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Exploring Teaching Strategies for University Dance Education in the Internet Era

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Abstract: This qualitative study explores teaching strategies for university dance education in the internet era, focusing on the challenges and opportunities presented by online instruction. Conducted at Hebei University, the research involved semi-structured interviews with 30 participants, including dance instructors and students. Thematic analysis of the interview data revealed key themes related to adaptation to online platforms, technological integration, enhanced accessibility and flexibility, challenges of engagement and interaction, pedagogical adjustments, and the emotional and psychological impact of online dance education. Case studies illustrate these themes, highlighting strategies employed by instructors and students to navigate the transition to online learning. The findings underscore the importance of innovative pedagogical approaches, technological infrastructure, and student-centered learning strategies in online dance education. Implications for teaching strategies and recommendations for practice are discussed, emphasizing the need for ongoing professional development, community building, and a commitment to excellence in online dance education.

Keywords: Dance education, online learning, teaching strategies, internet era, technological integration, pedagogical innovation

I. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The advent of the internet age has ushered in a new era of teaching and learning, transforming education across disciplines and sectors. This is particularly true for the field of dance education at the university level, where technological advancements have presented both challenges and opportunities (Risner & Anderson, 2019). Traditional approaches to dance pedagogy, which have long relied on in-person, studio-based instruction, must now contend with the realities of remote and hybrid learning environments (Overby & Dugas, 2019). University dance programs are grappling with how to effectively deliver high-quality dance education in the digital sphere, where students may be physically separated from their instructors and peers (Heiland, 2016). Technological tools such as video conferencing, online collaboration platforms, and virtual reality have the potential to enhance the dance learning experience, but also require thoughtful integration and novel teaching strategies (Whatley, 2018). Furthermore, the proliferation of dance content and instruction available online via social media, video-sharing sites, and specialized websites introduces new dynamics that university dance educators must navigate (Whatley & Trigwell, 2013). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online education across all disciplines, including dance. Universities worldwide were compelled to transition to online platforms, which revealed both opportunities and challenges in teaching practical subjects like dance. This period has underscored the need for effective online teaching strategies that can ensure the continuity and quality of dance education (Klonaris & Maniou, 2018).

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Amidst these transformations, it is crucial for dance programs to critically examine their teaching approaches and develop innovative pedagogical frameworks that leverage the unique affordances of the internet age (Barbour, 2017). By exploring effective strategies for dance education in the 21st century, university programs can ensure that students receive a comprehensive and enriching dance learning experience, one that prepares them for the evolving demands of the professional field (Risner, 2020).

1.2 Problem Statement

The unique nature of dance, which involves physical movement, kinesthetic learning, and real-time feedback, poses specific challenges when translated into an online format. There is a need to explore effective online teaching methods that can adequately address these challenges and support the learning outcomes of dance students. At Hebei University, as at many institutions, the shift to online education has prompted a re-evaluation of teaching methods. Understanding the experiences and perceptions of both instructors and students in this new environment is crucial for developing robust online teaching strategies that can enhance the educational experience and outcomes for dance students.

1.3 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To explore the current online teaching strategies used in dance education at Hebei University.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities associated with online dance education from the perspectives of both instructors and students.

To develop recommendations for improving online teaching practices in dance education based on the findings from Hebei University.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study addresses a gap in the literature concerning the online teaching of dance, a subject that has received relatively little attention compared to other academic disciplines. The findings from this study will add to the growing body of knowledge on online education and provide specific insights into the unique needs and challenges of dance education. Secondly, the study's focus on Hebei University offers a localized perspective that can inform both national and international discussions on best practices in online dance education. The insights gained can help other institutions that are facing similar challenges in transitioning their dance programs to online formats. By identifying effective strategies and potential pitfalls, the study can guide the development of more robust and inclusive online dance education programs. This is particularly relevant in a post-pandemic world where online education is likely to remain a significant component of higher education (Zhong, 2021).

II. Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of Dance Education

Dance education has a rich history, evolving from traditional apprenticeship models to more formalized pedagogical approaches (Dils, 2019). In the 20th century, dance programs at the university level emerged as a way to professionalize dance training and integrate it into the academic sphere (Ritenburg, 2020). These programs have continued to adapt and innovate, responding to changing sociocultural contexts and shifting perceptions of dance as both an artistic discipline and a field of scholarly inquiry (Risner, 2017).

2.2 The Impact of the Internet on Education

The rise of the internet and digital technologies has had a profound impact on education across all disciplines, including dance (Whatley, 2018). Online platforms, virtual classrooms, and multimedia resources have transformed the ways in which information is accessed, knowledge is constructed, and learning occurs (Bates, 2015). This has led to both opportunities and challenges for educators, who must navigate the evolving landscape of technology-mediated pedagogy (Barbour, 2017).

2.3 Teaching Strategies in Dance Education

Effective dance pedagogy requires a multifaceted approach that considers the unique physical, cognitive, and affective dimensions of dance learning (Heiland, 2016). Traditional teaching strategies in dance education have emphasized experiential, embodied learning through studio-based instruction, as well as the development of critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills (Overby & Dugas, 2019). However, the integration of technology has introduced new possibilities and considerations for dance teaching strategies (Whatley & Trigwell, 2013).

