



DEPA Extended Response to NESA's Creative Arts K-6 Draft Directions Options

Background

The National Curriculum in the Arts, endorsed in September 2015, is part of the development of National Curricula in the Key Learning Areas, with the intent to produce a 'world-class' Education system (ACARA, 2012:4), underpinned by the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, that promotes 'equity and excellence in Australian schooling' (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2008:7). National Curricula would see standardised content and practices across all Australian States and Territories.

Serious concerns have been raised about the direction of the National Curriculum in the Arts, and its capacity to meet its stated aims. Responses from NSW' Arts teachers to *The Draft Australian Curriculum: The Arts Consultation Report (November, 2012)*, as documented in the *NSW Response to the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts (2012)*, were predominantly negative. Of particular concern was the determination that Dance, Drama, Media Arts, Music, and Visual Arts would be accessed under one overarching Curriculum framework (ACARA 2012). 'Making' and 'Responding' were the component learning experiences (ACARA 2012), excluding 'Performance' (currently a central component of the study of dance as an art form K-12 in the NSW' Dance Syllabuses). The final document *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10*, released in July 2013, failed to take account of these concerns.

Currently Dance is studied in NSW through the 'Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus', 'The Dance 7-10 Syllabus', and the 'Dance Stage 6 Syllabus'. Each of these documents: sits under the overarching framework of the Study of Dance as an Art Form K-12; employs the three organising strands 'Performance', 'Composition', and 'Appreciation'; and is founded on aesthetic and artistic principles. Each of these documents is considered as 'best practice' in the Study of Dance as an Artform K-12.

A review of relevant literature supports the preceding contention, that the current Dance Syllabuses in NSW are founded on best practice. Reid (1969 & 1986), Abbs (1987 & 2003), Redfern (1982 & 1983), Smith-Autard (1994) and McFee (1992) support the notion that best practice in Arts Education requires an equal emphasis to be placed on both Aesthetic and Artistic concepts, which should not subsumed within each other in an educational context.

The model for the study of Dance as an Art Form in Education is based on this philosophy. The so termed 'Midway Model', employs three learning strands: Performance, Choreography and Appreciation and is supported by Dance Researchers and Philosophers Adshead (1981), Redfern (1982), Abbs (1987), Osmotherly (1991), McFee (1992) and Smith-Autard (1994).

DEPA's Response

The Dance Educators Professional Association's (DEPA) response to the Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10, remains consistent with views expressed in 'NSW Response to the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts' (2012). It is of great concern to DEPA that the National Curriculum Consultation Report (2012) failed to respond specifically to matters raised in the NSW' Report, and that the final document remains largely in the form of the draft document. This has led to conjecture as to the reasons underpinning this decision: political imperative; arts' politics; and/or problems in aligning each of the states and territories disparate arts curricula into a national approach.

Given that the current task is to comment on options provided by NESA in relation to the impact that the National Curriculum should have on the current NSW' Arts Curricula, DEPA argues most strongly for the option that leads to the retention of best practice in each of the arts areas.

There are several key issues arising from the Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10 (2013), that reinforce DEPA's position:

1. The reference to 'sensory experiences' an 'aesthetic choices' and 'aesthetic knowledge' to the exclusion of 'artistic knowledge';
2. Statements that make reference to the 'distinct bodies of knowledge, understanding and skills of each of the art forms ... their individual 'practice, terminology and unique ways of looking at the World', and the decision to employ a generic approach across the art forms through the strands 'Making' and 'Responding', excluding 'Performance';
3. The goals of 'Excellence', 'equity', and 'best practice' in the Study of Dance as an Artform are compromised in the Dance Strand of *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10 (2013)*.

Point 1: The reference to 'sensory experiences' an 'aesthetic choices' and 'aesthetic knowledge' to the exclusion of 'artistic knowledge'.

Arnold (Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol 39, No 1, Spring 2005: pp 42-64) contends that:

The aesthetic is frequently thought of as a generic term of which the artistic is a species. It should be made clear, however, that the two terms are not interchangeable (2005:50).

The aesthetic and the artistic are in fact conceptually distinct terms, even though they are frequently juxtaposed as if they were the same (2005:51).

Point 2: The decision to employ the strands 'Making' and 'Responding' across each of the arts areas excluding 'Performance'

Best (Journal of Aesthetic Education Volume 29, No2 Summer 1995:79-80) writes:

A seductive thesis has been proposed that the arts comprise a generic area of the curriculum and therefore that they should be planned for collectively. This is often taken to imply that the arts should be combined, since they supposedly involve the same creative processes ... I shall argue that the contention that the arts constitute a generic community is fundamentally confused and dangerously misguided: no reasons have been offered to support the notion of a collective policy for arts in the curriculum ... This is no abstract danger: it has already led to ominous consequences for the arts.

