kids more control, and they think for themselves a bit more, eventually they forgot I was even standing there but it did not matter because I knew this learning was valuable.

The studio dance class is a complex and challenging area to navigate for a teacher, where interactions between the teacher and students are important, yet often not attended to. Transmission pedagogies, long valued within studio culture place more emphasis on technical movement recall and correct alignment rather than development of students' creativity and movement exploration (Burnidge, 2012; Råman, 2009; Walus, 2019). Molly gave another example of her attempt to translate learning form dance education into the studio context.

> I remember being told off by another teacher who was also teaching the same grade as me. I was told off because I hadn't got through all the material properly from the syllabus. I was obviously distraught because I hated letting people down, but at that point I had developed my own way of teaching. It wasn't just about teaching the material, it was having a good time in class and instilling creative practice ideas, because there was more that I wanted to teach the kids that wasn't just learning how to do moves from a syllabus.

This comment reveals the difficulty of doing things differently and the power of the syllabus and others expectations of what should be happening in the dance studio context. There are concerns expressed by these postgrad students that being an agent of change may actually undermine their ability to be employed, to be welcomed, to have their new knowledge (degree)

respected. This speaks to the second main finding in the present study concerning pedagogical agency.

These postgraduate students are being taught how to be a dance educator and they are taking aspects of their dance education into their own studio teaching practice, but one begins to ponder what are the implications of this action. As outlined above there are positive and negative outcomes and multiple issues that require navigation. This small study does not have the scope to pick up on all of the issues raised, however it does attend to the topic of pedagogical agency.

5.2   Experiences of Pedagogical Agency in Dance Studio Contexts

"I don't agree with how the syllabus tells me to teach it" – Grace

The question driving this research is, *how have postgraduate experiences of dance education influenced three dance educators' teaching practices within the private dance studio context?* This research has found that the postgraduates' meanings of implementing their own pedagogical agency in dance studio contexts presented challenges. These postgraduate dance students who were employed to teach within the dance studio context struggled with the lack of pedagogical agency they had in teaching their students. Balancing tensions between educational practice, syllabus demands, business economics, parents' expectations and peer pressure presented personal dilemmas and professional tensions. The following section examines how Cynthia, Grace and Molly dealt with such issues within the dance studio environment.

Pedagogical agency is how "teachers learn through and from past experiences to gain new insights about themselves and/or their practice, whilst…appreciating how their own assumptions, knowledge and actions impact aspects of their professional context" (Maclellan, 2016, p. 2). Through newfound pedagogical understandings realised from their postgraduate dance education classes, Cynthia, Molly and Grace spoke to how they began to facilitate dance classrooms with their new pedagogical beliefs as main drivers of their teaching. Grace began to share the challenges that she has experienced while teaching within a dance studio context. She articulated,

> In my studio classes I make my best efforts to ensure that I have a variety of movement pathways in my choreography, even though I teach a syllabus. I don't agree with how the syllabus tells me to teach it…I'm trying to teach it [the syllabus] without breaking the rules too much…but in the end I know it is all coming from me and from my knowledge influence on it…I have to supplement the syllabus with other exercises to provide safety and correct technical teaching.

Grace's experience of teaching to a dance syllabus in a studio dance context is challenging as she is making pedagogical decisions to teach a dance class that fits the required needs of her students, but she is restricted, as she has to comply with the rules of a syllabus. However, she noted that she has agency over how she chooses to facilitate her dance class (Rikandi, 2012). Understandably, the freedom that Grace has over choosing how to teach dance technique classes gives her considerable agency. While Grace is in disagreement with the syllabus exercises and finds the content to be inappropriate, her new understandings of dance pedagogy have helped her to teach the content in a way that meets learners' diverse needs. In this sense she has a gained some pedagogical agency.

