



PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

“IT ENDED UP BEING A BIT TOO ADVANCED” - DISCOURSES ON DANCE COLLABORATIONS IN A SWEDISH HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

It is well-known that art and cross-sectoral collaborations are needed and have value in the educational sector. The aim of this article is to describe and problematise beliefs, norms, and experiences that are articulated in descriptions of collaboration surrounding dance teaching in educational contexts in Sweden. This article rests on social constructionist perspectives and is informed by discourse analysis to problematise the experiences of collaboration regarding dance education. The empirical material consists of focus group interviews with dance teachers, pre-school teachers, and school-age educare center teachers. Analysis is focused on the discourses that occur in the empirical material, where different educators describe their

experiences of collaborations. Three discourses emerge in the result: first, *dance as an eraser*; second, *the dance teacher as inspirer and physically competent*; and finally, *'Jack in the box'—dance as collaboration?* The conclusion drawn from the results is that cooperation is common, but collaborations are not. If one intends to develop shared values, alignment, and equal power relations, collaboration is required. The importance of combining dance competence with pedagogical competence adapted to the specific educational setting is essential.

Keywords: *Dance education, discourse, pre-school, school-age educare centers, collaboration, cooperation.*

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Dance in the Swedish educational context

The Swedish school system has a strong emphasis on democratic values and can be described using concepts like equity, inclusion, and education for all (Ministry of Education SFS 2010:800). Almost 86% of children between the ages of one and five attend pre-school. Pre-school has its own curriculum (in Swedish: *Läroplanen för förskolan*), revised in 2018 (Swedish National Agency for Education (SNAE), 2022). During the year when the children turn six, they start the pre-school class, which is part of compulsory school and can be understood as a preparatory year before children start grade 1. Compulsory school applies to all children between the ages of seven to sixteen. After completing compulsory school, upper secondary school provides further studies. Swedish school-age educare centers (further on SAEC, in Swedish: *fritidshem*) is an integral part of primary school, regulated by the Education Act, and can be explained as a combination of education and care for children aged 6–12 years.

In the Swedish context, dance occurs in music education and physical education and health (Mattsson, 2016). Dance as a creative and aesthetic form of expression is mentioned in the curriculum for pre-school. In the recently revised curriculum for compulsory school, pre-school class, and SAEC, creative and aesthetic forms of expression are defined as core content (SNAE, 2022).

Pre-schools and schools also involve professional dance teachers from Public Music and Arts Schools (further on PMAS, in Swedish: *kulturskolor*). The PMAS s in Sweden provide education in arts as a voluntary after-school activity for children and youths. Dance is the second most popular subject after music, but dance mainly attracts girls (The Swedish Arts Council, 2019). Overall, Swedish-born girls with well-educated parents are highly represented in PMAS (Jeppsson & Lindgren, 2018). Since 2008, federal grants help municipalities finance and integrate art projects in Creative School (in Swedish: *Skapande skola*) to involve children and youth from pre-school to secondary school. This means, e.g., possibilities to develop, organise, and implement different art forms as dance in an artistic dance context (Cedervall, 2020; The Swedish Arts Council, 2022).

As researchers in dance, we are interested in existing dance practice in the Swedish school system. Our primary focus is on examining collaborations in dance that involve professional dance teachers, dance instructors, and teachers in different pre-school and school settings, including SAEC. The overall aim of this article is to describe and problematise which beliefs, norms, and experiences are articulated in descriptions of collaboration around dance teaching in SAEC, schools, and pre-schools in Sweden. This aim is highlighted through the following question: What discourses about dance education emerge when pre-school teachers, SAEC teachers, and dance teachers describe, reflect upon, and discuss their experiences of collaboration in dance?

Collaborative dance projects

The marginalised role of dance in the educational sector is highlighted by dance researchers and educators around the world (Svendler Nielsen & Burrige, 2015; Burrige & Svendler Nielsen, 2017). According to Sofia Cedervall (2020, p. 156) writing about arts opens up different interpretations, but each school must decide how to fulfill the goals.

Collaboration stems from various reasons on different levels, such as children's right to access culture and the arts, principles' desire to create a school profile, individual reasons from involved professionals, or engaging unemployed artists in education (Cedervall, 2020; United Nations, 1989). Research about art-in-school programmes such as The Cultural Schoolbag in Norway points to challenges related to dance artists' freedom within the school curriculum. Further development is needed for engagement and collaboration between artists and teachers (Karlsen & Høeg Karlsen, 2022).

