

# Understanding the Value of Creative Dance by Fostering Empathy: A Collaborative Project with a Malaysian Kindergarten

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## ABSTRACT

*In Malaysian kindergartens, the dance show is one of the highlights of the annual school concert. Rehearsals for the dance show are teacher-oriented, where teachers teach dance to children through demonstrations. In 2008, I was hired as a dance teacher and consultant by a kindergarten in Shah Alam to produce annual dance shows. Over 10 years, I began to see cracks in teacher-oriented instruction. It does not allow children to move and express themselves creatively. It deprives them of holistic growth opportunities. In 2018 and 2019, I proposed that the kindergarten shift from teacher-oriented instruction to creative dance through a collaboration project. Shifting the method of teaching dance means changing the ethos and culture of a kindergarten community. It was a process that involved communication and discussion with the principal, administrators, teachers, and parents about a change in expectations—how we value dance and work together to produce a dance show. Ultimately, we wanted to provide children with a better and healthier dance learning experience. This could be achieved through building a consensus on dance value in the kindergarten community. This article discusses how I managed to create an understanding of the value of creative dance by fostering empathy in the kindergarten community. In short, the consensus building of the value of dance was achieved through four approaches: (1) understand the needs of the principal and dance teachers through empathic listening, (2) foster empathy for children among dance teachers through embodiment and reflection activities, (3) foster empathy among class teachers and administrators to provide a pleasant and healthier dance learning experience, and (4) assign children as the agents in encouraging the empathic participation of their parents in their creative dance learning.*

**Keywords:** *empathy, building consensus, community engagement, creative dance, change of teaching method*

## INTRODUCTION

Dance is an important learning method for children because the main medium of dance is the body. As stated by philosopher Mark Johnson, bodily experiences play a foundational role in meaning and “the patterns of our bodily movement shape our reality, the contours of our spatial and temporal orientation, and the forms of our interactions with objects” (Johnson 1987, xix). With the perception and bodily experience children form from birth till preschool, their body matures and gets ready to learn.

Many scholars advocate dance as an important activity for early childhood education, considering the significance of movement in learning. Stinson (1990) states that dance provides young children with a foundation of physical experience for future development and affirms an inner life and alternate realities. Lorenzo-Lasa et al. (2007) assert that a preschool dance programme has the potential to simultaneously enhance various aspects of children's development because, through dance, children connect movement with sensation, emotion, and cognition. Faber (2017) highlights the four rationales for including dance in early childhood: physical benefits, emotional maturation, social awareness and cognitive development. Overall, these scholars support the view that dance has the potential to enhance the development of the whole child.

However, not all dance activities in early childhood education or school settings provide children with a holistic learning experience. A misconception of the purpose of dance education or an inappropriate dance teaching approach might negatively impact child development. In a Taiwan kindergarten context, Liu (2009) found that emphasising the production of well-rehearsed movement through repetitive practices might impede children's creativity. Chua (2018) found that dance teaching for award-driven competitions in Singapore failed to foster students' creativity and fulfil the basic tenets of a quality dance experience. These two studies reveal that a product-based dance teaching practice is inadequate for providing children with a holistic dance learning experience. This issue is similar to the situation I encountered in the context of a Malaysian kindergarten.

From my experience as a dance teacher, I see that the purpose of dance activities in kindergartens is always driven by the production of annual school concerts, and the teaching practice tends to be teacher-centred, where dance movement is taught to children through demonstration. Hence, I would propose that kindergartens shift from teacher-oriented instruction to creative dance, a child-centred approach. However, the implementation of this pedagogical shift may encounter resistance. For example, Tan and Thiagarajan (2020) reported that Malaysian kindergartens that teach dance through school concerts still saw the purpose of dance education as performance, and they tended to reject a child-centred approach because it did not produce as polished dance movement as the principals and parents expected.

A curriculum is the outcome of a cultural practice where educational reform is always related to "the relationship of knowledge and power" (Kanu 2003, 69). The dance programme of the annual school concert, including the teaching methods and the performance on stage, is the outcome of the cultural practice of a kindergarten community. "Changing the method of teaching dance means changing the ethos and culture of a kindergarten community as well" (Tan and Thiagarajan 2020, 19). Therefore, to introduce a new method in a school, one must understand its social structure and culture. Besides that, one must also be able to lead the school community to see the value of change.

