

## The Professional Development Needs of Dancers

### Introduction

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) refers to self-directed, planned or developed activities designed to upgrade skills, knowledge and abilities in a profession or job.

Most people who work in the public sector, as well as many in private businesses are encouraged, and often encouraged, to participate in some form of CPD. It is seen as upgrading and increasing skills and knowledge, improving quality of work and enhancing the competitiveness of the organisation. Yet in the dance profession CPD is rarely addressed in an structured way.

In general, dancers train from a young age, approximately 7 years old and often longer, and if they are lucky they can continue to work around the age of 18 or 19 years, though many small dance companies (especially commercial dance companies) do not offer full time contracts, so some dancers will work on a contractual basis or have to find freelance work in addition to contractual work.

There are approximately 200 dance companies in the UK and more than 800 professional dancers (in both ballet and commercial dance fields). This does not include those in residential or commercial productions and the Equity Union reports 3000 members listed as dancers.

It could be assumed that professional development in the dance world happens in the studio and is inherent in the job. Of course a certain amount will happen as a dancer matures technically and artistically, takes on new roles and works with a variety of choreographers, but not all these opportunities are always available to all dancers. A dancer's opportunities for development will be very dependent on the facilities available in their company, the roles they are given, the people they get to work with and the funding available. But, in the possible exception of some freelance dancers or big stars, these opportunities are not in the dancer's control, they are not often free to make their own choices in these matters.

In 2004 the DCMS report *Arts Development: Dance* said that: *"The dance industry has also informed us that, at present, the sector does not receive enough funding for the on-going professional development of dancers."*

It noted that dancers often subsidise their own on-going development, which enables the profession to flourish. (DCMS, 2004)

The issue of professional development is further complicated and affected by the fact that dancers generally need to re-train and/or change career in mid-life, around the age of 35-40 years. This makes the development of new and increased skills even more vital, as they are less than half a third of their working life and still have a high concentration to make a social, financial and health of the country.

### What would CPD look like in Dance?

A framework developed at Ashridge Management College (Willie 1991) suggested that effective CPD should be:

- Viewed as an investment rather than a cost
- Concerned with improved performance
- About learning as opposed to training
- Linked to both individual and organisational needs

If we apply these principles of effective CPD to dance, a focused development programme could aim to do the following:

- Improve artistic capabilities
- Improve physical capabilities and wellbeing
- Improve psychological capabilities and wellbeing
- Improve inter-organisational or dance sector knowledge
- Enhance career transition
- Enhance the skills available to the organisation
- Benefit companies and individuals

Many aspects of training or development will cover more than one of these aspects.

### **What is the benefit?**

Dancers with a wider range of artistic skills and abilities will contribute to an improvement in performance and creative standards within a company, which in turn will enable the company to attract and retain talent.

Professional development also enhances physical fitness and develops psychological skills relating to confidence, stress, performance anxiety, specialisation and injury rehabilitation could have the effect of reducing injuries and speeding recovery, as well as enabling experienced dancers to dance for longer, enhancing performance and increasing morale.

Dancers with a greater knowledge of management, fundraising and marketing issues can be more involved in advertising for and promoting the company.

The recent Arts Council Dance Mapping report found that:

*“The workforce needs to be equipped with teaching, entrepreneurial and management skills alongside performance and choreographic skills. Workforce development should take into account the diversity of the field and adopt a more holistic approach to solutions”*

(Burns, S. & Harrison, S. 2009)

According to the DCMS *“The industry must work to reduce the dependency it has on public sector funding (this currently constitutes 43% of all funding it receives), through trying to increase commercial income and income from sponsorship.”* (DCMS 2004)

Since so many ex-dancers go on to managerial and other dance related roles in the field, these are the people who need to be equipped with the knowledge, training and development that enables them to take on these entrepreneurial and sponsorship challenges.

So in supporting and funding the development of new skills within the dance workforce, even those skills that may not appear to have an immediate and direct benefit to the output of an organisation are likely in the long-term to benefit and enrich the dance field as a whole, and therefore the future viability of the dance profession.

## Research methodology

This report focuses on the needs of dancers working for dance companies, however the same issues do also exist for freelance and independent dancers.

The research used in interviews and online surveys, as well as conversations with several experienced in training for dancers and more than 18 years experience as a professional dancer in a large ballet company.

I have also drawn together information from a survey carried out by Dancers Career Development (DCD) an organisation that provides funding and advice for dancers re-training after retirement (DCD Success Rates 2007), as well as from Beyond Performance by The ADVANCE Project; an international study that examines the conditions and challenges that professional dancers face as they experience their inevitable transition out of active performing to the next stage of their lives (Levine, M. 2004).

### Interviews

#### **23 ballet dancers**

##### **4 heads of department**

In a regional touring ballet company of medium size (approx 40 dancers and around 50 other staff), which gives around 170 performances a year (based outside London)

##### **7 contemporary dancers**

In a small scale regional touring company (based outside London)

The interviews with dancers were in groups of 2-4 people, and those with the Heads of Departments were individual interviews.

The groups in interviews were loosely structured around several issues and questions, but allowed dancers to bring up issues themselves and discuss their thoughts with each other as well as responding to open-ended questions and ideas. The interviewees were selected randomly according to how available between rehearsals. They came from all ranks of the company and varied in age from 19 to above 39.