Best (2004:167) also writes in relation to general aesthetic criteria across the arts:

Some years ago I was invited to lecture at a college where I was asked to provide my student audience with general aesthetic criteria which they could apply across the board of the arts, as it were, i.e. to such diverse activities as dance, drama, music and the visual arts. There was some dismay at my showing that the desire for such general criteria is fundamentally misconceived. (Research in Dance Education, 2004, Vol 5, Issue 2:167)

Arnold (Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol 39, No 1, Spring 2005: pp 42-64) contends that there are 'Three Key Aspects of Education in Dance': 'Understanding and Appraising'; 'Creating and Composing'; and 'Performing and Expressing':

'... it should be understood that each of them interrelates with the other two and that no one aspect can be satisfactorily considered without reference to the other two' (2005:53).

In further advocating for the role of Dance Performance in the curriculum, Arnold writes:

... It is an initiation into the practice of dance that is at the heart of an education in dance: that is, it involves the ability to engage in dance in a competent and enlightened manner as a dancer ... who but an intellectual or theoretician would wish to say of a person that she is dance educated, but cannot dance?' (2005:57).

Point 3: The goals of 'Excellence', 'equity', and 'best practice' in the Study of Dance as an Artform are compromised in the Dance Strand of *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10 (2013)*.

Research presented in this document highlights the failure of the dance content of the National Curriculum in the Arts to demonstrate excellence, equity and best practice in dance education.

The generic study of the arts fails in terms of equity and best practice, and consequently the goal of excellence.

Currently the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) has commenced a consultation process with the purpose of reviewing 'the *Creative Arts K–6 Syllabus* to include Australian curriculum content' (NESA, 2017:4). The review is said to provide an opportunity to evaluate current curriculum content and strengthen the continuum of learning in Creative Arts K–12.

DEPA's response to the three options presented for discussion by NESA is informed by research and is consistent with views presented in the NSW response to the draft Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10:

Option 1 retains each discipline area as discrete, consistent with all NSW creative arts syllabuses K–12. Option 1 proposes Making and Investigating as interconnected learning experiences. The Learning Framework, describing the roles and relationships between artists/performers, art forms, world and audience, supports the development of knowledge, understanding and skills in Making and Investigating. (NESA, Introduction to the Creative Arts K–6 Draft Directions for Syllabus Development, accessed 29/06/17).

DEPA Response: While at the outset Option 1 may be seen as viable in that it retains each discipline area as discrete study, it employs the National Curriculum's two-strand learning experiences model, but with 'Investigating' instead of 'Responding'. Research presented in this document shows that any model of Dance Education that employs generic learning experiences and excludes 'Performance' as a discrete but interrelated learning study is flawed in that it is a less than optimal study of the art form. Consequently Option 1 disadvantages students in the study of dance as an art form and cannot be considered 'equitable', 'excellent' or 'best practice'.

Consequently this option is rejected.

Option 2 retains discrete learning experiences for each discipline area – Performing, Organising Sound and Listening in Music; Making and Appreciating in Visual Arts; Performing, Composing and Appreciating in Dance; Making, Performing and Appreciating in Drama. This is consistent with the current NSW Creative Arts K–6 Syllabus. Knowledge, understanding and skills are developed by investigating the world, making and performing work(s), appreciating the work(s) of others and acknowledging the role of audiences. (NESA, Introduction to the Creative Arts K–6 Draft Directions for Syllabus Development, accessed 29/06/17).

DEPA Response: consistent with the research presented in this document, Option 2 is the preferred model for the study of dance in education and is fully supported by DEPA.

Option 3 considers the learning experiences Making and Responding as common across all creative arts discipline areas. Content is developed for each art form through making and responding.

Knowledge, understanding and skills are developed by exploring ideas, developing skills, and sharing and responding to works in Music, Visual Arts, Dance and Drama. (NESAs, Introduction to the Creative Arts K–6 Draft Directions for Syllabus Development, accessed 29/06/17).

DEPA Response: This option is flawed philosophically and educationally as has been shown in the research presented in this document. It employs a generic response to the study of the arts, which fails to acknowledge that the discrete study of each art form has the proven capacity to provide students with unique learning experiences, and the opportunity to value the study of the arts through aesthetic and artistic engagement.

This option structures students' engagement in the arts through two common learning experiences (Making and Responding), which in failing to present each of the art forms according to best practice, cannot be considered 'equitable' or 'excellent'.

This option is firmly rejected by DEPA.

Final Comments

Some may argue that the Syllabus under review (Creative Arts K-6) may be considered differently from say Years 7-10 or Years 11-12, where a more specialised study ensues. Such a view fails to acknowledge that the study of dance as an art form in education should be seen from a K-12 perspective. To fail to provide younger students with the opportunity to engage fully with the study of dance is to disadvantage them and is consequently inequitable.