Linda Darling-Hammond (2017, p. 111) writes about opportunities for collaboration related to high-performing schools. She highlights the importance of "[...] organis[ing] people to take advantage of each other's knowledge and skills and create a set of common, coherent practices so that the whole is far greater than the sum of the parts." In Eeva Anttila's (2015, p. 79) five-year-long action research project in a Finnish school, the aim was to "enhance the role of embodiment in all learning and develop democratic, collaborative pedagogical practices that involve individuals and communities in a holistic way". The results point to the need to engage a professional dance teacher who is willing to collaborate and engage in dialogue with teachers from the school. In the project, subject- and classroom teachers were encouraged to take up different themes and subjects to explore during the dance classes. The dance teacher encouraged the schoolteachers to combine dance with traditional subjects in their classrooms. Staff were welcome to participate in the dance classes together with the children. During this period the dance teacher also offered classes in creative dance, especially for teachers. As responsible for the action research project, Anttila highlights differences related to children's and teachers' interest, curiosity, and motivation to engage in the project "[...] embodied learning is demanding for many teachers, as it transforms the classroom from a silent, motionless space into a space full of motion and sound" (Anttila, 2015, p. 81).

According to Julia Puebla Fortier and Alexandra Coulter (2021, p. 147), there are several interrelated key factors of collaboration that affect the outcomes such as value and legitimacy, relationships, power, capacity, resources, alignment, and policy and system complexity. Key factors like values and legitimacy, for example, are interrelated to capacity and relationships with an impact on alignment. Relationships of power become visible in decision-making, questions about funding, and the opportunities of different sectors to design an agenda.

Discourse analysis as a theoretical starting point

Discourses are certain ways of talking about the world, and discourse analysis is derived from critical social constructionist theories (Burr, 2003; Potter & Wetherell, 2007). Discourses are constituted by practice, but they also contribute to constituting practice (Potter & Wetherell, 2007). In this study, we focus on how educators describe, reflect upon, and discuss collaborations in dance in curricula-driven educational settings. The function of language is crucial in discourse analysis, and it pinpoints how people *use* language *to do things*. It is the way something is articulated that is in focus, not the intentions (or the person) behind the articulation. Kristina Holmberg (2020) offers examples of how the use of descriptions function as a producer of a specific image of reality. Discourses are linguistic productions of "truth" and are formed by different

societal institutions (Olsson, 1999). This means that different factors enable or hinder what can be said in a specific situation. What is not mentioned is of interest in the analysis and helps us understand a topic and reveal different power dynamics (Howarth, 2007). When studying discourses one also, from a critical angle, studies society since discourses are shaped and reshaped within specific societal contexts. According to Jonathan Potter and Margeret Wetherell (2007), the positioning of oneself and others has a vital impact on society, as it produces discourses that impact society and identifications by subjects. According to Norman Fairclough (2003), reality is constructed by societal and linguistic practices which are shaped and reshaped in interactions with other linguistic and non-linguistic practices. A discourse can be understood as the embodiment and language which make a social practice coherent and comprehensible (Gilbert, 2008). This means that the focus of the analysis can only be what is possible for educators to say in a specific situation, what is repeated, and what creates meaning. When we say that something is “possible to say”, we mean, for example, that in a Swedish educational landscape, educators operate in relation to policy, rules, and norms that they cannot break, or go against. For example, educators cannot, even if they are literally capable of doing so, argue a case to not listen to children or take their opinions into account, as this is a dominating norm in Swedish educational practice and policy documents, and even in our laws. Relationships of power (i.e., norms, policies, and laws) continuously shape and reshape our understanding, and therefore hinder alternative ways to understand or articulate things. Even if laws or rules are not always crucial to our articulations, norms are, as we as subjects are influenced by norms and participate in rearticulating them.

Discourses also point out positions and contexts which are legitimate and desirable. In the present study, this means that we are interested in understanding which positions and arrangements are possible and meaningful for educators when they talk about collaboration in dance in a teaching context. Fairclough (2003) emphasises that surrounding structural conditions have great significance in how discourses are articulated and practiced. In this study, the collaborations in dance take place in curricula-driven educational settings, which constitute prerequisites for how discourses are constructed. Discourses also constitute practices, so that they - over time - adapt to norms and values in line with the articulated discourses (Potter & Wetherell, 2007; Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2009).

