

# Interest-Oriented Dance Education: Goals and Implementation Pathways

Jingjing Wang\*

Henan Normal University, Xinxiang, China

\*Corresponding author:1501012405@qq.com

**Abstract.** With the increasing emphasis on quality education in China, learning dance has become an essential way for more and more young people to improve their quality of life. However, the traditional approach of specialized teaching of dance skills dominates the teaching practice of dance teachers. The theory of multiple intelligences should guide popular dance education to stimulate everyone's interest in dance and provide targeted support and assistance based on the difficulties encountered by students in dance learning. This will minimize the number of students giving up in the middle of their studies and shift the focus of teaching from the development of professional skills to the appreciation and experience of dance. The focus of teaching should shift from "developing professional skills" to "appreciating and experiencing the charm of dance". This article reveals the characteristics and common problems of young people's dance learning, some of the misconceptions that exist in teachers' teaching, and analyzes the target orientation and ways of achieving dance education for the public. This study is of reference value in promoting the healthy development of dance education, based on surveys and interviews with dance education practitioners and students and observation of the teaching process.

**Keywords:** dance education, interest stimulation, teaching misconception.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the theme of dance education research has shifted from cultivating professional skills to developing dance education for the general public. In 1985, the "CPC Central Committee on the Reform of the Education System" stated that the fundamental purpose of education reform is to improve the nation's quality. In 2005, the Ministry of Education announced six critical tasks for education reform and development to promote quality education. After years of continuous development, the recognition of quality education in China has increased. Learning dance has become a significant way for young people and adults to improve their quality of life.

However, in dance education, the practice of specialized teaching of dance skills dominates the teaching approach of dance teachers. Academic research has overlooked the trend towards popularization of dance education and has not explored in depth the laws and teaching strategies of interest-driven dance learning. Conducting theoretical research and practical exploration of popularized dance education is an urgent need to achieve the goal of art education.

This paper consists of four parts. The first part is a literature review. The second part primarily involves a logical analysis of the massification of dance education. The third part reveals existing problems and misunderstandings through investigation and research of educational practice. Finally, the fourth part explores the target orientation and methods for achieving the massification of dance education.

## 2. Literature review

In 2022, China's Ministry of Education developed the Compulsory Education Art Curriculum Standards, which included dance as a separate component of the art course. This was a significant change from the original document released by the Ministry of Education. The new standards require that the curriculum be designed to adapt to students' development, focus on core qualities, reflect the characteristics of arts learning, and emphasize the process and fundamentals of arts learning. The

release of these standards has highlighted the importance of dance in compulsory education and has opened up prospects for developing dance education, making the market broader than before.

Existing literature has mainly focused on exploring the training of talents for mass dance education in recent years. This has involved emphasizing the exploration of training modes for dance education talents through university teacher training and summarizing teaching modes suitable for the general public. However, most of the literature has not explored strategies and methods for promoting children's dance education in extracurricular interest classes [1].

Most of the studies on the mass dance education model in general higher education draw on the dance education experiences of Western countries. These studies recognize that the purpose of dance higher education should not only be to deliver performing talents to a minimal number of professional dance troupes but also to meet the needs of a large number of dance enthusiasts while cultivating resourceful, flexible, well-trained, and high-quality talents who can contribute to the whole dance industry and even society as a whole. These realizations are also highly in line with the quality education advocated in China [2].

Regarding children's dance education, the current reality is that it is too traditional and emphasizes physical norms while neglecting the existence of children's subjectivity. This leads to the imbalance and fragmentation of rationality and sensibility, figurative and abstraction, and inner and outer in dance education, which is not conducive to the healthy development of children's body and mind. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on the current children's dance teaching from the perspective of "embodied cognition" theory and reconstruct the concept of children's dance teaching [3].

Although the literature mentions the need to change traditional teaching methods in early childhood dance education, updating concepts, innovating methods, and practicing innovations to cultivate better cognitive abilities, aesthetic emotions, and social abilities of the body [4], it does not discuss in-depth how to link dance education with popularization and stimulate students' interests.