The recruitment issues from the interviews were then used to shape the online survey questions in order to build a broader picture of whether the opinions voiced in the interviews were more widely shared.

### Online surveys

#### **Professional dancers – 50 respondents**

#### **Ex-professional dancers – 43 respondents**

The surveys were a mixture of open-ended questions and multiple-choice questions, and were anonymous.

The surveys were disseminated via messaging contacts and passed on to their friends and contacts using email and social networking sites, and respondents were asked to forward them to their friends in the profession. Therefore they are not scientifically balanced and could be biased towards ballet rather than contemporary dancers (since that is my background). Although it is here possible compared to data which has from other organisations, the data cannot be regarded as completely representative of all dancers, but rather as complementary to the interview data, and as a general indication and confirmation of the issues.

## **Research Findings**

Statistics from the online survey show the following about the dancers working lives:

### **Dancers – careers now and in future**

**80%** were full time members of a ballet/dance company  
The remainder were freelance or gig artists

**30%** had been professional for 10-15 years  
**24%** for 5-10 years  
**18%** for 20+ years  
**14%** for 15-20 years  
**14%** for less than 5 years

**64%** envisaged working in, or connected to, dance when they retired from dancing  
**13%** envisaged working in a different field  
**23%** did not know

**50% +** found knowing what to do, finding time to study & paying for courses difficult  
**69%** found it difficult to find courses to do while they were dancing

### **Ex-Dancers – dance careers and current careers**

**95%** had been members of a full-time ballet/dance company  
**58%** had been freelance for some, or all, of their career

**54%** had danced for more than 15 years  
**30%** had danced for 10-15 years  
**12%** had danced for 5-10 years

**75%** of the ex-dancers still work in or connected to the dance profession  
**23%** work outside the dance profession

**62%** had benefited from a re-training grant from DCD

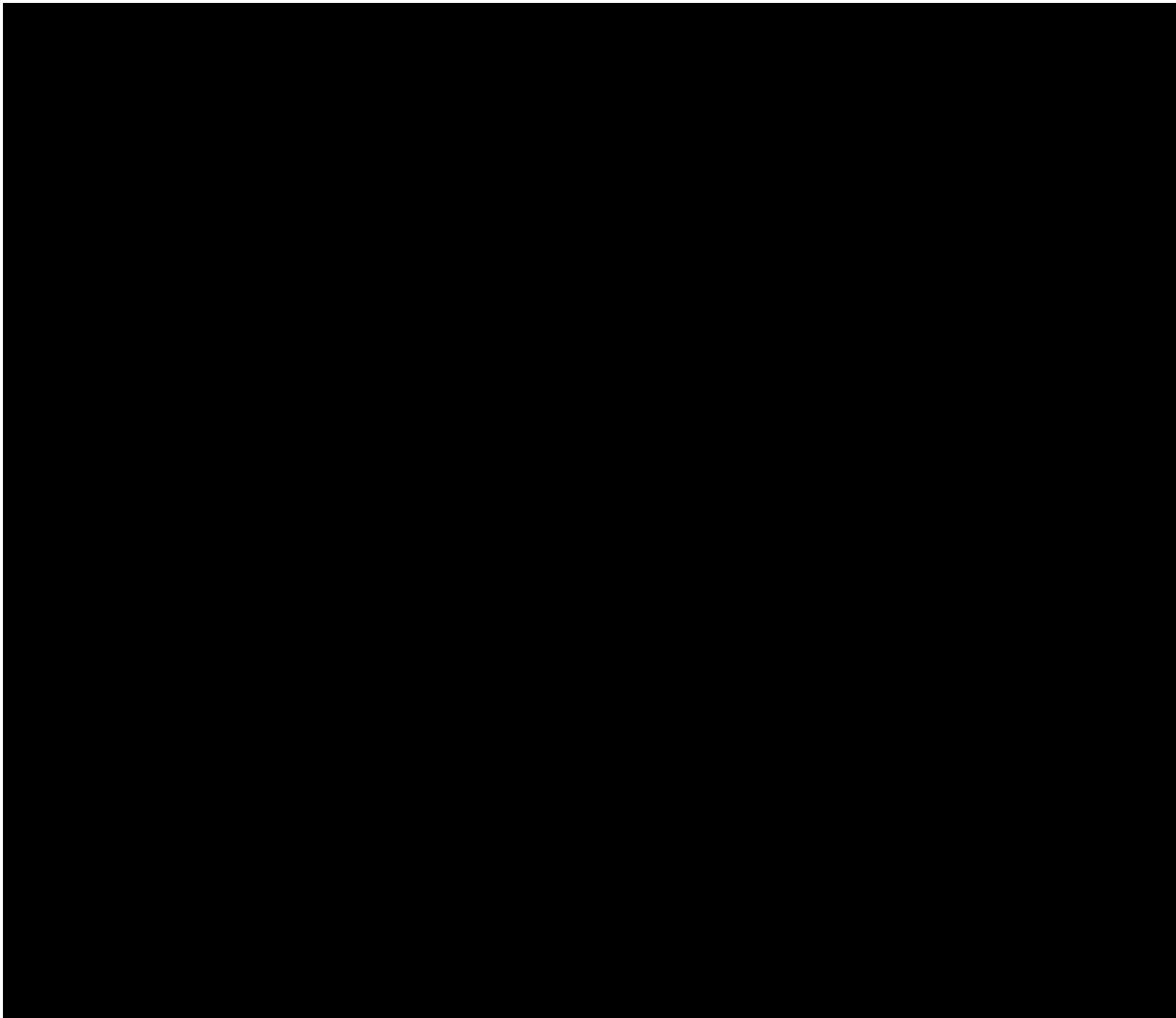
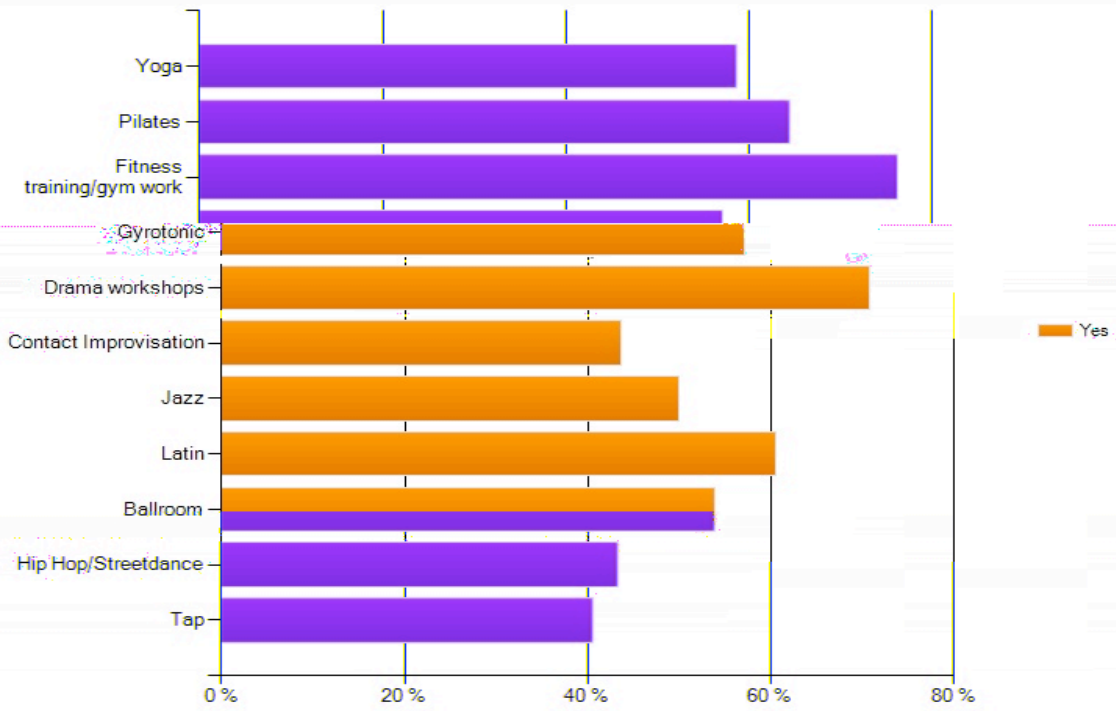
**61%** did not do any re-training or courses while they were dancing