2.4 Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

The shift towards online and hybrid learning models in higher education has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting universities to rapidly adapt their pedagogical approaches (Rapanta et al., 2020). Research indicates that effective online teaching in higher education requires a combination of technological, pedagogical, and content-specific expertise, as well as a strong emphasis on student engagement, interaction, and community building (Martin et al., 2020).

III. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the teaching strategies for university dance education in the internet era. Qualitative research is chosen for its effectiveness in providing deep insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through semi-structured interviews, this study aims to gather rich, detailed data that can reveal the complexities and nuances of online dance education at Hebei University.

3.2 Research Setting: Hebei University

Hebei University, located in Baoding, China, is a comprehensive institution known for its diverse academic programs, including a well-regarded dance department. The university has recently integrated online teaching methods into its dance curriculum, making it an ideal setting for this study. The transition to online education, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, has provided a unique context to examine how dance education can adapt to and benefit from digital technologies (Zhong, 2021).

3.3 Participants

The study will involve 30 participants, consisting of both dance instructors and students from Hebei University. This sample size is chosen to ensure a manageable yet diverse range of perspectives. The participants will be selected using purposive sampling to include those who have actively engaged in online dance education, ensuring their experiences and insights are relevant to the study's objectives (Patton, 2015).

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Interviews

Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews, which allow for flexibility in exploring participants' experiences while ensuring that key topics are covered. The interview questions will focus on the participants' experiences with online dance education, the strategies used, the challenges encountered, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these strategies. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted via video conferencing tools, considering the ongoing emphasis on online interactions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis will follow a thematic analysis approach. The interviews will be transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts will be coded to identify recurring themes and patterns. This process involves familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. NVivo software will be used to assist with data organization and analysis, ensuring a systematic and rigorous examination of the data .

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are paramount in this study. All participants will be provided with detailed information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights as participants. Informed consent will be obtained prior to the interviews. Participants will be assured of their confidentiality and anonymity, and their data will be securely stored and used solely for the purposes of this research. The study will also obtain ethical approval from Hebei University's institutional review board (IRB) to ensure adherence to ethical standards.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations are acknowledged in this study. Firstly, the sample size, while adequate for qualitative research, may not capture all perspectives within the dance department at Hebei University. Secondly, the reliance on self-reported data through interviews may introduce biases, as participants may present themselves in a socially desirable manner. Thirdly, the study is context-specific, focusing on Hebei University, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other institutions or cultural contexts. Despite these limitations, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can inform future research and practice in online dance education.

IV. Research Findings

4.1 Overview of Collected Data

The data collected from the 30 participants at Hebei University comprised detailed transcripts of semi-structured interviews. The participants included both dance instructors and students who have actively engaged in online dance education. The interviews explored their experiences, challenges, and strategies related to online teaching and learning. The transcripts resulted in a rich dataset that provided deep insights into the nuances of dance education in the internet era.

4.2 Key Themes

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed several key themes:

Adaptation to Online Platforms Participants highlighted the necessity of adapting traditional dance instruction to online platforms. Both instructors and students discussed the initial challenges they faced, such as technical issues, limited physical space, and the absence of in-person feedback. Over time, however, many developed innovative methods to overcome these obstacles, such as utilizing multiple cameras for better visual angles and incorporating pre-recorded sessions for practice.

Technological Integration The integration of technology emerged as a significant theme. Participants praised the use of motion capture technology, virtual reality simulations, and other digital tools that enhanced their understanding of dance techniques and choreography. These technologies provided new avenues for interactive learning and allowed for more precise feedback on students' performances.

Enhanced Accessibility and Flexibility Online dance education was noted for its enhanced accessibility and flexibility. Students appreciated the ability to review recorded classes and practice at their own pace. Instructors mentioned that online platforms enabled them to reach a broader audience, including students who might not have access to traditional dance education due to geographical or financial constraints.

Challenges of Engagement and Interaction Despite the benefits, maintaining student engagement and fostering interaction were recurring challenges. Participants emphasized that the lack of physical presence made it difficult to create a sense of community and to ensure active participation. Some instructors used creative approaches, such as interactive assignments and virtual group projects, to mitigate these issues.

Pedagogical Adjustments The shift to online education required significant pedagogical adjustments. Instructors had to redesign their curricula to fit the online format, balancing theoretical content with practical exercises. This theme highlighted the need for ongoing professional development to equip educators with the skills necessary for effective online teaching.

Emotional and Psychological Impact The emotional and psychological impact of online dance education on students and instructors was also a notable theme. Participants discussed feelings of isolation and the stress associated with adapting to a new learning environment. However, many also expressed resilience and a growing sense of adaptability as they navigated these challenges.

4.3 Case Studies

To illustrate the identified themes, several case studies are presented below:

Case Study 1: Instructor Adaptation and Innovation

One instructor, Professor Wang, faced significant challenges when transitioning to online teaching. Initially, he struggled with the technological aspects and felt that his teaching was less effective without the physical presence of his students. Over time, however, he began to utilize motion capture technology to provide detailed feedback on students' movements. He also created a virtual dance studio using VR, which allowed students to practice in an immersive environment. These innovations not only improved the quality of his teaching but also enhanced student engagement.