Combined with domestic literature on the massification of dance education and children's dance education, it can be seen that most of the research focuses on the aspect of cultivating talents in higher education in universities. However, little attention has been paid to the direction of cultivation of interest classes from childhood, as well as changes in the mode of teaching. Scholars are also often unable to link extracurricular interest classes with the massification of dance education, and are even less likely to focus on how to stimulate students' interest to reduce their learning difficulties.

### **3. The Shift Toward Popularization in Dance Education**

#### **3.1. Multiple Intelligences and Dance Education**

According to American psychologist Gardner (2008), the theory of Multiple Intelligences consists of eight types of intelligence: linguistic intelligence, mathematical and logical intelligence, physical-motor intelligence, natural observation intelligence, spatial vision intelligence, self-reflection intelligence, musical intelligence, and interpersonal intelligence [5]. Dance combines physical-motor intelligence, musical intelligence, linguistic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, self-awareness intelligence, and aesthetic value orientation. As a means of art education, dance is an effective way to develop multiple intelligences and promote quality education. The theory of Multiple Intelligences embodies the educational concept of respecting individual differences and teaching students according to their abilities. By combining dance education with the cultivation of multiple intelligences through particular training, an individual's superior intelligence can lead the development of weaker intelligence. For example, those with an advantage in body movement intelligence can make up for deficiencies in language intelligence by training in this area, thus improving their interpersonal skills. Effective use of body language can make one's point of view more clearly expressed, and help the other party understand the message they want to convey. Dance education also involves body movement intelligence, and teachers can appropriately incorporate verbal, mathematical, and scientific intelligence training into the process, so that students can master language, numbers, and other knowledge while stretching their limbs and jumping.

With the popularisation of quality education, dance education is becoming increasingly popular. However, under the influence of the long-standing teaching idea of specialisation in dance skills, many dance teachers still focus on cultivating students' professional skills, neglecting the development of their multiple intelligences. Therefore, in dance education, the theory of Multiple Intelligences should be used as a guide, and diversified teaching methods should be adopted to stimulate students' interests and potential, to cultivate their creativity, as well as disciplinary thinking. By combining dance education with multiple intelligences, more people can benefit from dance education and get the opportunity for self-development and enhancement.

### **3.2. Interest-Oriented Dance Education and Its Pedagogical Support**

In the popularization of dance education, cultivating interest is crucial. Interest in dance education is not just a temporary aspect of the process, but rather an important part of the entire dance education experience, for both the teacher and the student. Pedagogical support encourages each student to explore their own interests and potential in dance, thus stimulating initiative and motivation. Additionally, dance educators need to provide targeted support to students according to the difficulties and barriers they encounter in their learning process.

Teachers should abandon the teaching concept of "cultivating professional skills" and pay more attention to students' "appreciation and experience of dance" so that students can improve their appreciation and experience. Therefore, teachers need to focus on letting students really experience, feel, and understand the charm and meaning of dance, rather than just pursuing the skills of showing off and performing.

For those students who encounter difficulties and obstacles in learning dance, teachers should provide sufficient help and support to encourage them to overcome difficulties and make progress. This will not only help prevent students from giving up learning due to a loss of interest in learning difficulties, but also enhance their self-confidence and sense of achievement in learning dance.

Interest-driven and pedagogical support are key components in transforming dance education for the masses, which will help increase the popularity of dance education, cultivate more talents with dance and cultural literacy, and also promote the healthy development of dance education.

## **4. Problems and Misconceptions in the Field of Dance Education Practice**

In China, dance education has become increasingly popular among young people, particularly parents who seek additional educational opportunities for their children. As the national policy for art education continues to be reformed, parents are further motivated to pay attention to their children's learning of art, which in turn promotes the importance of dance education among the general public.

As a former dance education practitioner, the researcher has extensive experience with organizations engaged in children's dance, folk dance, classical dance, and other forms of dance education. In order to explore the problems and misconceptions in children's dance education, the researcher conducted a one-week teaching observation covering two classes each of new students, old students, and examination classes, with an average of 15 students in each class. Additionally, 1-2 students and instructors were interviewed in each class, totaling eight people.

To reduce the influence of the researcher's preconceptions on the observations and interviews, the researcher set aside their own previous views and opinions and recorded how the teacher stimulated the students' interest during the teaching process, as well as the changes in the students' emotions.