In a studio dance class, teachers are given a book with choreographic inscriptions, instructions for formations of where students should stand when completing exercises and a DVD of dance phrases with exact musical choices (New Zealand Association of Modern Dance, n.d). Having multiple rules to follow, as outlined in the syllabus, Grace commented on the difficulty she has in both complying with the syllabus and providing an optimum education experience for the students. Grace's experience shows that teachers have an internal battle of how to heed the boundaries and restrictions stated within a dance studio business model, and having agency over pedagogical decisions for how a dance classroom could optimally be managed. These postgraduate students spoke to situations where they question their roles as teachers having either having too much agency or not enough.

Studio teachers not only have to teach a structured syllabus but also have to be mindful that there is an expectation that parents have for how you treat their child. Studio owners have an expectation that you will teach students with respect and teach the lesson content that you are required to teach as per the syllabus. Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, (2012) noted

that teachers need greater resilience where teachers are expected to "manage high workloads, challenging student behaviour and meeting the complex needs of diverse students" (p. 357). Molly explained a feeling that she experiences when she has had to work hard in the dance studio classroom.

> Being a dance teacher is great because I can share my love of dance, but there are situations with kids who don't feel good enough, because someone else is really good in the class. And they won't try, because they don't want to fail.

Molly acknowledged that she is noticing the behaviour that her students sometimes present to her as a result of teaching difficult dance moves, or having different technical abilities within the class room. As a dance teacher, Molly has the agency to craft her dance class in any way she feels is best for the learners. Agency allows individuals to act independently within certain cultural structures (Hitlin & Elder, 2007). Additionally, agency allows for individuals to work freely and apply their own judgement to make a variety of decisions (Bandura, 2006). Molly and the other postgraduate dance teachers commented on their desire to be active agents for change, where the teacher has more agency to operate within the confines of the dance studio/syllabus/parent/peers context.

I asked Molly about her perceptions of herself as a teacher, given the pedagogical knowledge she has gained from dance education. Molly continued, "I like to think that there is a humanising pedagogy in everything that I do…Then there are times where I have to be authoritarian…Within that there is room for a blend of other pedagogies". Molly speaks to compromises, pedagogical blends and judgements that she makes. Molly is managing the translation of new understandings of teaching and learning dance found within dance education contexts and implemented within dance studio contexts. As Molly has found, a teacher does

not have singular agency, because agency is "inherently multidimensional: it can be exercised in different spheres, domains, and levels" (Samman & Santos 2009, p. 6).

5.2.1   Understanding complex decision-makings in the studio dance class

"There are so many different situations that I have had to cope with as the role model in the room, and I try to do the best thing… so you have to be really strong and adaptable to be able to deal with lots of things" - Molly

Molly, Grace and Cynthia all stated that they feel that a dance teacher nowadays has to be adaptable to many situations that are dealt to them, and they are expected to deal with it. Molly's comment above has some strong language that I wish to unpack within this section. The words that stand out to me are "cope", "role model" and "adaptable". What might these terms look like within a dance studio context for a teacher? Decision making is a common occurrence that individuals are dealt with every day, giving people the options of what they should decide in a split second in order to gamble on the best outcome or choose what they desire (Slovic, Lichtenstein, & Fischhoff, 1988). For teachers, the decision making process can be harder, because it is not only yourself that is affected, teachers have to make decisions based on what is beneficial for their students (Arvai, Campbell, Baird, & Rivers, 2004). As we can see from the previous discussion, Molly, Grace and Cynthia are all making decisions based on benefit that their students may gain. Alternatively, they are making decisions that will simply please and satisfy what the clients (parents, managers and learners) desire.

This need to cope with different situations in the dance studio comes across quite strongly in Molly's introductory comment above. Each of these postgraduate teachers were asked to cope with difficult situations. Cynthia observed,

I think parents are a huge issue… based on my experiences, there needs to be more support for teachers. It is not in our job descriptions to get yelled at by someone's parent because we didn't let their child be lifted or something…a massive challenge is parents…living vicariously through their child.