**70%** of ex-dancers are now self-employed or freelance

### **Artistic development and other training**

The online survey showed the level of interest in a range of different types of development opportunities, from artistic and physical through to academic and career development, and the results shown below confirm many of the responses from the earlier group interviews.

Percentage of dancers who would like to do classes in the following



During the interview some of these development areas were discussed:

### **Dance Classes**

In the interview some dancers talked about the benefits of having a variety of teachers. Some also mentioned they would like the chance to learn a wider variety of styles. Jazz, improvisation, Ballroom, Hip Hop and Latin were all mentioned but it was highlighted that the related works have been, or coming in to the repertoire at the time.

*“When we were doing a jazz ballet we had a jazz teacher give us classes to ‘loosen us up’ because we were too classical, and it worked and we all really enjoyed it”*

*“It furthers your ability as a dancer, adapting to other styles”*

*“Because now choreographers ask you to do stuff that’s not in your vocabulary”*

*“Contact improvisation would be interesting, for people that are ballet trained it is so alien... most ballet dancers are terrified of improvising”*

In the online survey 70% of female dancers thought that classes in different styles would be beneficial, though only 30% actually had the chance to do them during their career. Among the current dancers Latin, Ballroom & Jazz were most popular, with more than 50% of current dancers being interested in learning these styles.

Of course some of these classes are available at dance centres but they are still not available for professional dancers and not always when dancers can attend.

### **Pas de Deux**

Pas de Deux (partnering) was brought up in several interviews as an area of professional development that has often been neglected after leaving ballet/dance school around 18/19 years. Dancers described suddenly finding themselves, after a few years in the company, with a bigger role requiring more advanced partnering skills and not feeling ready or skilled enough.

Male dancers in particular are still growing and gaining strength during their first years in a company, making it crucial that they keep developing their partnering skills at this time.

*“You come from school then stop having lessons and the next thing you get caught out and if the right person isn’t there to help you, you miss all your opportunities. Plus that takes up rehearsal time”*

*“They could do it in-house and have some of the principals teach the younger ones”*

### **Choreography**

Most dancers thought there should be more opportunities for choreographic development such as workshops and in-house courses. 80% of female dancers said that dancers and choreographers benefit from choreographic programmes. 50% of dancers wanted more chances to choreograph and over 80% wanted more chances to be involved as a dancer.