In 2018, I proposed that Kindergarten XX (this article uses pseudonyms to preserve the anonymity of the kindergarten and participants of this project) employs creative dance as the teaching method for leading students through a collaborative project in making dance programmes for their annual school concerts. A performance-based creative dance programme was developed and implemented for this project through two main action research cycles. In this study, I focus on one aspect of the project—How did the researcher introduce creative dance as the new pedagogical approach to a Malaysian kindergarten community? To answer this question, I employ autoethnography as the methodology to review the process of making changes in the kindergarten community.

Autoethnography positions the researcher as the main subject of study (Cooper and Lilyea 2022). It is "a method of choice for using personal experience and reflexivity to examine cultural experiences, especially within communication" (Adams et al. 2017, 2). When researchers review their personal experiences through writing, this reflexive process reveals multiple layers of consciousness connecting the personal to the cultural (Ellis and Bochner 2000). In writing this autoethnographic article, my consciousness constantly shifted between the positionalities of a researcher and an educator. The data was gathered through self-observation, self-reflective notes and participant observation. Through this autoethnographic study, I intend to reveal my insights as the researcher in making changes and engaging with the kindergarten community. The findings of this study could

contribute to the knowledge of future researchers who intend to introduce a new pedagogical method to an educational field.

This study also proposes that building a consensus on the value of creative dance is a critical factor in ensuring the success of the collaborative project. I employ Bronfenbrenner's bioecological system to analyse the social structure of the kindergarten and propose fostering empathy as the key element in establishing an understanding of the value of creative dance and children's needs among different parties in the kindergarten community.

## **BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

Dance is not a compulsory subject in Malaysian preschools. Some kindergartens provide music and movement as physical activities for children, while some provide classes for dance performances in annual school concerts. These kindergartens are willing to hire dance teachers. The kindergarten I approached to run the collaborative project, Kindergarten XX, fell in the latter category. This kindergarten is located in Shah Alam, Malaysia. Since its establishment in 2002, annual school concerts have been an important event for this kindergarten.

In 2018, I proposed to run a two-year collaborative project between the Dance Department of the Faculty of Creative Arts Universiti Malaya and Kindergarten XX. This project advocated creative dance as a better practice in children's dance pedagogy, which conforms to child-centred dance practice. The project aimed to develop and implement the modules of performance-based creative dance for children in Kindergarten XX. This project went through two main cycles of action research. I played the role of consultant for this project and worked closely with two of their existing dance teachers. I met these two teachers twice a month for lesson planning and visited their dance class at least once a month for observation and advice. As a result, the outcome of the research project was presented as the main programme in their annual concert. The concerts were held on 30 September 2018 and 22 September 2019 in the Experimental Theatre of Universiti Malaya. Each year, this project involved approximately 100 children, 25 kindergarten teachers from Kindergarten XX and 10 volunteer students from Universiti Malaya. On the performance day, approximately 400 parents were in attendance. In 2018, the creative dance expert Marcia Lloyd was invited to the performance.

Creative dance is an approach to dance pedagogy where the expressive aspect of movement from oneself is very significant. It "is a unique self-expressive art form which blends rhythmic movement and aesthetic expression that the participants select to communicate their ideas, thoughts, and feelings" (Lloyd 2014, 1). This pedagogical approach can benefit children in cognitive, psychomotor, affective, and social aspects (Cone and Cone 2005; Gilbert 2015; Lloyd 2014). It is also a child-centred approach, allowing the children to create movements to express themselves.

Liu (2009) proposed a version of creative dance, titled performance-based creative dance, that involves children in seven steps of making dance; the seven steps are "choosing the subject matter, exploring and selecting movements, coordinating music and movement, exploring possibilities, refining and memorising dance, and adding finishing touches and performing the dance" (19).

This project adapted Liu's performance-based creative dance to guide the children of Kindergarten XX in dancing with the two dance teachers. The process began with the selection of subject matter which was meaningful to preschool children. Food and beverage was the subject matter in 2018, and occupation was the subject matter in 2019. Each class selected a theme for their dance-making based on the subject matter. For food and beverage, classes selected the themes ice-cream, doughnut, roti canai, soda drinks, lollipops and spaghetti. Classes selected mechanical engineer, fireman, soldier, doctor, and policeman for occupation. Next, the dance teachers led the children in exploring the possibility of movement. The teacher employed a multisensory approach in stimulating and inspiring the children in that exploration. For example, in the Spaghetti Dance, the teacher lets the children observe and touch the texture of raw and cooked spaghetti. Then, the teacher led them to