In Cynthia's experience, the expectations of parents in the dance studio puts a lot of pressure on not only their own children but the teachers as well. Patterson-Price & Pass (2021) agree that parents enrol their children into extracurricular activities so that they can develop skills and that parental support is needed and vital for participation. Cynthia however, noted that it can become disruptive when the parents get too involved and step over a boundary and interfere with the teacher. It is the pressure of competitions and parent's desire for their child to win that creates tension. Too often, this type of dance studio behaviour can be the norm (Schupp, 2019).

Cynthia had experienced this feeling, where parents overstep the boundary of being a silent observer to being an interfering observer. The challenge is to navigate the tension caused by a parent, when she is employed to teach children, and has not any authority to counter parent's very assertive demands. Cynthia noted that she has to deal with such instances on a daily basis. Cynthia continued "even though this is something I have to deal with most days, I don't feel I have a voice outside of teaching…I don't feel as though I have the ability to bring this up with my employer". Beyond the need for pedagogical agency, these postgrad teachers are also speaking about a need for management agency, as they deal with parents and employers. She continued, "there are different challenges…dealing with teenagers, having to be sensitive to them as people…deal with them as they come in… and they might not want to be there but still having strategies to still teach them". Cynthia revealed that these challenges occur most days as a teacher and she needs extra support to make decisions and come up with strategies that satisfy different stakeholders' needs.

Borko & Shavelson (1990) state that there are assumptions when teachers make decisions and judgements in complex environments. They can respond irrationally and not process any situations that are presented in the dance studio to solve problems, such as; parents interfering or lack of control over syllabus boundaries. Grace identified her dilemma when teaching and making judgement calls, she acknowledged;

> I want the kids to be getting the best out of their education and if I think that a particular movement or whatever, wants to serve them well I will change it…Then I panic when it comes to their exams as to whether or not I'm going to get pulled up there or yelled at.

This study found that these postgrad teachers are confronted with complex decision making and pedagogical leadership decisions on a daily basis. They noted that the teaching strategies learnt in their postgraduate dance course have assisted in dealing with these issues, however, there remain tensions caused in part because of contrasting needs and desires. Shavelson, Cadwell, & Izu, (1977), state that while teachers are facilitating the classroom they have to be observant, "if one group of students is quite able and willing to work while another group is unable, unmotivated or both, the teacher might be expected to choose different methods for teaching the different groups" (p. 84). Decision making is clearly part of the teachers job, and I believe that this aspect of teaching is not attended to within postgraduate dance education courses. The three postgraduate teachers outlined their experiences of responding to situations where they have had to learn quickly how to cope or adapt their teaching when meeting and dealing with extraordinary dance studio issues. Realising that dance teaching in a studio context is much more complex than simply giving dance instruction is something that this study revealed, and would be a focus for further research.

5.3   Teaching as performance

This section examines the theme of teaching as a performance. Teaching is an embodied practice (Vick & Martinez, 2011), and these three teachers commented on the feeling that teaching could be seen as being performative.

5.3.1   *Putting on a show*

"You feel like you've done a full on performance" - Cynthia

Have you ever experienced a live theatre dance performance? The black stage, with the long draped curtains outlining the stage, the luminescent lights beaming onto the performers, stage makeup, loud music, dancers running, jumping, leaping, turning; all performing to the audience members. It is planned, structured and exhausting for a performer to exert energy whilst thinking about every direction, correction and note given to them by their director. Cynthia suggested she experiences this feeling when she is teaching, she described to me the difficulties of being a dance teacher in a dance studio:

> [Y]ou are almost having to put on a show… especially when kids are younger, you need to think of a million different things to keep these people entertained. If there is parents sitting in the room, you're constantly aware that they are watching you…There is a lot going on.