An interview study with critical framing

The empirical material consists of transcribed focus group interviews with preschool teachers, SAEC teachers (teachers in Swedish *fritidshem*), and dance teachers separately. The interviews are part of different previous research projects and were produced during 2019 and 2022 in north and southwest Sweden. The intention of these previous projects has been to illuminate educators’ experiences, knowledge, and values in relation to dance. In all the interviews, collaborations have been described, and these descriptions have been re-used in this article. Even if the interviews have been conducted in different research projects, the overall ambition in these previous projects has been to let the respondents develop their thoughts, experiences, and ideas in a rather open manner. Semi-structured interviews have been carried out in a timeframe that allowed the respondents to speak freely and reflect together with each

other and with the researcher. All the interviews took place during the respondents' everyday practice. The interviews lasted between 60–120 minutes and were recorded with dictaphones and transcribed.

As Potter and Wetherell (2007) state, transcription is a constructive activity, where the researcher needs to make decisions on what to include and how to interpret statements. The interviews with pre-school teachers involved 12 pre-schools, and in a majority of the interviews between two and four pre-school teachers took part. The interviews were conducted by Anna Lindqvist (6 pre-schools, north in Sweden) and Martha Pastorek Gripson (6 pre-schools, southwest in Sweden). The interviews with SAEC teachers took place at six different schools with two to four SAEC teachers involved in each interview. The interviews were conducted by Torun Mattsson (3 SAEC, southwest in Sweden) and Märtha Pastorek Gripson (3 SAEC, southwest in Sweden). The interviews with dance teachers were carried out on three occasions with the same group of dance teachers, by Anna Lindqvist. The group consisted of four dance teachers. Most respondents have a university education within their field/subject: either educated as dance teachers, SAEC teachers, or pre-school teachers. Dance instructors are mentioned by the respondents and are defined as individuals who have practical knowledge of dance but do not have a university education in dance or dance pedagogy.

Ethical considerations

Taking part in the focus group interviews was voluntary. In line with ethical requests (Swedish Research Council, 2017) all informants received written and oral information about their option to withdraw their participation at any time before the interviews. All respondents gave their written consent, and both the names of respondents and their workplaces have been anonymised. As the empirical material has been produced in other research projects, we needed to make sure that the original consent also covered this interpretation of the material. We agreed that this re-reading would be ethically responsible. Informed by ALLEA (2017), we strived to establish a climate where the informants felt safe, appreciated, and comfortable during the interviews. According to ethical issues, honesty is another guiding principle. Unlike the previous research projects, where the same interview material is used, this study rests on a more critical perspective due to epistemological and ontological understandings. Following discussions in our research team about “reasonable and fair conditions for the data use, ownership and/or protection” (ALLEA, 2017) we found it ethical to re-use the empirical material. The results are not harmful or disrespectful to individuals.

Mapping the field

Analyses began with a selection on statements about collaborations between curricula-driven educational contexts (pre-schools and SAEC) and extended educational contexts, such as dance organisations or PMAS. The material is rich and comprehensive; therefore, we specifically focused on those parts of the interviews that relate to collaboration between curricula-driven education for young children and extended dance education. This limitation means that six of twelve pre-schools are not part of our analysis, as they do not mention collaboration with dance institutions, PMAS, or dance teachers at all. Those six pre-schools were all geographically situated in

▶ southwest Sweden, while the rest were situated in north Sweden. We could therefore identify a difference between north Sweden, where collaboration was mentioned more often, in comparison to southwest Sweden.

The material has been collected in a pragmatic and inclusive way (Potter & Wetherell, 2007), and therefore cases that initially seem only vaguely relevant have been included. In this sense, the analysis has been conducted in an inductive way. The core aspect of discourse analysis involves finding nuances, similarities, and variations, and to better picture different understandings that are articulated and create meaning (Lindgren, 2006).

Potter and Wetherell (2007) suggest that analysis is made over several steps. Inspired by Holmberg (2010) and Monica Lindgren (2006), we choose to lean on the following two steps in our analysis;

1. Search for patterns in the material. This includes differences, but also shared understanding or similarities.
2. Form hypotheses about functions and consequences related to the patterns identified in Step 1.

After those two steps were conducted, we reorganised the material to picture 'what's at stake'. This means highlighting what discourses in the main statements or patterns became visibly articulated. For us to be able to picture 'what's at stake', the relationships between words have been essential, as these position the word in a context that produces meaning (Lindgren, 2006; Potter & Wetherell, 2007; Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2009). Potter (2008, p. 110) describes that "they (individuals, our remark) treat reports and descriptions as if they come from groups or individuals with interests, desires, ambitions and stake in some versions of what the world is like". This sheds light on the understanding that individuals or groups describe in their statements. The analysis is not conducted on an individual or even a group level, but on a level where specific patterns appear to us during our analysis that reveal the discourses. Initially, we identified five discourses, but after the functions and consequences of the statements made by our respondents appeared more clearly, we reorganised these into three discourses, which will be described in the following sections. The study does not provide generalisable ideas, although it may present themes and findings relevant to similar, and more generalisable, contexts in dance education.