During the interviews, the researcher focused on the students' learning experience and asked about their level of interest in dance, the impact of the teachers' teaching requirements and process on them, whether they could keep up with the pace of the class, whether they felt tired of learning dance, whether they liked the teachers' teaching methods, and so on. The attrition rate of teaching was also a special focus.

#### **4.1. Mismatch between Pedagogical Objectives and Teaching Methods and Students**

The study found that current out-of-school dance education generally aims at professional development, but the pedagogical objectives and teaching methods of dance teaching in the surveyed organizations were not adapted to the characteristics of students of different age groups. For instance, the researcher found that when observing the three academic classes, teachers were more likely to emphasize correcting irregularities in the taught learning movements. The teacher repeatedly corrected the irregular parts even for students who had been learning for more than one year as if they were new students. Interviews with two students in the veteran class revealed that the teacher's constant teaching in a rigid and non-encouraging manner led to a psychological tendency to lose interest in dance.

During the interview, the teacher said, "I learned step by step in the same way, but nowadays most children have their own personalities and ideas. I have to consider the learning progress of the whole class, so I can't be concerned about many kinds of educational methods. If I do that, I may not be able to carry on with the class smoothly. As a teacher, what I look forward to is that the students can learn some dance moves through this dance class, even if it is just one." Teachers also expressed feeling helpless, while students receptive to learning found it tedious.

According to Liu Miao's (2021) advice on dance teaching, teachers should develop more distinctive teaching goals and methods for students according to the students' time of learning dance as well as a full understanding of each student's characteristics, interests, professional abilities, personality, and other factors that are more in line with students' developmental laws[6]. Teachers should affirm and encourage students' progress in a timely manner, rather than criticize and deny them, boosting their self-esteem. More communication with students after class and constantly improving educational work by in-depth understanding of the needs of students' curriculum will help students learn better content and progress.

#### **4.2. Students Are Not at the Center of Teaching and Learning**

The teaching attrition rate in this teaching institution was high, and the researcher found that teachers in this dance education institution did not make the students the center of the teaching session in the classroom. When teaching dance movements, the teachers only tried to indoctrinate the students by prescribing them to follow the exercises done by the teacher. When some students could not do it, the teachers only tried to rigidly put the actions in place for the students instead of helping the students to think independently and find a proper way to do the movements well. Through the interviews with the teachers of the three classes, it was revealed that they did not have much time and patience to pay attention to each student in the classroom and could only solve the problems in a "fast, precise and hard" way. This leads to the fact that when students dance, they just do the dance movements coldly as if they were bodies without flesh and blood.

Each person's body structure is different, so the dance movements' angle, height, and position are different for each person. For example, in a large group dance, some dance sequences require all the dancers to be neat and synchronized, which requires a long time of training for professional dancers. However, students studying in dance institutions are educated in mass basic dance, and everyone is an individual who must be allowed to differ and be different. Teachers need to accept this fact and develop more artistic and emotional expression in their students. According to Li Wen's (2017) suggested countermeasures for dance education, teachers should shift from indoctrination so that students are no longer passively receiving knowledge from their teachers[7]. Students should be allowed to think through independent thinking so that they not only have a deeper understanding of what they have learned in class but also learn the method of learning, which also helps students to bring their personal understanding of dance movements and emotions into the dance.

#### **4.3. Teachers Generally Lack Awareness of Interest-Driven Instruction**

Interviews revealed that teachers had not recognized interest-driven and pedagogical support as key to dance education for children. During the week-long observation, the researcher found that

teachers generally lacked awareness of interest-driven instruction in their classes to the extent that they failed to motivate the majority of students to attend class. For example, in the freshmen class, many students would quit the course in the second half of the class because they wanted to go to the toilet. In the veteran class, there would be various kinds of inattention, and in the examination class, most students would be lazy and unable to do the combination of the examination dance. Through interviews with students in each class, it was learned that students in the freshmen class and the veteran class only wanted to get out of the class quickly in the second half of the class. Students in the examination class found it very tiring to dance the examination combinations over and over again and did not want to do the movements perfectly.

During the interview, teachers mentioned, "The professional dance education received since childhood is to practice the movements repeatedly under high intensity, and the dance techniques and basic skills are also the must-practice links every day. But in the face of the current state of dance education, which is very difficult to carry out, our teachers are now also very painful in the classroom. They need to be like kindergarten teachers every day to coax the students to class."