Cynthia's experience suggests that there is a performance aspect to teaching. Teachers are constantly multitasking, and performing more or less in different roles. Additionally, Molly described what it was like being a teacher and explained some of the specific strategies that she uses with her students, stating that, "I have to change up my teaching style constantly to keep kids engaged, sometimes I rock up wearing stupid outfits and am overly loud and then there is other times I teach silently". Vick & Martinez, (2011) agree that teaching is an

embodied practice and a further extension of the subconscious personality traits and identity of each individual. This insight resonates with the postgraduate teachers in this research, as they were aware that there are multiple factors involved in the dance studio and they were adapting their teaching identity to accommodate diverse needs.

Studio dance teachers are whole-heartedly involved in all aspects of operating the studio. They are involved with the studio class management, teaching of dance technique, staging of shows, marketing and pastoral care. Teachers take on different roles and to some extent, as they put on different hats they need to put on different personas. As a dance studio teacher, I am more than aware of the multiple roles I have played outside the classroom. I am also aware that in a dance class I have to perform the role of disciplinarian, mother, mentor, expert, cheerleader, and critic. As such, I concur with these three postgraduate teachers perceptions of teacher's performativity. When analysing the performance aspect of teaching, this study found that the postgrads were trialling teaching techniques in the dance class based on the knowledge they accumulated from postgrad dance education courses. These postgrad teachers were playing with their 'teacher identity', to 'perform' to their students.

In relation to identities, Molly commented "I rock up to class and bring crazy outfits and my students are like *"who the frick is this crazy woman?"* Instantly, Molly notes that she has captured the attention of her students by not 'acting' like a normal teacher. She is playing with having a unique teaching style. She explained further, "I'm going to make a fool of myself so that you [the students] don't feel like you have to be perfect." Stripping away normative teaching stereotypes of dress code, by wearing clothes that are considered distracting because they are not 'normal' for the dance studio class (Gibbons, Argent, Sanders, Germain, & Crawford, 2005), and instead bringing the "crazy outfits", is an example of being performative.

Molly is wearing a costume and is developing a unique teaching style that sets her apart from other teachers. Regardless of what Molly is teaching in this class she is fostering creativity with her students. She is also differentiating herself from what is considered a 'normal' dance teacher in a 'normal' private studio class by creating this identity for herself.

This study found that the dance studio environment is filled with challenges and pressures, and that some of these pressures are not only external, but can come internally when teachers are trying to distinguish their teaching identity in the studio (Craig, 1994). As external pressures for a dance teacher increases, it may be easy to succumb to others' expectations of how to teach, which is why it can be challenging for teachers to have complete agency over all decisions that they are making.

Cynthia mentioned that in the dance studio context, teachers have their assigned class, with set out schedules of what the rest of the year looks like for that dance class. In this instance the teacher often has some freedom over what is to be taught, meaning they have the ability to act and make decisions within the boundary of rules they have been given (Bandura, 2006). Having freedom might encourage a degree of performativity, because the teachers are creating their own teaching identity when facilitating a class, and in Molly's case she was creating an identity of being the weird and wacky teacher that shy's away from normative dance teaching stereotypes. Molly further commented, "…for the older students that find dancing really hard, they think they look stupid doing it…it is removing…that barrier for them". It may be interpreted from Molly's comment that the barrier that is being removed is the 'normative' dance teacher aesthetic. Traditionally, dance teachers were primarily focused on passing on practical knowledge and rely heavily on how they were taught as students (Fortin, & Siedentop,

1995), whereas students who are experiencing Molly's classes are receiving new teaching strategies that may inspire and motivate learning.

Cynthia described the personal feeling she has after teaching a class. She feels that she has "put on a show" for her students. Grace's experience of performativity within the studio dance class speaks to a more emotional and even survival strategy she uses to protect herself as she 'performs' the business of teaching and tolerating the studio demands. Cynthia noted that putting on this mask or performance helped her to deal with the dance studio manager/owner and her classes. Grace states that;

> I've had motivational problems with my students trying to get them to do dances or combinations specifically that they hate. They think it is terrible… It is quite a difficult thing for me to try and navigate… I have to say just give it a chance… There is only so many times I can say that, when I don't believe that myself. I just want to be on everyones side.