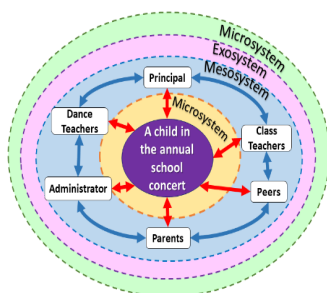
create movement by imitating those same textural qualities. As a result, they created dance movements with the contrasting concepts of hard and soft. Next, with the help of the teachers, children selected and arranged movements into short dance combinations by coordination with music. The teachers also explored the possibility of short dance combinations with various formations and narratives. Once the dance combinations were confirmed, the teachers led the children in practising and refining the movements so that they could remember them. Finishing touches such as costumes and accessories were added at the final preparation stage. In the end, the children performed the dance in the school concert in a theatre setting.

The selection of a theme and a multisensory approach are a part of a child-centred approach. The themes were child-centred because they were relevant to kids; they were taken from their daily lives or other school subjects. The multisensory approach made the process of creating dance child-centred because it triggered students' imagination and stimulated them to create movement.

## UNDERSTANDING A CHILD'S DANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory places child development within environmental systems and recognises that child development is affected by different levels of those systems. According to Tudge et al. (2009), Bronfenbrenner revised the ecological systems theory and changed the term "ecological" to "bioecological." This revised theory emphasises children's biological influences in shaping their development and positions them as the agents who actively shape their learning environment (as cited in Hayes et al. 2017). According to Hayes et al. (2017), there are five levels of environmental systems which are arranged around a child, from proximal (micro or close by) to distal (macro or distant). The microsystem is the first and closest system, which contains parents, family, daycare, and schools. The second system is the mesosystem, which refers to the communication and interaction between the various actors (e.g., among parents or between parents and school teachers) in a child's microsystem. The third system, the exosystem, is the social system where the child is affected by the interactions within their microsystem but does not function directly within it (e.g., changes in educational policy or a parent's workplace policy will affect interaction within the child's microsystem). The fourth system, the macrosystem, is the outer and larger social-cultural system in which social and cultural beliefs and values are rooted. Finally, chronosystem refers to the dimension of time relating to a child's environment, encompassing a child's life events and physiological changes.

Based on this model, if we look at a child's dance learning environment in an annual school concert, the parties who have direct contact with a child in the innermost layer—the microsystem—are the dance teachers, peers, teachers, principal, and parents (see Figure 1). The direct interactions of these parties with the children within the microsystem are crucial for supporting the child's development. Meanwhile, the interaction between these parties in a mesosystem layer also directly affects the child's development. If the relationship between the parties is good, it will positively impact



**Figure 1** A child's dance learning environment in a school concert based on Bronfenbrenner's Bioecology System.

Source: Modified by the author based on Hayes et al. (2017, 14).

the child's development. In the case of this project, how the parties in the microsystem perceive and value dance impacts a child's development directly. Therefore, building a consensus on the value and managing the expectations of dance among the parties surrounding the mesosystem's children was essential.

## **THE CONFRONTATION SITUATION**

Based on my previous experience with kindergartens, the principals always interrupted attempts to adopt creative dance as a pedagogical tool. Conflicts always arose in the teaching process because creative dance, which emphasises the learning process, did not meet the expectations of most principals and parents, which were product-based (Tan and Thiagarajan 2020). There was a big difference in how the kindergarten community and I valued dance. From the perspective of the principals, teachers, and parents, a good dance performance is one that is well-rehearsed and skillful. Through a series of dance classes, they expected the children to be transformed into skilled dancers who could perform complex and polished dance movements.

Their perception of dance was influenced by their interaction with other social systems or other cultural resources they received in the exosystem. Besides that, their perception of how dance should be taught might also be affected by the learning culture in the macrosystem, which is accustomed to an examination-based approach. This is supported by Fariza et al. (2015), whose findings showed that examination-based learning culture influenced Malaysian students to negotiate their acceptance of a Western-based learning approach.

In contrast, I positioned dance within the context of a dance educator. I advocated that dance is not just about dance skills. Through dance classes, I expected children might also enjoy dance, learn dance skills, and develop affective, cognitive and aesthetic aspects. My notion of dance was influenced by the education I received in my learning journey in modern and creative dance, that is, Western-based. In this confrontation, how can I, as an outsider, create an understanding to bridge this gap?