According to Peng Lingling's (2018) suggestion on interest cultivation in children's dance teaching, teachers should recognize that interest is the most critical factor to support students' learning to persevere to the end, and they can improve students' freshness by selecting dance accompaniment music, classroom dance games, and exchanging classroom performance points for gifts, etc[8]. Students tend to show greater interest in new things they have not come into contact with, and so teachers should make full use of their curiosity to drive students' interest, which helps them to focus more on their own interest in learning, improve learning efficiency, and achieve twice the result with half the effort.

## **5. Positioning of Popular Dance Education**

### **5.1. The Concept of Popular Dance Education**

The philosophy of popular dance education is guided by the theory of multiple intelligences, where interest and teaching support go hand in hand to stimulate everyone's interest in dance. Traditional dance education often focuses on developing professional skills, neglecting the interests and needs of learners. Popular dance education should be committed to allowing more people to enjoy the charm of dance and cultivating learners' ability to appreciate and experience dance.

When implementing popular dance education, teachers should provide targeted support and assistance according to the interests and needs of learners. At the same time, teachers need to avoid common teaching misconceptions, pay attention to learners' interests and conditions, and provide learners with a positive learning environment and support. In this way, the goal of popularizing dance education can be achieved, and the healthy development of dance education can be promoted.

### **5.2. Popularization of Dance Education Within Schools**

Popularization of dance education within schools refers to a form of dance education that is incorporated into the school's curriculum system and is widely promoted so that every student can have access to and participate in dance learning. In-school mass dance education aims to enhance students' interests and qualities and develop their comprehensive abilities through dance education.

At the introductory stage of realizing in-school mass dance education, it is necessary to make full use of children's innate curiosity about everything, especially activities related to physical movement, to construct a low threshold, distinguish between professional and public, give students more opportunities to participate in and appreciate the charm of dance. Under the continuous advancement of China's education reform, primary and secondary schools have always been an essential stage of training in national quality education, but there is a lack of professional dance teachers in the teaching force, and in primary and secondary schools, dance is taught almost entirely by music teachers, in line with the national education development perspective. In university dance teaching, teachers need to combine the needs of students to research and develop teaching materials, fully understand various

external influences, effectively integrate course teaching content, introduce elements based on the theory of multiple intelligences, and innovate in the original teaching materials. Combined with students' professional learning, emotional expression, and emotional presentation needs, the dance theory and related dance teaching cases in the textbooks are updated for cultivation[9].

### **5.3. Popularization of Dance Education Outside of Schools**

Popularization of dance education outside of schools mainly refers to after-school dance interest classes, so that people feel that dance is not only for those who intend to be professional dancers or those who must engage in a dance career in the future, but also for those who are interested in dance and willing to learn it, which lowers the threshold and expands the scope of the school-suitable population.

Due to the lack of teachers in school dance education, many students are in the introductory stage for a long time. Dance education institutions need to design the curriculum accordingly, and while fully guaranteeing the students' interest and hobby in dance, it is especially important to gradually strengthen the teaching support so that they can enter the special education smoothly. The content to be learned at this stage of special education will become slightly more specialized, such as dance combinations, body rhythm combinations, etc., to guide students into primary dance learning. This is sufficient to meet the needs for dance in daily life, cultivate artistic sentiments, and conform to the national quality education.

## **6. Ways and Suggestions for Promoting Dance Education**

To promote the popularisation of dance education, there are several important steps to take. Firstly, dance education should be based on the idea of educating people with beauty. Through dance, students can perceive, discover, experience, and appreciate the beauty of art, nature, life, and society. This approach can enhance the ability of aesthetic perception, enrich the imagination, and develop innovative thinking.

Secondly, the training direction of dance education should break the professional orientation of dancers. It should be established that learning dance can cultivate good personality traits and lay the foundation for future life.

Thirdly, the form of dance education activities should be diversified. Through a variety of activities, dance education can be popularized to arouse interest. This can encourage more people to learn dance and feel the joy of dancing.

### **6.1. Promoting Dance Education and Expanding Its Audience**

In 2020, the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving the Work of Aesthetic Education in Schools in the New Era was released, which gave a brand new definition of aesthetic education as an essential initiative for aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual education. This can improve students' aesthetic literacy and warm their hearts to stimulate creativity and innovation, becoming a new goal for reform and development of the education sector.