Grace's experience suggests that there is a performance aspect she uses to protect herself and to escape from classroom tensions. When Grace refers to being on "everyones side" this suggests that Grace is stuck between the rock and hard place of teaching content the students prefer, and not trying to upset the business owner by disregarding the rules set for dance teachers. Her 'performance' helps her to deal with the students and other expectations.

Cynthia spoke to her need to be performative to help engage the learners to learn content they don't like, stating, "…sometimes when I am asked to come in and teach a contemporary syllabus class, I have to put on this extremely enthusiastic persona so that my students think contemporary dance is actually cool". While Grace and Cynthia's experiences are different they are regarding their teaching roles in terms of performance in order to get the job done. Ruitenberg (2007) noted that performativity in teaching speaks to the fluidity of identities we

use in diverse and multiple contexts. That is we all do it, and we shift identities in different contexts. Again, in returning to Molly, she noted that she has different performative personas for different classes and students, and that while this works for her on a daily basis, she feels it may undermine her professional identity as a teacher. Molly observed a conversation that she had with one of her students;

> One of my students said to me *"You should be a teacher, I learn so much from you"* and I replied and said I am a teacher though? She replied with *"yeah, but you should be a normal teacher"* I said well, thank you. I appreciate that, but I'm still a teacher.

Teaching is difficult and as the above discussion has revealed young teachers use various strategies to survive the day and/or motivate their learners and themselves. While teaching can be performative, I believe that teachers in dance studio contexts need to be careful that they don't lose themselves, their true teaching identity, as they busily try to satisfy the learners, and parents and business owners' needs. I feel that we young postgraduate teachers need to at some point be ourselves and remove our masks.

5.3.2   *The masks we wear*

"I am a performer; I've been able to fudge it. There are times where my teaching might have gone wrong, and no one knew because I can keep the energy alive, or I can put on the mask"
- Molly

All teachers communicated a range of teaching experiences and opinions that revealed the embodied feeling of how they facilitate a dance class. As Molly's statement above suggests, there is a performative aspect to teaching where she can choose to 'wear' the teaching mask or take it off and reveal herself. Pineau (1994) identifies that the performativity of teaching is self-evident. Within the concept of being a performative teacher there are scripted moments, there are improvisation aspects to hold the attention of the students, and there are those cliff-hanging

moments where an unexpected plot twist can happen at any point during the lesson (Pineau, 1994), that is when it becomes the teacher's job to choose which 'mask' to wear. Perhaps, this metaphorical 'mask' is a cover up of identity, and Molly is indicating that she is hiding behind this 'mask' when she steps into some of her teaching situations.

The 'mask' is an important concept to acknowledge. The 'mask' that is worn is unique to each individual and is classed as their persona that they 'put on' when they become the teacher figure (Craig, 1994). According to Craig (1994) the 'mask' that everyone wears is how others perceive us and our persona, this is who we are to everyone. Cynthia communicated her ideas around what her teacher identity is to her; "sometimes I have to strip back a layer so I can focus on everyone in the room to understand that people work differently and learn differently." Cynthia's acknowledgments of stripping back her teaching persona to become more personable to her students, is an example of how she uncovers her truest self and takes off the 'mask' of being the teacher in the room. Arguably, it is acknowledged that sometimes teachers slip the mask back on automatically in order to resume a teaching persona (Craig, 1994). The 'masks' that we wear are not necessarily deemed as positive or negative but instead an observation of how an individual transforms into a teacher figure (Pineau, 1994). Cynthia noticed that she has a mask, but will often peel back its layers to suit certain contexts. I consider, is this removal of layers and taking off the 'mask' revealing her true identity, or is her teaching 'mask' a depiction of her truest self?