Discourses on dance collaborations

In our results we found articulations on continuity, competence, and the emancipative role of dance teaching. Three discourses emerged through an inductive process: *Dance as an eraser*, *Dance teachers as inspirers and physically competent*, and *'Jack in the box' - dance in collaboration?*

Dance as an eraser

When educators describe the role dance has in the education they have experienced, it is often about how dance contributes to overcoming various types of ▶

difficulties. Dance is highlighted as a solution to address and remove difficulties, in the same way that an eraser erases written mistakes. Examples of difficulties where dance is perceived as a resource concern how children with behavioural challenges find new roles and function better in their education. It also relates to how boys in masculine-coded environments can be offered a “breathing hole”, and how the dance teacher and the dance venue offer a “free zone” relative to the school environment.

Dance teacher Emma works at a private dance school in a big city, and she has experiences of collaborating in formal educational contexts. Emma states:

When we had a group of the second years [...] as they were here for five weeks, these things that one does not actually have to know, but the teachers think it's interesting to see how they act in that situation. And they almost dropped dead out of happiness as they saw how children engaged with dancing when nothing else in school worked out, but this boy particularly, he loved to dance. And this was a boy who definitely didn't express love for anything else in school. That's why it could be a huge advantage for teachers to observe the students sometimes, so they can see this.

Emma describes how the conditions surrounding dance instruction create favourable conditions for reaching children who are engaged in dancing. It is emphasised that dancing is surprising in its engagement of boys. Carolyne Herbert (2017) highlights that dance is often presented in the form of gender-based pedagogical practices, and that boys and girls are treated differently in dance education. Through this story, the dance teacher is also constructed as a kind of benefactor who brings balance and something else than school in terms of children's needs. Other aspects of the impact of context are raised by the pre-school teacher Olle at the pre-school 'Sunflower'. He illustrates how freedom for boys in a macho environment prevails in dance education:

Interviewer: What skills in dance do you wish to develop among the children and how do you achieve it?

Olle: Hmm, we want to develop the hmm, the X-culture, which is a bit macho, so we want to achieve the boys not feeling as if they have to be macho, but rather, deep down, they want to dance, which one can tell, and they should be given the space to dare to do this without having those thoughts. Now it is not like that [...] it is only later in school that it begins with the older children, but in pre-school one does notice some of that.

Interviewer: In which way do you notice it?

Olle: Yeah, they, they are a bit like, they walk a bit cocky and act tough, present themselves as strong, they nurture those masculine traits you know, the tough things in the x-profession. It comes, you can already feel it when they are five years old. The dance can erase it temporarily, we have seen this over the years as these boys let go of this façade and they want to be part of the dancing, but it is about empowering the children to make them brave, brave to enter the big room and let go, they can dance and be themselves. I do not think that pre-school children are difficult since they are not very influenced yet.

The narrow masculinity norm affects the boys and limits them. Dance is described as erasing gender norms. Accordingly, dance is legitimised, as challenging traditional gender norms is spelled out in the governing curriculum. Finally, it appears that pre-school teachers have the ability to determine how children are “when they can dance and be themselves”, a kind of therapeutic gaze that sees when someone is ‘their true self’.

Dance teachers as inspirers and physically competent

Stories that actualise competence, both educational and physical, recur in the transcripts. There is an ambivalence among the dance teachers regarding their desire to reach out to schools and contribute with inspiration and tools. At the same time, they experience a lack of respect for their professional knowledge from the teachers with whom they collaborate. Pre-school teachers express astonishment at the dance teacher’s competence. In SAEC, the importance of catching the children’s interest is highlighted as urgent, and the importance of visiting dance teachers’ competence in doing this can be seen in relation to gender issues. Dance teachers themselves, on the other hand, emphasise bodily competence as crucial to successfully developing children’s abilities in dance, and how dance is part of their holistic ambitions.

At the pre-school ‘Poppy’, the pre-school teachers talk about experiences they had when a flexible dance teacher from PMAS visited. The pre-school teachers appreciated the competence of the dance teacher, but they also reflected on their own limited bodily competences. Birgitta says “Yeah, this one (dance teacher) from XXX ...she was like a snake. Her flexibility astonished me”. Later on in the conversation, Birgitta talks about the dance teacher again.

Hanna: We have done it in three rounds, I think. The first time it was “dance in pre-school”, I mean, we had someone come.