The ACE Dance mapping report also highlighted this issue:

*“Dance artists need more time for both creation and research and development. There should be opportunities for new choreographers to experiment in safe environments, be mentored by more experienced choreographers and get feedback about their work from their peers and audiences.”*

The chance to work with a wide variety of choreographers as possible was seen by all as increasing the responsibility and versatility of dancers which will benefit both individuals and companies.

As some interviewees pointed out:

*“It limits you if you are working with one person all the time”*

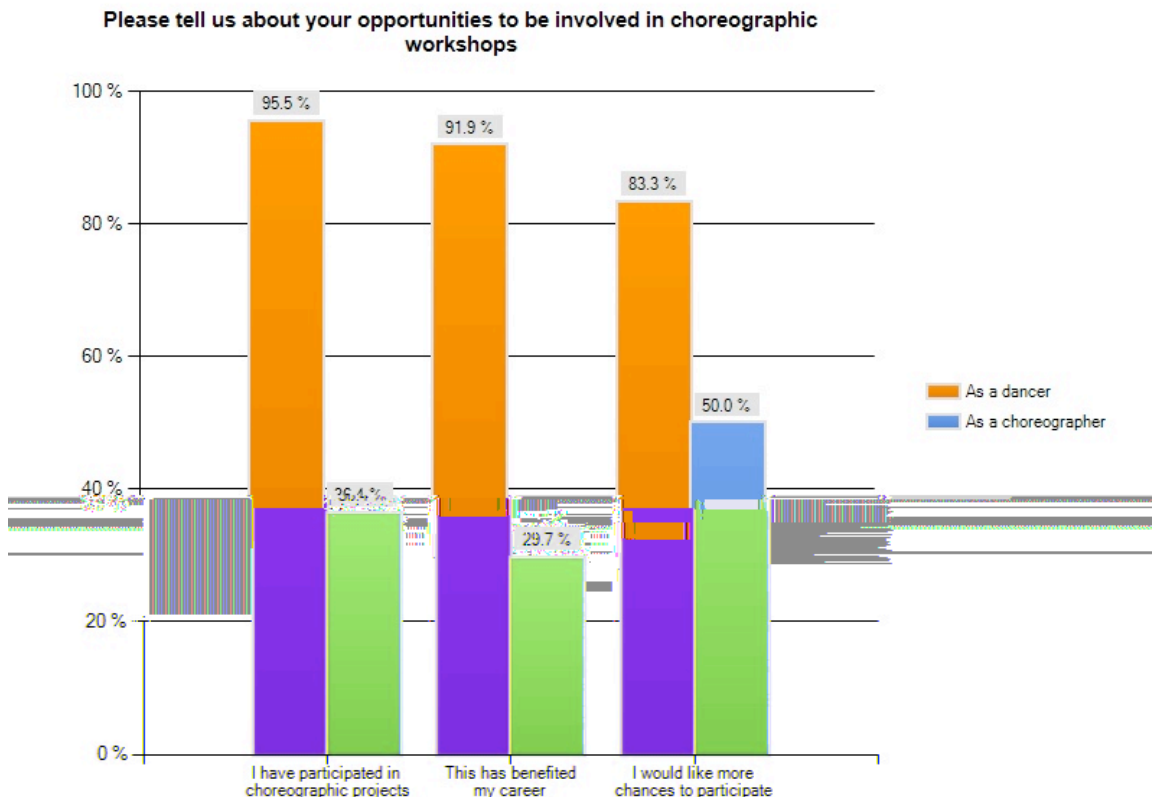
*“You get stuck in one way of working”.*

On the whole the contemporary dancers felt they were given good opportunities to develop their own choreography, but said that there was a danger in having a lot of contemporary companies where the choreographer led and did not perform work by other choreographers, and that this could limit a dancer if they mostly worked in one person's style.

There has in the past few years also been discussion in newspapers and dance journals about how there are fewer and fewer female choreographers, especially in the classical ballet.

*“The present reality of the dance sector is that most managers, choreographers and directors are men. Once in a company, especially ballet, women rehearse most of the time, while men have more time to choreograph. So, when men reach their thirties they have a wider portfolio of experience and works than their female counterparts.”* (Carlson, A. A. 2010)

A panel discussion organised by Dance Umbrella in October 2009 also debated the issue, where issues of childcare, touring and the men being more assertive were brought up, but while the reasons may be varied it is certainly possible that a structured choreographic development programme could go some way to addressing them and encouraging more female choreographers.



**Bodywork (Yoga, Pilates, Gyrotonic, Fitness Training)**

There is a strong interest in being able to do yoga, Pilates and Gyrotonic classes and fitness training because this could help with injury prevention, rehabilitation from injuries and strengthening. Some larger companies have their own Pilates or Gyrotonic instructors for the dancers, but this company did not, and the majority of smaller companies do not have access to such facilities.

Approximately 70% of dancers thought Pilates, Gyrotonic and/or yoga could be beneficial to dancers and about 50-60% of current dancers would like to do them.

However, only 37% of current dancers had had access to Pilates classes and 25% to yoga or Gyrotonic. Some dancers interviewed had managed to go to the occasional yoga class on a Sunday but one of the problems highlighted was that these classes were not available for, or specific to, dancers. Outside of London it can also be more difficult to find independent facilities or classes.