Dance Studio's place multiple demands on teachers (Mortimer, 2020). A main priority within the dance studio that parents and business owners expect from all their teachers, is to facilitate a sense of belonging and inclusion for the students (Mortimer, 2020). Complying with this priority is easy, however Molly, Cynthia and Grace acknowledged that they at times had to

wear a 'mask' of being 'the dance teacher' in order to comply with a range of Studio priorities. Grace noted, "it can be a difficult thing to navigate…I am just trying to keep on everyones side". Grace's comment describes how she has difficulty in navigating what it can be like as a teacher, and again the mask can serve a role of protection.

Molly reiterates that there are moments when she recognises the need to remove all masks "there are definitely some classes where I put on teacher Molly and there some times where I can be like this is me as a human teaching and it is mostly with the older kids". The need for and use of a 'mask' change and as stated above different learners and in different contexts require use, or not, of the mask. Within the Studio context the older students, mostly, want the real teacher not the 'masked' teacher. As students are growing up and they are starting to become their own person they need support in different avenues of life so the teacher becomes the mentor (Kassing, & Jay, 2020). The challenge of when the mask stays on or comes off becomes difficult as the students age and start asking personal questions that require you to reveal yourself and take the mask off (Pineau, 1994).

There are times when students can get personal with you because they are away from their parents and they trust you because you have been their teacher (Kassing, & Jay, 2020). Again issues concerning what role you are in, what role you are being employed to do, what boundaries do you hold firm on in terms of relationships require careful navigation. Wearing a mask can help and can hinder in these situations (Pineau, 1994).

Molly spoke of her needs as a teacher, and how being herself helps connect with the students.

> I remember one time I had a really crap day, life turned upside down for me and I thought "*I am probably going to cry*" and I still showed up for them (the students)… then I thought this is me as a human. You don't often get to see that, because normally

I am the person that is there to encourage [students] to do the thing, but sometimes you need to be like I am a person as well…"

These teachers observed that wearing a 'mask' is neither good nor bad, but it happens a lot, as they created learning environments for engaging the learners (Pineau, 1994). I believe all teachers wear various masks and the best teachers are very subtle in putting them on and off. This study has found that postgraduate teachers are learning about the diverse masks to be worn and how to use them. Their real teaching world in the dance studio contexts, reveals that they have been playing with masks all their teaching lives, and that it has been the postgraduate dance education experience that has required them, and me, to reflect on why and how we wear our masks.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This research used a qualitative post-positivist paradigm to investigate the research question *How have experiences of postgraduate dance education influenced three dance educators' teaching practices within the private dance studio context?* Valuing a constructivist framework I conducted semi-structured interviews with three postgraduate dance students studying dance education, with a view to understand their personal experience. After conducting the interviews three main themes emerged and these were discussed in Chapter five and summarised below.

6.1 Summary of findings

All three teachers interviewed in this study commented on the new knowledge created during their postgraduate studies. They spoke clearly about moving through thresholds and understanding pedagogy with new eyes, such that it was difficult to teach as they once did. They all commented on the difficulties of transferring their new understandings of pedagogy into the dance studio context. Being a learner in the postgraduate classroom caused them to be reflective practitioners and take time to look at their practices, their values, their teaching personas.

A major finding from this study, albeit, sort of obvious, is that there are always benefits to being a learner. Teachers forget to be a learner. As one teaches on a daily basis we can be a learner, but also we need to take time out and study our own and others practice. The present study revealed the power of taking time out to reflect on teaching practice.

The present study also found that transferring knowledge and practices from the dance education context into the dance studio context is challenging. All three teachers in this study

commented on tensions caused when new understandings around pedagogy were introduced into the studio context. The key issues were around assumptions of education and training. They also spoke of the diverse stakeholder expectations of what good dance education is in the dance studio context, and why dance pedagogy is not questioned within the dance studio context. All three teachers were challenged by their postgraduate dance education experience, and were curious to experiment with new teaching strategies in the dance studio context.