Still others may argue the capacity of generalist teachers to deliver an efficacious arts education program. The question then is should a curriculum be written to suit the teacher, or to provide the best educational opportunity for the students? If equity, excellence and best practice are the core goals then the response is clear.

DEPA urges NESAs to consider public perception as an aspect for consideration. The Dance Community, the public, and students recognise 'performance' as synonymous with the study of dance. Consider the thousands of students who study dance in the community, the thousands who perform each year in public education events (Schools Spectacular, State Dance Festivals, District Dance Festivals, Eisteddfods, etc.), and the thousands who attend dance performances. To recognise dance performance as integral to dance, but not to have the opportunity to study it as a discrete but integrated learning area in dance education K-12, would potentially contribute to the devaluation of the study of dance as an art form in education.

DEPA August 15, 2017.

Bibliography

- Abbs, P. (2003). *Against the Flow: Education, the arts and postmodern culture*, Routledge Falmer London.
- Abbs, P. (Ed) (1989). *The Symbolic Order*. The Falmer Press, London.
- Abbs, P. (Ed) (1987). *Living Powers: The Arts in Education*. The Falmer Press, London.
- ACARA (2013). *The Australian Curriculum: The Arts Foundation to Year 10*.
- Adshead, J. (1990). 'The Practice-Theory Dichotomy in Dance Education', *The Educational Forum*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 35-45.
- Adshead, J. (1988). 'An introduction to dance analysis: its nature and place in the study of dance' in *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice*, Ed. J. Adshead. Dance Books Ltd, London, pp. 4-20.
- Adshead, J. (1981). *The Study of Dance*, Dance Books Ltd, London.
- Adshead, J., Briginshaw, V.A., Hodgens, P., and Huxley, M. (1982). 'A Chart of Skills and Concepts for Dance', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 16, no. 3, pp. 49-61.
- Adshead, J., Briginshaw, V., Hodgens, P., and Huxley, M. (1988). *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice*, Dance Books Ltd, London.
- Arnold, P. (2005). 'Somaesthetics, Education, and the Art of Dance', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol 39, No1, Spring 2005, pp. 48-64.
- Bannon, F., and Sanderson, P. (2000). 'Experience Every Moment: Aesthetically significant dance education', *Research in Dance Education*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 9-26.
- Best, D. (2004). 'Aesthetic and Artistic, Two Separate Concepts: The Dangers of "Aesthetic Education"', *Research in Dance Education*, vol. 5, no 2, pp. 160-175
- Best, D. (1995). 'The Dangers of Generic Arts: Philosophical Confusions and Political Expediency', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 79-91.
- Best, D. (1984). 'The Dangers of 'Aesthetic Education'', *Oxford Review of Education*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 159-167.
- Best, D. (1979). 'Free Expression, or the Teaching of Techniques?', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, pp. 210-220.
- Board of Studies NSW 2013, 'NSW Response to the Draft Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts',
- Board of Studies NSW. (2006). Creative Arts K-6 Syllabus.
- Board of Studies NSW, (2003). *Dance: 7-10 Syllabus*, Board of Studies, NSW.
- Brinson, P. (1991). *Dance as Education: Towards a National Dance Culture*. The Falmer Press, London.
- Copeland, R., and Cohen, M. (1983). *What is Dance? Readings in Theory and Criticism*, Oxford

University Press, New York.

Dunn, J, and O'Toole, J. (2002). *Pretending to Learn: Helping Children through Drama*, Pearson Education Australia, NSW.

Kassing, G. (2010). 'New Challenges in 21st-Century Dance Education', *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, vol. 81, no. 6, pp. 21-25,32.

Lowden, M. (1989). *Dancing to Learn*. The Falmer Press, London.

McFee, G. (2004). *The Concept of Dance Education: Expanded Edition*, 1st Edition. Pageantry Press, United Kingdom.

McFee, G. (1992). *Understanding Dance*, Routledge, London.

Osmotherly, R. (1991). *Dance Education in Australian Schools*, Department of Education Queensland,

O'Toole, J. (1992). *The Process of Drama: Negotiating Art and Meaning*, Routledge, London.

Redfern, B. (1983). *Dance, Art and Aesthetics*. Dance Books Ltd, London.

Redfern, B. (1982). *Concepts in Modern Educational Dance*. Dance Books Ltd, London.

Reid, L.A. (1986). *Ways of Understanding and Education*. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, London.

Reid, L.A. (1969). *Meaning in the Arts*. Allen and Unwin Ltd, Great Britain.

Smith-Autard, J.M. (2002). *The Art of Dance in Education*, 2nd Edition. A & C Black Publishers Limited, London.

Smith-Autard, J.M. (1994). *The Art of Dance in Education*, A & C Black Publishers, London.