Dance education should be infiltrated into general education, both inside and outside the school. All school students should receive appropriate dance education. Dance education in primary and secondary schools should inspire students to create their choreography and not be limited to textbook knowledge. University dance education elite training, in addition to professional education to cultivate artistic elites, mass dance education should be popularized in general colleges and universities to become part of national education. Public elective courses should be added to the dance class so that students of other majors can participate. Dance education should also be popularized by lowering the entry threshold for off-campus interest classes.

## 6.2. Breaking the Vocational Orientation of Dance Education

The birth of a profession depends on the later development of human society to make a living for oneself. Dance is not a means of earning a living at the beginning but only a fun activity and hobby for people after dinner. Therefore, breaking the perception that dance education is about training dancers is important.

At the beginning of learning dance, people do not think that they will become dancers. The important thing is that the process of learning dance is full of all kinds of challenges and difficulties. To overcome these difficulties and achieve success, we need to have a strong will and perseverance, and it is necessary to spend time and effort. Therefore, students who grow up in such an environment have developed a spiritual strength, which is the enterprising spirit of not being afraid of difficulties and bravely moving forward. They also have the tenacious spirit of challenging setbacks and overcoming problems, which develops personality traits of perseverance, patience, and independence. More publicity should be given to popularize the popularity of dance education in general, and the goal of dance education should be established on cultivating innovative talents with a complete knowledge structure and comprehensive personality character. Dismantling the vocational orientation of dance education makes the various cultivation and education functions more widely embodied and applied.

## 6.3. Diversified Promotion of Interest-oriented Dance Activities

Dance activities are a good way to generate interest, motivate learning, and promote dance. In primary and secondary schools, there are many dance-related activities, such as recess exercises, dance performances at festivals, and random dance choreography. In universities, various popular dance knowledge lectures, dance club activities, campus music festivals, and dance exceptional performances can be organized. Extracurricular dance institutions can also offer adult dance courses, usually in the form of organizations or several institutions to cooperate in holding special dance activities, organizing adult dance teams, square dance, and so on. These activities create a perfect impetus for dance education. They promote and develop popular dance education on both school campuses and within the larger community, so that more children, teenagers, and adults can understand dance and desire to learn dance. This helps to meet the growing cultural needs of people with the development of the economy and the pursuit of the spirit.

## References

- [1] Liu Wenfang. (2009). Exploration of talent cultivation mode of popular dance education. *Art Education*, (5), 46-47.
- [2] Xie Qiong. (2016). Exploration of new mode of popular dance education in general colleges and universities. *Journal of Hebei Energy Vocational and Technical College*, 16(4), 89-90.
- [3] Li Qiong & Xiong Ying. (2021). Embodied cognition: Rethinking the "detached" tendency of children's dance education. *Journal of Beijing Dance Academy* (04), 126-132.
- [4] Du Lingyan. (2016). Exploration and Application of Contemporary Methods of Early Childhood Dance Education (Master's thesis, China Academy of Arts Research).
- [5] Howard. Gardner. Translated by Shen Zhilong. (2008). *The structure of intelligence*. Beijing: Renmin University of China Press.
- [6] Liu Miao. (2021). Analysis of the importance of children's dance education and teaching strategies. *Popular Literature and Art* (12), 139-140.
- [7] Li Wen. (2017). Analysis of problems and countermeasures in children's dance education. *Art Review*(06), 148-150.
- [8] Peng Lingling. (2018). A preliminary study on the cultivation of students' interest in children's dance teaching. *Popular literature and art* (22), 232.
- [9] Han Yang. (2023). The application of multiple intelligences theory in the teaching reform of higher vocational dance education. *Theatre House*(10), 147-149.

- [10] Feng Ruiqi. (2022). Research on the reform tendency of primary and secondary school dance education under the perspective of aesthetic education. *Art Education* (07), 241-244.
- [11] Li Yanhua. (2018). Research on the impact of dance education on personality development of primary and secondary school students (Master's thesis, Shenyang Normal University).
- [12] Yang Wen. (2017). Implications of multiple intelligence theory for dance education. *Art Technology*, 30(02):399.