Interviewer: Was it a dance teacher?

Birgitta: Who has such qualifications? For certain, this girl that I got, she was very talented. There is no question that, how should I put it, she was very into it herself [...] with her movements and ways of moving, how she was crawling, naturally she inspired the children, because she had such ambition. While being an old lady like me (laughs) I feel that even the act of getting up from the floor is a complicated affair. This transition from the floor to a standing position.

The dance teacher is positioned (Potter & Wetherell, 2007) as physically competent through her agility. At the same time, a distance is created from the dance teacher and her work as Birgitta perceives the dance teacher as almost a spectacle, a “snake”; something inhuman with abilities that you cannot expect from people in general. The statement connects to gender norms, gendered bodies, and movement expectations for a female dancer (Schupp, 2017).

Furthermore, the dance teacher is described as being “into it”. The bodily capacity to move, and specifically kneel, is highlighted. The drive and the ability to inspire

children are also perceived as linked to physical ability and commitment. The pre-school teacher positions herself as without physical competence when she describes her difficulty in getting up from the floor. With both sound and laughter, the absurdity of such an enterprise is reinforced. Potter and Wetherell (2007) describe that positioning constructs understanding of oneself or others.

In the SAEC 'Neptunus', the SAEC teachers reflect on whether the dance teacher from PMAS has the right competencies in relation to their context. Gender issues are at stake when Lovis talks about how the dance teacher does not catch all children.

Lovis: They only reach a few little girls. They do not reach the large number that the school age educare center ought to reach. I think that street dance is more [...] she teaches street dance as well... but it is not spoken about.... If they knew that it is street dance, then maybe more would go. The school age educare center needs the possibility of borrowing from the Public Music and Arts School. The time is not there, the knowledge is not really there, [...] which means that dance is often neglected.

Dance is not favoured, as there is a lack of competence and time among the teachers at SAEC. The dance activity provided, which the children sign up for via PMAS, only engages "a few little girls". In line with Hebert (2017), Lovis imagines that "street dance", as a popular culture expression, would attract more children. The collaboration between the dance teacher and the SAEC teachers, as pictured, is rather limited.

In the pre-school 'Bluebell', the opposite is described, as a collaboration has taken place according to the pre-school teachers.

Kajsa: When I think about the times that the Public Music and Arts School was here [...] perhaps that is the positive aspect of it [...] that we do it together. Also, normally it has been a sort of fairy tale, I mean there was a story we did. It was not like us simply 'shaking our buttocks', but a story that made sense of what we did together. It's like a big curtain and...you are fish in the sea...I think that the children may even forget that they are dancing, because it feels like another activity, which makes it so enjoyable. That is what the dance pedagogues are so great at. They are really incredible.

Kajsa positions dance teachers coming from PMAS as facilitators, as they make "this dance" possible. Implicitly, in pre-school the teachers themselves are involved in the active work with dance together with the dance teacher. As Kajsa speaks of dance teachers in plural, she indicates recurring visits, and that collaboration with PMAS takes place continuously. Kajsa describes how the dance teachers get the children involved in a way that makes them almost forget that they are dancing. Ida Pape Pedersen (2019) understands the dance teacher's ability to be located in his/her body, in a way that can be related to Kajsa's understanding of the children's involvement. The function (Holmberg, 2010) of the dance teacher is both to contribute to increased enthusiasm and give teaching a different 'touch' (maybe 'feel' better) than the pre-school teachers themselves are capable of. Dance education, led by a dance teacher, is simultaneously presented as serious, eager, and joyful.

Even if the dance teacher's competence is often appreciated by other educators, one dance teacher has ambivalent feelings when her skills and material are demanded.

Maria: [...] There are teachers who will come and say "yes great, I wrote down some of the exercises, could you also send me the music? And then we can do it again on our own" [...] But this makes me very...kind of divided, and I tell them "I don't know..." How many hours have I spent finding this music? It is a part of my job, should I simply give it to you...? At the same time, what can I say...you want to promote dance.

One can sense a conflict, as Maria wants the dance classes to be continued when her assignment is completed, but also feels disrespected by the fact that another teacher assumes that s/he can simply continue the teaching without dance qualifications as soon as the dance teacher has left. Maria positions herself as interpellated (Burr, 2003) by conflicting ambitions. One can also note the schoolteacher's ambition to make use of the knowledge s/he sees in the dance teacher's lessons, and the music she uses. In line with Fourtier and Coulter (2021), Maria's experiences can be related to unequal relationships of power. In an example from the pre-school 'Daisy', Betty illuminates the importance of the inspiration received from the visiting dance teacher to improve the quality of the education.