75% of dancers wanted to have access to fitness training or gym work, but while some of the larger companies do have some weights and exercise machines many again do not have access to those facilities or experts to advise on the right type of programme.

The Artistic Director of the ballet company described how male dancers who had been given an upper body programme by the physiotherapist, experienced a considerable increase in strength and stamina, which benefited their performances and recovery. He also said of his own career:

*“If I had known more about how the body works, good technique, fitness and stamina, I might have avoided injuries”*

These types of body work are also popular for career paths for dancers, with many becoming Pilates, Group & Fitness instructors, and it may be that companies could benefit from helping dancers to train as instructors while still in the company, in return for teaching classes.

### **Anatomy, physiology & nutrition**

50% of the 8 interview groups brought pain in areas in anatomy and physiology courses or workshops specifically related to dance, as this could help with understanding technique, injury prevention and rehabilitation. There were also some who were interested in further career opportunities in these areas.

Sports nutrition was another subject that many were interested in because they felt that increased knowledge could have an impact on performance, injury prevention and recovery as well as general wellbeing.

Many dancers will learn on the job about anatomy and nutrition from physiotherapists (if the company has one), but this tends to happen only after an injury has been sustained.

Approximately 60% of elite dancers and 74% of current dancers felt they could benefit from regular advice from a sports nutritionist.

It was recognised that schools did give some education in these areas, but that quite often it was not specifically related to dance, so it was not felt to be as self-lacking as it could be.

### **Drama**

The dancers interviewed all talked about a very positive experience they had in drama workshops that were held some years ago for the company and how it has continued to feed into the company's approach to their work, the identity of the company and developed their skills as dancers in dramatic roles.

*"It's done an incredible amount for us as dancers, the difference is amazing"*

The said that, although there was some initial resistance, because the whole company did it together, the facilitator was very supportive and the workshop was specifically designed for them as dancers, this encouraged everyone to help themselves in one way and support each other. However, it was noted that this workshop was a one-off and that the positive outcomes could be sustained for longer if it became a regular feature.

It is obvious from the survey that there is no limit to how much they have experienced it, as 60% of dancers said they would like the chance to do drama workshops.

### **Sport/Performance Psychology**

Psychological support and/or performance psychology came up in nearly every interview with the dancers. There was recognition that while some teachers were naturally good at developing the psychological aspects of performance, a more structured approach to mental training and psychological support for all aspects of the career is needed.

Some people noted that while there was often access to psychologists in companies and schools, they were generally off-site so required a special trip, appointments had to be requested and they tended to be used only when there was a big problem or after an injury. As a result seeing a psychologist was sometimes stigmatised or seen as a sign of not being able to cope, rather than being seen as a valuable development skill that will enhance performance.

As an example of the difference in attitude one dancer pointed out that the knee surgery of a professional sportsman who regularly worked with sports psychologists to improve their performance as a contractual obligation. Another dancer said that they would not have returned from a previous injury if it had not been for the help from a psychologist.

75% of dancers in the survey also thought dancers should have regular advice from a sports psychologist.

### **Dance Teacher Training**

A large number of dancers move into teaching when they retire from the stage, but at the time of writing there are only 2 courses designed for a professional dancer to gain a teaching qualification (although neither are as well accredited). The Royal Ballet School course runs over the course of 1-2 years in total (1 or 2 days per week in term time) and the Royal Academy of Dancing course runs for 12 consecutive weeks full time.

To do either of these courses a dancer would need to have already retrained, or take time off work (if allowed), and be able to go to London for the training.

The online survey showed that 60% of dancers would be interested in a teaching qualification which they could complete while still working, and had no need to take time off work.

Companies and associated schools could also benefit from enabling this and having practising dancers who are also qualified to teach.

### **Career transition**

This is a very complex subject and here are a lot of issues in relation to career transition, however, for the purposes of this research I was only looking at issues surrounding the availability and types of courses or training required by dancers. The issues have been repeatedly brought to the attention of just one person who has the experience to do so, and hence highlighting identified areas of interest, the difficulty of getting qualifications or gaining new skills while still dancing.

The prospect of transition brought practical, psychological and financial worries relating to re-training has can have an impact on what dancers choose to do and when.

#### **- Identifying a path**

Most of the dancers interviewed said they needed more help in identifying their transferable skills they have, and what other careers would suit or interest them. They all need this kind of help many years before they stop dancing in order to prepare for transition and make choices about their courses, training or development opportunities to follow. In general dancers are willing to put in the time and are very self-motivated but they often don't know where to start, consequently they find the idea of career transition scary.

*"I think about it, but it all kind of goes round in my head and I don't get anywhere"*

*"Well where do I start. I bet there are ideas in there but I can't get them out"*

*"It's not even the preparing, it's the making your mind up what you're going to do. You've been in dance so long that the only logical things that come to you are teaching, choreographing or something in dance"*

*"Maybe if the DCD could do taster days or workshops for different careers?"*

Emergent research into dancers' transition carried out by The ADANCE Project (Levine, M. 2004) said, "**Dancers do not fully explore career options whilst dancing for fear it will jeopardize their career**".