The second key finding within this research referred to pedagogical agency that teachers have within the private dance studio and the responsive decision making that these dance educators have to make. The young teachers in this study discussed their pedagogical agency and or lack of it, but also revealed that they needed some sort of management agency in order to be most effective workers in the dance studio context.

Decision making emerged as a key theme in the present study and this referred to decisions in the classroom but also in the running of the dance studio business. The three interviewees noted that they wear different hats and that to be part of the dance studio team they were expected to do more than teach, but to assist putting on the end of year shows, costume design , to choreograph, to examine, to help with the accounts and so on. Pedagogical agency was required as was managerial agency in order to meet the employers demands.

Teachers in this study commented that they are expected to be adaptable to situations that might be uncomfortable and that they were not trained how to teach or deal with many situations. However, there was an acknowledgement that postgraduate dance education helped these teachers.

The third key theme that was revealed in this research was that these postgraduate teachers were likening teaching to a type of performing. All three participants spoke to the performativity of teaching and the exhausting feeling it can be to be 'switched on' at all times, because you are not only being watched by their students, but you are under the eye of parents and the business owner(s). The young teachers commented that the teacher persona can be compared to that of wearing a teacher 'mask' and when teachers put on the 'mask' they are then the teacher figure in the room. The 'mask' is a conceptual idea that covers up, or protects their identity and when teachers remove the teacher 'mask' they are revealing their truest self.

Wearing the 'mask' is an interesting idea to understand, as each teacher's mask is individual to them. The choices in how the 'mask' is created is up to them, they can craft their mask to be an authoritative figure or a teacher that focuses on using student centred pedagogies. This study found that there are positive and negative aspects of wearing a mask and taking a performative approach to teaching

6.2   Emerging questions and directions for future research

There are a number of areas for this research to further explore. Firstly, more research is required to understand pedagogical agency within the dance studio context. Of specific interest is the interplay between pedagogical agency and managerial agency as studio dance teachers wear multiple hats, not just the teacher hat. This research has been invaluable for what it found but also for the new questions that it has prompted. A number of questions could be considered for further research investigations

These are:

- What might be the implications for dance education research on students who are trained by dance educators in the dance studios?

- How might dance teachers experience pedagogical agency within studio dance contexts in New Zealand?

- How are dance studio organisations supporting the training of dance teachers, and facilitating dance education techniques into their teacher training programmes?

- How can dance researchers educate other studio dance teachers on dance education?

- How can dance educators create knowledge and understanding of teaching strategies to facilitate student centred learning in a dance training context?

6.3   Research Observations and Significance

This research has focused on the experiences of three post graduate dance education students and their experiences of teaching in the private dance studio contexts. The process of this research has been insightful and useful to understand how dance educators like myself are facilitating dance classes and are questioning the same ideas, challenges and topics. This research has come from my own questions and reflections on experience, where I wondered how might a dance educator like myself teach a dance 'training' lesson when there are aspects to the dance studio culture that I disagree with.

While this research is focused on postgraduate dance educators teaching in studio dance contexts, it is hoped that the issues and challenges presented hold relevance to all dance teachers, dance studio owners and parents connected to studio dance culture. Understandably, the research would look different if I had chosen to interview more people or different

individuals, however, the rich experiences from the three participants hold value and open up conversations to be had around dance studio culture and context. Potentially, there might be a need for more moments of reflection for dance teachers situated within the studio environment, to reflect on teaching revelations and avenues for fostering pedagogical agency and dance education practices within dance training contexts.

Reflecting back to the opening of my thesis, my experiences and moments of revelations have caused me to ponder why studio dance teaching has made me feel like I have been caught between a 'rock' and a 'hard place'. Perhaps, this research will relieve some of those personal tensions and provide relief from the feeling of being trapped between a 'rock' and a 'hard place'. I hope this study has provided a small glimpse into the lives of studio dance teachers, postgraduate dance education, and how through open dialogue we can improve the service dance studios provide our communities.

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