Interviewer: Then you get some ideas and inspiration from this then?

Betty: Yes, very many ideas and inspiration on how one could begin, and that the children can also see how one should do it and learn, so later we can do it...

Interviewer: Do I understand you correctly, that you feel that it is something that brings you joy within your work, that it is material that you make good use of?

Betty: Yes, it is, I think that it is really good. I think that colleagues have also said that it is very enjoyable.

Getting tips from the dance teacher indicates that the pre-school teachers learn how dance education can be developed, varied, and deepened. The inspiration and knowledge functions (Holmberg, 2010) as a resource for continually dancing and possibly for developing pre-school teachers' ability to teach dance themselves. Dance education, in this specific case, appears to be stable, carried out in collaboration, and recurring. It also appears that it helps to define a dance-specific content by having access to material contributed by the dance teacher. This is in line with Kerry Chappell and Veronica Jobbins' (2015) key features of partnership pedagogies: for example, the importance of shared knowledge in creating new understandings and possibilities.

'Jack-in-the-box'—dance in collaboration?

The regularity of collaboration is highlighted by several respondents, and short collaborations on one or multiple occasions are the most common. This limits dance teachers' opportunities to develop and deepen their teaching (Lindqvist, 2020). Very

different ambitions emerge, where some SAEC teachers highlight dance activities that seem to lack purpose and well-thought-out content. There are also examples that show how external interventions are not recurring when the children's interest falls. A tension field emerges, where the degree of collaboration is actualised. Activities often take place that were not planned in collaboration, and shared understanding regarding goals, method, or content do not occur (Fortier & Coulter, 2021). Dance thus appears to be more of an activity than an area of knowledge. Many dance teachers are concerned by the very short teaching periods, sometimes only a single occasion, when they reach out to schools, SAEC or pre-schools.

Annika: It is usually an isolated event. We want them to do something fun [...] And that means that the positive aspects that would take place after several times, with the dancing, which could happen, do not happen.

To be able to develop ideas and create dance with the children, trusting relationships are necessary, as is time to practice and elaborate. This is not possible to achieve when the dance teacher is used as a 'Jack-in-the-box', rather than a subject-oriented and qualified resource. The term 'Jack-in-the-box' in this text refers to occasions when a dance teacher is asked to teach short-term (1–3 occasions) in a context without any knowledge of the participating children or any understanding of the intended aim of the educational content, except that it should be "fun" (Lindqvist, 2020). The lack of continuity is a challenge (Fortier & Coulter, 2021). At the SAEC 'Mercurius', continuity is valued but sometimes difficult to achieve for various reasons.

Marit: It follows that all School-Age Educare Centers have access to a dance that has begun now, which we also had last year with a dance teacher who was called 'Liv'. And yes, now there is a new dance teacher that I have not met yet. She taught once so far. [...] Yesterday she was supposed to have had dance, but then she was ill [...] And this is 60 minutes free of charge.

The ambition is to offer extra-curricular activity via an integration project that takes place in a dance studio at the school. Martin, one of the SAEC teachers, describes how the lack of continuity has a negative effect. Even if the dance class is free of charge so that everybody can participate, fewer children participate now than was the case three years ago, as Marit described later in the interview. At the SAEC 'Pluto', the SAEC teachers experienced resistance from the children after a while, when dance instructors from a dance association were involved.

Daniela: We cooperated with civil society organisations and there was one group coming once a week. It was about dance from Latin America. There was great interest from many age groups. But it ended up being a bit too advanced. The children lost interest since they could not follow the steps. But there was initial interest there.

Daniela reveals that even if the SAEC offered dance activities continuously, it did not turn out well. The ambition to include several age groups failed after a while

when it became too advanced. It appears that despite continuity and subject-related competence, relevant pedagogical competence was lacking, or had not yet been developed. The visiting dance instructors had not been able to adapt the content to the student group's conditions and possible goals. The outcome here was that initial interest among the children faded. This indicates that the arrangements were not meaningful (Fairclough, 2003).

The children's ability to choose whether they want to participate is in line with democratic ambitions and the ambition to let children influence and participate in decision-making (Gilbert, 2008). On an organisational level, different educational units can also choose whether they prefer to take part in 'dance offers', from for example the dance organisation 'Swing it'.

Martin: We also offered dance online during COVID-19. It was 'Swing it' that invited all the schools. They enabled us to follow it via Teams. Many schools joined. Those who picked up on it. Quite a few here in the community. It was fun.