This sentiment was borne out in many interviews too:

Although in the interviews many dancers felt the Director of their ballet company was more supportive and open than most to discussing career options, it was still worrying to risk their career, this was still an issue for lots of dancers.

*"You feel if you are seen doing something else it might affect your career"*

*"You're not supposed to have time for anything else, just ballet ..... they will think you're not interested anymore and stop casting you"*

Several dancers talked about how more could be done within companies to help dancers make a gradual transition and in preparing themselves for transition.

*"My friend went straight from performing to do a teachers course, there was no transition, no help and basically she had a breakdown"*

However, it was noticeable that the ballet dancers found the prospect of transition more frightening than the contemporary dancers, which the contemporary dancers put down to the fact that they have started their careers as more freelance and unpredictable. Consequently they have to be more proactive and resourceful about their careers and are more likely to develop a wider network and alternative career skills from early on. The contemporary dancers also felt that their training differed in that it was more about individual and personal development than traditional ballet training.

*"Here (in the contemporary company) the Director encourages leadership, teaching and choreographic skills which is very important in transition and I don't think you get that much in ballet companies"*

### - Courses & qualifications

Whether they have identified an area of interest or are still doing so, dancers need more opportunities to start preparation for their transition before they stop dancing professionally.

Amongst interviewees were many dancers who had enrolled in short Open University courses but here were real limitations on the types of courses they could realistically fit into their normal schedule. A number of those interviewed had either done, or were doing, Open University short courses or other distance learning courses. Some chose to do a course just to keep the brain going and some were pursuing something as a step to a new career. In all cases they found it difficult to fit the work into their schedule and meet essay deadlines, and most could not attend tutorials. One dancer had tried to do a weekend Business Link course but had had to cancel 3 times due to last minute changes in the rehearsal schedule.

*"The fact that we don't know our schedule more than a few days in advance, travel around and work evenings means we just can't participate in outside courses"*

Interviewees also said some half-dancers were allowed a certain amount of study/development leave per person when they could probably attend some weekend or short courses.

Issues of cost and suitable quiet places to work during breaks were also brought up, as well as just having the energy to take on extra work.

However, the main issue in relation to courses & training is that here jobs aren't enough suitable flexible courses for dancers in the areas they are in, so more often than not study and re-training has to be left until after retirement from the stage.

Shadows discussed as a great chance for a dancer perhaps several years away from transition to learn new skills. One dancer who is now a stage manager was allowed to shadow the stage manager in his company. He had planned to stop dancing earlier but is very glad he allowed himself the extra time to come to terms with the end of his career while beginning to find out about his new chosen path. He felt this made his whole transition process and subsequent training, much easier and less stressful.

The Director of the ballet company also said that before becoming a Director he would have benefited from training in a variety of business related areas as well as opportunities to shadow other Directors and see how they worked.

The Communications, Fundraising and Learning department Directors all said they would love to be able to involve the dancers more in what they did, but that the dancers' schedule seemed to make this extremely difficult.

*"The dancers are an incredible resource because they have the passion and knowledge. If they could come to meetings sometimes it would make all the difference"* (Communications dept.)

*"To have dancers who could develop and lead workshops but also have the ballet background would be invaluable"* (Learning dept.)

This was also reiterated in the New Directions Report:

*"As a dancer you don't often find you are involved in the company vision. Our knowledge and experience is not tapped in to. The transition process needs to start within the company. Dancers need to be seen as more than just machines who execute steps."* (Burns, S. 2010)

### - When preparation for transition should start

We also asked about when the right time to start preparing for transition and a lot of people felt that it was best to start focusing on their dance career as long as possible, because when they were at the beginning of their career they didn't really think about anything else.

*"The trouble is at the beginning you are so terrified about keeping your job, that every minute of the day you are in the corner doing an exercise!"*

*"But you never know, injuries can come from nowhere and if you haven't done anything earlier on then you could be left with nothing and you have to retire."*

One person pointed out that the early career is often the time when they have less work and could more easily find the time to do a course, whereas if their workload increases.

However, another said that gaining qualifications part-time can be a time-consuming and expensive Open University degree could take several years, especially if you have to start with a foundation course, so you need to start early.

*"You should think seriously about it after your first operation!"*

On the other hand, the Artistic Director also pointed out that if a dancer spends too much time thinking about a future career early on, there is a danger they might not make the most of enjoying what they are already doing as a short career. However, he was also very keen on enabling dancers to take several years developing new skills and choosing a new path before retiring from dancing, because they are so skilled.

The biggest difficulty for the Director was that *"conversations about career transition often don't work because the dancers think you are trying to get rid of them"*

Another issue that came up was that for dancers who are not based in London (and often for those who are) it is extremely difficult to see and/or hear dance companies perform or attend other cultural events and performances, because they finish work on late, work 6 days a week and get so little notice of their weekly schedule. The effect of this is to isolate them from what is happening elsewhere in the dance world as well as the broader arts or business sectors, which in turn can limit their horizons and experience of other career possibilities.

The company director agreed that *"Dancers should take an interest in all art forms and be able to go to theatre, art and music that will inform them as artists"*.