Empathic communication is the answer to this question. Many scholars point out that empathy or empathic communication is important in resolving confrontations, especially in a multi-stakeholder context (Roffers and Waldo 1983; Seddon 2014; Senbel 2015; Klimecki 2019). For example, in the medical field, Cochrane et al. (2019) stress that compassionate care with a sense of empathy leads directly to improved outcomes, including better quality and safety, patient experience, physician engagement and financial performance. In education, Tran (2020) claims that the empathy local teachers and students display towards international students crucially influences the sense of belonging of those students in the classroom and university community.

## **BUILDING CONSENSUS FOR THE VALUE OF CREATIVE DANCE IN THE KINDERGARTEN COMMUNITY BY FOSTERING EMPATHY**

The concept of empathy is simple yet complex (Bruneau 1989). In a simple way, empathy is defined as "the ability to experience and relate to the thoughts, emotions, or experience of others" (Gentry et al. 2007, 1). It is "the ability to put oneself in another's shoes, is the act of projecting oneself into an observed context" (Franzese 2017, 696). Empathy is different from sympathy. "Sympathy is feeling for someone, while empathy is feeling as someone" (Huit 2009), "[empathy] is more than sympathy" where one "is able to understand and support others with compassion or sensitivity" (Gentry et al. 2007, 1). Riggio et al. (1989) define empathy as a social skill that encompasses three types of subskills: expressive skills, skills in sensitivity and skills in the ability to regulate emotions. According to them, there are two types of empathy: cognitive and emotional. Cognitive empathy is the "ability to take another perspective," while emotional empathy is the ability to take a "vicarious experience of another's emotional state" (Riggio et al. 1989, 93).

On the other hand, Bruneau (1989) draws out five distinct concepts of empathy through a literature review. They are “empathy as object identification, empathy as a form of imitation, empathy as a psychological mode, empathy as a sequential-step-flow process, empathy as sociality” (4–9). Among these concepts, empathy as a psychological mode is the most relevant concept to explain the empathetic relationship of this project. Empathy as a psychological mode considers empathy to be “a perceptual view taking process” where “one person identifying with or experiencing the internal subjectivity states or emotional states of another” (7). Building consensus on the value of creative dance in the kindergarten community is the process of each party learning to understand the other’s internal subjectivity or emotional states.

Empathy has broad applications in many areas. For example, Shelly (2015) asserts that empathic care is a holistic approach to doctoring in the medical field. In corporate management, empathy is a leadership quality (Holt and Marques 2012) and a factor of relationships fundamental to leadership where empathic emotion creates a supportive and secure working climate that passively impacts job performance (Gentry et al. 2007). Franzese (2017) claims that empathy enhances a teacher’s ability to understand the conditions and needs of students in education. All the literature suggests that empathy is a communication skill that supports mutual understanding among two or more individuals.

The following sections discuss my strategies for developing empathic relationships with different parties in the kindergarten community.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF THE PRINCIPAL AND DANCE TEACHERS THROUGH EMPATHIC LISTENING**

I started the project by approaching the principal and dance teachers because the principal is the key decision-maker, and the dance teachers would be the people who execute the teaching. As the consultant to lead the change, I applied empathic listening to understand the concerns of the principal and teachers. According to Huitt (2009), when applying empathic listening as an approach, one should “seek first to understand, then to be understood.”

Empathic listening was a particularly good practice when I was in a confrontation situation with the principal. Being a good listener helped me gain respect and build trust. Instead of promoting the benefits of creative dance to the principal, I first listened to their expectations and concerns for the dance class and performance. The principal was mainly concerned about the students’ onstage performance. This is because Kindergarten XX is private, and the number of students who enrolled every year depended on the school’s reputation. School concerts are one of the biggest events representing the quality of the kindergarten, and dance is the main programme in the school concerts. Hence, student performance is vital and is seen as a learning outcome in kindergarten. Well-trained dance performances give a good impression to the parents about the quality of the kindergarten.

Empathic listening also means listening without judgement (Gentry et al. 2007). I expressed my understanding of their situation without judging and criticising the principal. I clarified that I was looking for a win-win situation where the quality of the student’s performance would be maintained, and the children’s cognitive, affective and aesthetic benefits would not be compromised.