To "follow it" via Teams indicates that the SAEC teacher Martin is not quite clear about what is being followed, in terms of genre, dance content, and material (Howarth, 2007). Martin pictures dance as something you follow, something that 'Swing it' taught, and that the children implicitly imitate. However, talking about dance, work with improvisation, or composition is not mentioned. The SAEC teacher also points out that there are quite a few schools in the municipality that "picked up on it". Through this, the dance activity that 'Swing it' offers takes on a role that is mainly full of pleasure, appreciated, and limited in time. The legitimacy of the dance is actualised as something fun, but also possible to easily opt out of (Robinson, 2020).

Possibilities and challenges for dance collaborations in educational settings

The impression is that dance in general is appreciated in schools, SAEC and pre-schools. Most of the educators mentioned that children appreciate dance, and benefit from participating. Dance teachers tend to highlight the freedom dance brings for example, the encounters with dance venues (such as a dance studio that pupils visit, outside of the school) that they present to the children. They describe this context as more suitable for children than the school environment, with its demands and rules (Lindqvist, 2020). Children's emancipation is continually at stake, and pre-school teachers also mention how gender norms can be extended in a way that gives boys "a breathing hole" in a traditionally "macho culture". Dance teachers tend to point out the possibilities regarding dance, without mentioning the limitations that are also present in professional and extracurricular dance contexts such as gender stereotyped dance genres (Pastorek Gripson, 2016; Hebert, 2017). Therefore, letting children simply dance is not enough. It is also important to consider what kind of dance/genre one presents and what sort of norms and values are embedded in the dance genres and materials presented to the children (Chappell & Jobbins, 2015; Pastorek Gripson, 2016).

Dance is not questioned at all in the interviews but presented as important for all children. Dance teachers are generally regarded as 'enthusiastic specialists' in relation to the regular educators when it comes to teaching dance in schools, SAEC, and pre-

schools. Dance teachers are portrayed in this study as professionally and physically competent. But the dance teachers feel that their professionalism does not always have a high status. One example is of teachers asking a dance teacher for her music, and whether she can give away her playlist. In line with Lindqvist (2020), dance is emphasised as knowledge that can be given away.

There are nevertheless examples where SAEC teachers question whether the dance instructors or teachers have the right pedagogic skills. They are perceived as good at teaching dance, but their ability to meet all children's needs is questioned. When children can choose if they want to participate in the instructor's dance activity, unless already interested in dance, they tend to drop out. Competence in dance does not solely appear to be important, but needs to attract a great variety of children, or as one SAEC teacher puts it, to "catch others than little girls".

In line with Mattsson (2016), dance activities are also motivated by the perception that it should be fun to participate, not just what pupils should learn by participating in the activity. It is problematic if dancing must always be full of pleasure as this can act as a shackle to the educational outcome. Michael Gard (2006) argues that dance can be valuable in challenging pupils and children to move beyond gender-stereotypical ways to dance. Dancing may challenge children to move outside their own comfort zones, and this is not always primarily enjoyable. Dance has the potential to become something more than a pleasurable activity that only motivates some children, usually girls with an interest in dance already (cf. Risner & Schupp, 2020). To be able to reach this stage, long-lasting collaborations are a prerequisite.

Dance is often an offer to children and pupils, and participation in the activity is voluntary, according to our respondents. UNESCO (2010) illuminates the importance of establishing life-long and intergenerational learning in, about, and through the arts. It is therefore important that dancing in pre-school, school, and SAEC does not just become a voluntary activity. According to UNESCO, there must also be sustainability in arts education for educators, artists, and communities. In this study, offers from dance associations or PMAS become something that educators can choose to present to children, or not. One example is when the dance association 'Swing it' offered children the opportunity to participate in dance lessons through Teams, and when the dance teacher from PMAS attracted only "a few little girls". When dance is voluntary, either for the children or for education in general (at pre-schools, or schools), the possibility to develop knowledge of dance does not reach all children.

Different opinions of what successful collaboration means are visible in the results. When professional dance teachers from PMAS are engaged in pre-schools, opportunities are given for pre-school teachers to become inspired and have insights into dance as an area of knowledge. Even if the pre-school teachers are involved together with the dance teacher, there are no statements on communication and co-planning between them. Dance is knowledge-specific and practice-based, and therefore difficult for pre-school teachers to implement as an art form at pre-school by themselves. The lack of pre-school teachers' confidence in teaching dance appears as a hindrance as does dance teachers' possibility to work in more long-lasting collaborations. The sharing of knowledge and professional expertise is conspicuous by its absence.