### **Factors that affect or prevent development needs being met**

The main reasons that so much of this does not get addressed effectively are fairly straightforward:

1. Time & work schedules
2. Provision of services
3. Money
4. Organisational support

#### **1. Time**

Time is always going to be an issue for a busy working company, but there are examples of dancers taking courses and degrees while dancing, so there is a willingness to find the time and make sacrifices to achieve the ends. The degree from Birmingham University and Birmingham Royal Ballet is renowned around the company schedule and does not require dancers to lose any of their normal working time, but does require time to be spent in organisation and liaison with the Education department.

The issue of scheduling came up regularly in interviews with both dancers and other department members, because of the impact it has on the ability of all those parties to plan an aspect of their work, schedule or lives. Many companies do not plan the daily rehearsal schedule until the end of the previous week and some only 2 days before, and therefore often the contracts allow for changes of an actor just 1 day in advance. This makes it impossible for dancers to book courses or classes of an actor on the side of work, but also means that other department members are often unable to involve dancers in their work because they cannot plan this in advance. It would suggest that although some degree of flexibility will always be needed, an attempt to improve advance notice of schedules could have benefits overall and merely needs some creative thinking and persistence.

#### **2. Provision**

The availability of suitable flexible courses is the biggest issue, and it is clear that there are not enough options for dancers. In Beyond Performance (Levine 2004) **"Flexible College and University Programs which target the needs of 'non-traditional' students and provide credits for 'life experience'"** as well as **"On-the-job Arts Management and Leadership Training programs where**

**they can gain necessary skills to build careers in arts administration and which can provide critical field entry points”** are cited as vital to the transition process.

BRB (Birmingham Royal Ballet) education department in partnership with Birmingham University pioneered a Masters Degree programme designed especially for the dancers around the company schedule and enabled dancers to gain an MA, MPhil or BPhil in 3 years part-time study. This requires flexibility on the part of the University and tutors, and an agreement about equivalence of professional experience for entry requirements, since many dancers will not have the normal academic qualifications of university students. So far this is the only course of the type to be available in his country.

In the online survey, gaining a qualification was important to 56% of dancers, but 67% also said that they were more interested in work experience or just a good quality relevant course. Therefore non-accredited courses could also be a valuable option for many areas of study.

Provision of schooling, if it is to be ideal available, needs to take into account the varying performance schedules of dancers in companies, as well as those of freelance dancers, short notice of schedules, significant numbers of foreign nationals with varying degrees of English, and possible lack of formal qualifications, balanced against the financial devaluation, commitment and creative intelligence of dancers.

### 3. Money

Much of the provision discussed here could actually be met within companies in-house costing much, since the expense is often already there. For example partnering classes although company soloists/principals who are interested in being involved, need only to be fitted into the schedule, and could give each other experience. Older dancers increase the skills of the younger ones and help to develop a mentoring culture.

Educational departments could also be utilised in delivering in-house or workshops/courses on dance in education, marketing, fundraising etc. Admined this would require time from already busy people, but would also have a payback in the form of dancers whose knowledge & skills can be more effectively applied in-house and make benefit the company in future.

Several interviewees in the ballet company talked of their rival Companies in which all departments, including dancers, go together and worked in mixed groups on a project relating to the company. They all described this as effective and some things that should be developed further. It was also suggested that some things similar could be developed as a form of induction for new employees.

The ability of dancers who are fairly low paid to afford courses is an issue, but this is often more of an issue for freelancers. If course fees are not too high dancers will be willing to pay what they can afford in order to gain the skills they see as valuable. For those who qualify there are also re-training funds available from the DCD (Dancers Career Development) and it may be that a combination of evening funding, networking, and contributions from dancers and companies could allow many of these courses to happen.

### 4. Organisational support

It is clear that many dancers feel a pressure to prove their dedication to dance by not being seen to do anything else or have other interests, and a change in this culture can only be brought about by conscious effort on the part of management. However, funders can play a role here in providing incentives and support for organisations to change, in the same way that some regulated dance companies have been encouraged or required to contribute to the Dancers Career Development fund.

Companies are constrained by not having enough staff or money to provide or organise extra services, but small changes of provision by utilising talent within the organisation, communicating a willingness to support development, and some creative approaches to solving the problems could all make a considerable difference at a relatively low cost.

In addition, if a single national centre were to provide advice, courses and co-ordination of development and training programmes then costs to companies in terms of time and money could be minimised and a greater equality of provision achieved, rather than the current dependence on individual companies, individual managers and local training provision.

### **Conclusion: A CPD Programme for Dancers**

The interview and survey findings both showed the need for a range of development opportunities covering artistic, physical, psychological, and career transition areas.

Increasing these opportunities can be linked to benefits for individual dancers, dance companies and the wider dance sector, since even after a performing career the majority of dancers work in areas connected to or benefiting dance such as teaching, company management, choreography, design, education or dancer health.