This was the turning point where I gained the trust and permission to employ creative dance as the new pedagogy. Only when I gained her trust did I have the chance to explain and demonstrate how children benefit from the cognitive and affective aspects of the learning process of creative dance. Witnessing children’s growth through observation and participation in learning, the principal started to understand and believe in the process.

The empathetic rapport between the principal and I did not develop in a short time. It was developed throughout the production. Apart from creating an understanding of the value of creative dance, empathic listening was also applied during costume selection, set design and programme design. The decision-making in these matters was not often based on the opinions of one party.

A result that could meet my expectations and those of the kindergarten community was arrived at through constant communication.

Regarding costume selection, our perspectives differed. From the dance educator's perspective, any costume would be suitable for the children as long as they were safe and comfortable and fit the child-appropriate themes. On the other hand, the principal was concerned about the quality of the costumes and whether they would meet the expectations of the parents and children. She wanted the parents to feel like the costumes were worth the value of the fees they paid. She wanted the children to be happy and excited about their costumes. Tutu skirts are an exciting costume, and all the girls wanted a chance to wear one. If they did not, they would feel disappointed. All her concerns were valid because the dance performance was a cultural event in the kindergarten. Only through empathic listening could these concerns be considered.

Through empathic listening, I also understood that the two dance teachers were not confident in employing creative dance as the pedagogical approach. They doubted their ability to employ a child-centred approach as well as the children's ability to create their own movements. By understanding their worries, I provided support in lesson planning and teaching. I also clarified that a creative dance teaching approach allowed for a teacher-directed approach. A child-centred approach can be implemented progressively according to the children's abilities. Such mutual communication enhances the understanding of the needs and concerns of both parties. It was a process of "a perceptual view taking" as Bruneau (1989) mentioned.

## **FOSTERING EMPATHY AMONG DANCE TEACHERS THROUGH EMBODIMENT AND REFLECTION ACTIVITIES**

In stating that "without empathy, we are teaching content instead of students," Franzese (2017) asserts that teaching with empathy is a powerful tool that allows teachers to improve their pedagogical approach based on student needs (695). In this project, coaching the dance teachers in designing and planning activities was important to support them in adapting creative dance as a pedagogical tool. However, to foster empathy, we needed to go further. The embodiment of lesson plans and reflection activities was instrumental in fostering empathy with dance teachers and children.

Teachers need to experience and embody their lesson plans from the point of view of their students in order to understand their needs. For this purpose, a small study group was formed with the two dance teachers to test the usability of lesson plans. Before teaching the children, microteaching sessions with this study group were carried out. In these sessions, the teacher would teach, and another teacher would play the role of the child. After the sessions, they would give feedback on how to improve the lesson. By doing this, activity pacing, age appropriateness, and clarity of instruction based on children's needs were considered. In short, the teachers empathised with the students through direct experience of the lesson design.

Franzese (2017) asserts that our students deserve to be seen by teachers through an empathic lens so that they will be able to see others in the same way. Teachers were encouraged to teach with empathy in their dance classes. The dance teachers, especially slow learners, were guided to be more observant and sensitive to the student's performance and progression in class. During my visits, I would provide suggestions based on my observations of their teaching sessions. I would point out details that the teachers overlooked and suggest appropriate solutions. For example, the teachers might focus on the good students in the front row and neglect the weak ones in the back, or they might repeat the same exercise repeatedly without noticing their students are getting tired. The viewing of class recordings also supported the feedback sessions.

Another activity to help teachers understand the needs of students was teacher-student discussion. Taking place after the movement activities, these discussions were also important for children to reflect on their feelings and learning experiences. By listening to the children, teachers would be able to better empathise with them. The discussions also enhanced the children's ability to empathise with each other. By listening to their peers, children acknowledged the feelings of others and became aware of thoughts and feelings outside of their own.

## **FOSTERING EMPATHY AMONG CLASS TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS**

Besides the principal and dance teachers, class teachers and administrative staff also played an essential role in providing pleasant dance learning and performing experiences. Dance teachers meet the children one hour a week, but class teachers spend time with the children five days a week. The way a teacher talks to the children about the school concert reveals the teacher's perception of dance. During my field visit, I overheard a class teacher talking to her students after attending the dance rehearsal. She said, "Children, you must do very well at the concert. You must remember the dance movements and make them perfect... because Daddy and Mommy are coming to watch you perform. If you do not do well, Daddy and Mommy will be very disappointed."

