CultureCase

Setting the right conditions for community dance

This research was conducted by **Jennie Norfield and Sanna Nordin-Bates** at the **University of Birmingham and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, UK**

Summary

This paper looked at what conditions are needed to maximise the positive benefits of community dance by engendering a sense of satisfaction, enjoyment and motivation. The authors have a wide definition for community dance: encompassing a range of dance styles and programme structures. By surveying 84 people from 11 different dance groups they found that when community dance is true to the principles of friendliness, encouragement, and social inclusion, people derive maximum benefits from the experience.

The research is set within the context of self-determination theory

Self-determination theory suggests that people derive benefits from dance as a result of the way it allows them to exercise self-control, acquire a competence or skill, that they derive pleasure from the experience and feel a return on the effort they invest while learning to something new. In essence, community dance is about a professional working with people in a spirit of openness and generosity: sharing skills and expertise in a way that does not discriminate on the grounds of age, ability etc.

They surveyed 84 people who regularly participated in community dance

The survey asked about their expectations, attitudes and experiences of community dance. 16 respondents were male and 68 female, many had been dancing for some time, more than 90% of the people attended a dance class at least once a week.

Aspects of the community dance experience

People's favourite elements of the dance classes were the social and collaborative aspects, as well as the sense of learning and progression it gave them. Their least favourite aspects related to a lack of self-confidence or ability, or some complaint about the facilities in which the classes took place. Overall opinions of the dance leaders were very positive: praising their personalities, friendliness and supportiveness.

Keywords

UK **dance** **community** **survey** **experience**

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