This was also clearly highlighted by the Arts Council Dance mapping report in 2009, which said: *"The workforce needs to be equipped with teaching, entrepreneurial and management skills alongside performance and choreographic skills"* (Barnes, S. & Harrison, S. 2009)

So an effective and rounded CPD programme for dancers should include:

- A wider range of flexible learning opportunities available to dancers during their dancing careers
- Opportunities to develop dance related and arts related entrepreneurial and management skills, which will improve career transition possibilities and extend the areas in which dancers can work within the company
- Opportunities to experience classes and workshops and all as each training in a variety of techniques and styles which will improve and enhance a dance career, including drama, fitness, Pilates, Grotonic, yoga & partnering
- More chances to be involved in choreographic development, either as a structured programme of development for choreographers, and for dancers to work with a range of choreographers
- More psychological support for performance & opportunities to develop knowledge of sport and dance psychology to enhance training and performance as well as career transition
- Earlier help in choosing a focus for further training, such as coaching mentoring and career advice
- The fostering of a creative, learning environment within companies, which encourages and supports the development of new skills and positive self-support in the transition process

The various areas of professional development highlighted during the research can be identified as falling into one of the following 3 categories:

#### **1. Dance skills**

These are most obviously related to the job of a dancer and can have an immediate positive impact on the performance standards, artistic capabilities and creative output of a company.

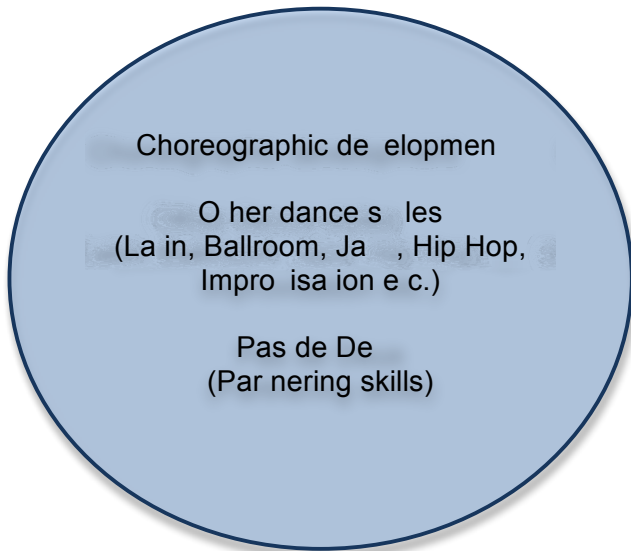
#### **2. Skills directly related to dance**

These can have an impact on performance standards, artistic capabilities, physical capabilities and psychological health, either immediately or in the longer term. They may also provide possible career transition opportunities.

#### **3. Skills indirectly related to dance**

These are most likely to benefit career transition and even all the dance sector as a whole, but could also have more long term benefits to companies because dancers with these skills could be involved in other aspects of the companies work (such as fundraising or education) and could even be re-employed by the company in other roles.

### 1. Dance skills



### 2. Directly related skills



### 3. Indirectly related skills



### **How can it be provided?**

Governments, The Arts Council of England and dance organisations such as Dance UK and DCD, have all highlighted the need for more support in the area of professional development and career development for dancers.

The DCMS report in 2004 said:

*"We believe that it is imperative that dancers are paid sufficient amounts to cover any training costs, or that support should be given to them to enable participation in development courses so that their future careers are not hindered."* (DCMS 2004)

So how can development needs be met, and support be provided?

1. Areas of development that fall in to the dance skills category can often be provided in-house by dance companies that are willing to put in the organisational time; such as Pas de Deux classes, choreographic development and dance classes. The cost should not be prohibitive and in some cases the expense could be absorbed within the company.

This should not however provide access for independent or freelance dancers and other small or project-based companies would find it much harder to include them in their work practice if they are fundraising. However, there may be an opportunity for larger companies to partner with smaller companies and to open up development programmes or classes to independent dancers.

2. In the case of the directly related skills some of the expense of each of these skills may be absorbed within the company, but in many cases professionals would probably need to be brought in. However, there are many other dancers working in these fields and in the case of Yoga, Pilates, Grouping & Fitness it would also be possible for dancers who had trained as a teacher in some of these disciplines to give classes to company members. In this way companies could play a positive role in a dancer's career development and benefit from the increased skills.

With many of these skills there are two possible types of provision, the first being informative workshops, regular classes or short courses, and the second being training leading to a qualification. Some dancers would only want to participate in the first while others might go on to gain qualifications.

While one-off workshops or classes may be relatively easily arranged, training courses with a longer timescale and perhaps accreditation are much more labour intensive to organise. As we have seen, evening qualifications do not fit the requirements of working dancers, but if funding was provided to organise flexible programmes, then I believe the interest is there.

3. Many of the courses and types of training that fall in to the indirectly related skills group are already, both accredited and non-accredited, but not in a form that allows dancers to participate. One or two companies have managed to develop some courses for their dancers and there have been one-off courses for independent dancers, but this means that the work involved in setting up partnerships and courses is often being repeated by different companies, or achieved in one company and not in others. It would seem that a coordinated programme working in partnership with the relevant trainers or education institutions, has served all dancers regardless of which company they are in, could ensure that the opportunities are equal, more readily available and ongoing rather than short-term or one-off.

In short, with current funding levels, time constraints, and limited staff, dance companies cannot realistically be expected to meet all these needs themselves, but an independent organisation with appropriate funding could act as a facilitator and provide ongoing courses and support services in partnership with educational and training institutions, dance organisations, companies and dancers.

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## **Acknowledgments**

This research forms part of my Clore fellowship and was supported and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

I would also like to thank John Holden for being my academic supervisor and sounding board, all the dancers and dance professionals who took the time to be interviewed and fill in surveys, and the DCD and the Linbury Trust for sponsoring my fellowship and The Clore Leadership Programme for providing me with the opportunity.