This statement sounded like the teacher was motivating the children but could also stress them out. Another layer of meaning was hidden behind the teacher's words: the children's dance performance is to meet the parents' expectations, and they must not fail to do so. Besides that, class teachers normally became nervous when the concert drew nearer because they were concerned about the children's performance. They pushed the children by making statements like the one above. Sometimes, they even did extra practice outside the dance class. The principal would even receive complaints from some parents that their children refused to come to school because they were too tired after rehearsal. The statement reflected the perception that the purpose of dance education was for performance and entertaining the parents. However, the purpose of dance education is not just to serve the parents' expectations. Dance scholars propose that dance education should emphasise student development in artistic, aesthetic, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects. These concepts help consolidate the importance and necessity of dance in the formal education system (McCutchen 2006; Smith-Autard 1994).

Therefore, there was a need to establish empathic communication with teachers to understand their concerns and reposition the dance's function in the school concert. Therefore, their expectations and attitudes towards children could be changed. A discussion session with all teachers and administrators was conducted. The discussion session started with teacher feedback about the children's progression in dance class. From their sharing, I could hear their worries. They were concerned that children could not remember the steps or positions or that their dance movements were not synchronised. It was essential to let them express their opinion. Through listening, I would then have a chance to communicate with them. I would let the teachers know they would not be penalised if the children's performance was not good, and all their concerns could be solved subtly. It was also important to let them know that the performance aimed not mainly to entertain the parents but to provide a pleasant learning experience for children, which could be a sweet childhood memory.

In addition to the process of making dance and the daily interaction of teachers with children, a comfortable and safe rehearsal process and the environment was also essential in ensuring the children had a happier and healthier dance learning journey. The administrators were reminded to empathise with children's needs when discussing backstage management. For example, the administrators had to ensure that the waiting area was safe and comfortable, the queuing and waiting time should not be too long, and children were allowed to watch other dance performances during rehearsal.

## **CHILDREN AS THE AGENTS IN ENCOURAGING PARENTS' EMPATHIC PARTICIPATION IN CHILDREN'S CREATIVE DANCE LEARNING**

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model highlights that children are the "active, interested and influential" agents who shape or change their learning environment (Hayes et al. 2017, 79), suggesting that educators should support children to be active participants in their learning. In this project, apart from involving children in the dance-making process, building an empathic relationship with their parents is also a way to promote children's participation in their learning.

Parents are the most distancing party with dance classes but are also the closest to the children. Their expectations of the children's performance are important to the success of creative dance



programmes. They are highly influenced by their understanding of the essence of creative dance and children's needs. This project proposes that empathic participation would help parents' understanding. According to Sommer et al. (2013), empathic participation with a child means "being able to grasp the intended meaning in a child's initiative and to respond accordingly, being emotionally available—providing emotional support—and establishing contact and trust" (463–464). Parents could participate in the learning process empathically by understanding the children's meaning in dance-making and being responsive. This project proposes two approaches to encourage parents' empathic participation.

First, I assigned children as ambassadors to promote creative dance to parents. Teachers assisted in the task of explaining the meaning of creative dance. During the school concerts, two children and two teachers demonstrated how they created dance movements in class—the demonstration helped the parents appreciate the children's performance differently where the dance movements might not be well-polished or tidy, but they were meaningful to the children.

Second, I encouraged children to share their thoughts and feelings about participating in dance rehearsals and performances with their parents. After the school concert, children were asked to draw a picture to express their feelings. Then, they were told to bring the drawing back home and tell their parents about their thoughts and feelings about the dance performance. The picture helped the parents understand how meaningful the dance was to the children. The change in the parents' response was significant.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that building consensus on the value of dance was possible by fostering different empathetic relationships within the community of Kindergarten XX. The consensus building process provided children with a better and healthier learning experience by implementing creative dance as the pedagogical approach. The findings of this study could be applied to other schools where educators seek to introduce pedagogical change. Of course, these changes are not restricted to creative dance or other child-centred approaches. In theory, any pedagogical approach could be introduced through consensus building, but more research would be required to test this.

Bronfenbrenner advises locating the child at the centre of practice. This study attempted to accomplish this by supporting children to become "agents of change" in their learning environment, but they could have been further empowered through more systematic feedback mechanisms. This article was written from the perspective of only one stakeholder. The findings of this research could be input for future multi-stakeholder studies, potentially employing triangulation in the data collection phase.

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