Research points to different key factors important to collaboration: for example,

dialogue between teachers, legitimacy, resources, relationships, and power (Anttila, 2015; Fourtier & Coulter, 2021). Dance as an aesthetic subject can be understood as practice-oriented, sensitive, and emotional in contrast to theoretical subjects. Hierarchies and different values are connected to school subjects and affect organisation, time, and space (Connell, 2000). In line with Darling-Hammond (2017), the possibilities dance teachers have to create the right conditions for dance teaching and teaching quality in dance can be problematised. In the results, content and goals related to dance in the curriculum and key factors are missing in the teachers' stories. The lack of continuity and stability of dance teaching is also obvious. It is probably more difficult for dance teachers or dance instructors to get to know each child individually, compared to pre-school teachers (and SAEC teachers) who meet the children every day.

An issue that is at stake in the results is competence. Dance teachers emphasise the importance of bodily and kinaesthetic knowledge, such as being able to feel your own body and own movements. Additionally, pre-school teachers describe how they learn and get inspiration from the dance skills they recognise that dance teachers possess. On the other hand, dance competence is not the only aspect of importance. To be successful in an educational context that consists of children with a great variety of knowledge, goals, and interest in dance, one needs to have pedagogical education and experience to specifically meet this kind of group. To be responsive in relation to all children's needs and to take children's initiatives and interests into account when designing education is of importance (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011). These kinds of capacities are core aspects in pre-school teachers and SAEC teachers' professional training, but, in contrast to dance teachers, they often lack knowledge in dance (Pape Pedersen, 2019; Pastorek Gripson et al., 2021; Pastorek Gripson et al., 2022). Therefore, long-lasting collaboration would be beneficial, in line with Anttila (2015), so that dance teachers and educators in the formal education system could develop dance education designed for a specific group of children and specific educational context together in collaboration.

According to Fortier and Coulter (2021) collaboration benefits from identifying values that are shared and having an ambition to equalise power relationships between the participating actors, in favour of the least stable organisation (in general, the party from the arts sector). As Cedervall (2020) suggests, it is common for unemployed artists to be involved in projects through Creative School. Dance artists might have dance skills that can benefit educational work through Creative School, but on the other hand, the pedagogical skills might not yet have been developed. This also applies to dance associations, where instructors with an interest in a specific dance genre, for example dances from Latin America, might not be reaching out to children in a way that relates to the children's knowledge level and holistic ambitions in the specific context. As one of the SAEC teachers states, it tends to "become a bit too advanced" for the children.

Prerequisites for fruitful dance collaborations

A limitation in this research project is that collaboration was mentioned as part of a more general interview study. Further research, with a practice-based design, focusing on collaboration, could contribute with new and even more developed knowledge. In such a study, the data collection could consist of interviews and observations with dance teachers, educators, and children who take part in the same project.

The overall aim of this article was to describe and problematise which beliefs, norms, and experiences are articulated in descriptions of collaboration around dance teaching in SAEC, schools, and pre-schools in Sweden. We lean on Fortier and Coulter (2021) in our understanding of collaboration as something that involves common goals and commitment to fulfil the different participating organisations' agendas in long-lasting work to connect, share values, and strive for equality. This study shows that cooperation between dance organisations and more formal education is more common than collaborations. 'Cooperation' is understood as when someone works together or does something they are asked to do for example, teaching dance without continuity or providing a room for a visiting teacher without being involved in the teaching themselves. Both collaboration and cooperation can be fruitful and generate new knowledge for children. It also shows that competence is a core aspect that needs to be in place to be able to both meet the specific group and to challenge them. Dance teachers and instructors in general are valued for their kinaesthetic competence, but the importance of adapting to a context where flexibility, children's initiatives, and play are foundations in everyday life, needs to be taken seriously into account in order to be able to build fruitful and long-lasting collaborations.

Involving dance associations where the instructors lack pedagogical maturity when the goal is to work in a holistic and democratic way seems to be problematic. To involve dance teachers with pedagogical university education and experiences of reaching out to all children is therefore of importance. Planning and evaluating programmes together (dance teachers and educators) and working over longer periods builds a deeper understanding that helps isolate shared core values. In long-lasting collaborations not only the 'fun' aspects of dance are present, but also educational ones: for example, moving outside one's comfort zone, creating and communicating in dance, and experiencing emancipatory outcomes.

Structures for collaboration that involve suitable prerequisites for all participants in the educational settings are also needed. To add dance as something voluntary, independent of whether the organisation can choose to offer dance, or the child can choose to participate, takes the interests of the organisation or child into account. However, this also leads to a lack of possibilities for *all children* to develop skills and knowledge in and about dance.

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