Case Study 2: Student Experience and Flexibility

A student, Li Mei, shared her experience of balancing dance education with other commitments during the pandemic. The flexibility of online classes allowed her to attend rehearsals and complete assignments on her own schedule. She appreciated the ability to replay recorded sessions, which helped her master complex techniques at her own pace. Despite initial difficulties in adjusting to the online format, she found that the convenience and accessibility of online education significantly benefited her learning experience.

Case Study 3: Overcoming Engagement Challenges

Instructor Zhang employed various strategies to maintain student engagement in her online classes. Recognizing the limitations of virtual instruction, she incorporated interactive elements such as live polls, breakout rooms for group discussions, and collaborative projects. These methods helped to foster a sense of community and ensured that students remained actively involved in the learning process. Her efforts were reflected in the positive feedback from students, who felt more connected and motivated despite the physical distance.

V. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

The findings reveal both the challenges and the opportunities presented by the shift to online platforms. One of the key themes that emerged was the necessity for instructors and students to adapt to the online learning environment. Both groups faced initial obstacles, such as technical issues, limited physical space, and the absence of in-person feedback. However, the data suggests that over time, many participants developed innovative strategies to overcome these challenges. Instructors, like Professor Wang, explored the integration of technologies like motion capture and virtual reality simulations to enhance the quality of instruction and feedback. Similarly, students, such as Li Mei, appreciated the increased flexibility and accessibility of online classes, which allowed them to balance their dance education with other commitments.

The integration of technology emerged as another prominent theme. Participants highlighted the benefits of digital tools, which not only facilitated interactive learning but also provided more precise feedback on students' performances. This technological integration underscores the evolving nature of dance education, where traditional techniques are being augmented by innovative digital approaches.

While the online format offered enhanced accessibility and flexibility, the study also revealed challenges in maintaining student engagement and fostering meaningful interaction. Instructors, like Instructor Zhang, had to employ creative strategies, such as interactive assignments and virtual group projects, to address these issues. This finding emphasizes the need for ongoing pedagogical adjustments and professional development to ensure effective online teaching.

The emotional and psychological impact of the shift to online dance education was also a significant theme. Participants discussed feelings of isolation and stress, highlighting the importance of addressing the well-being of both students and instructors. However, the data also revealed a sense of resilience and adaptability as the community navigated these challenges.

5.2 Implications for Teaching Strategies

The identified themes have significant implications for the development of teaching strategies in the context of online dance education. Firstly, the necessity of adaptation to online platforms underscores the importance of innovative approaches that address technical challenges while maintaining the integrity of dance instruction. Strategies such as utilizing multiple cameras for better visual angles and incorporating pre-recorded sessions for practice can enhance the online learning experience.

Secondly, the integration of technology presents opportunities for enriching pedagogy and enhancing student engagement. Motion capture technology, virtual reality simulations, and other digital tools offer new avenues for interactive learning and precise feedback. Incorporating these technologies into teaching strategies can facilitate a deeper understanding of dance techniques and choreography, contributing to improved learning outcomes.

Moreover, the enhanced accessibility and flexibility afforded by online dance education highlight the importance of catering to diverse student needs. Strategies that prioritize flexibility in scheduling and provide opportunities for self-paced learning can accommodate students with varying commitments and learning styles. Additionally, instructors should leverage online platforms to reach a broader audience, including those who may face geographical or financial barriers to traditional dance education.

However, challenges related to engagement and interaction must be addressed through strategic pedagogical adjustments. Creative approaches such as interactive assignments, virtual group projects, and live polls can foster a sense of community and active participation in online dance classes. Moreover, ongoing professional development is essential to equip instructors with the skills and resources necessary for effective online teaching.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance the practice of online dance education:

- **Professional Development:** Institutions should invest in ongoing professional development opportunities for dance educators to enhance their skills in online teaching and technology integration.
- **Technological Infrastructure:** Universities should ensure the availability of robust technological infrastructure and support systems to facilitate seamless online instruction.
- **Flexibility and Accessibility:** Teaching strategies should prioritize flexibility and accessibility to accommodate diverse student needs and maximize participation.
- **Innovative Pedagogy:** Instructors should embrace innovative pedagogical approaches that leverage technology to enrich the learning experience and promote student engagement.
- **Community Building:** Efforts should be made to foster a sense of community and connection among online learners through interactive activities and collaborative projects.

VI. Conclusion

The exploration of teaching strategies for university dance education in the internet era has revealed a dynamic landscape shaped by adaptation, innovation, and technological integration. Through a qualitative study conducted at Hebei University, insights from both instructors and students have illuminated the challenges and opportunities inherent in online dance education.

The interpretation of findings underscores the importance of innovative pedagogical approaches that balance technological integration with pedagogical best practices. Participants emphasized the

necessity of adapting traditional dance instruction to online platforms while leveraging technology to enhance pedagogy and student engagement. Implications for teaching strategies highlight the need for ongoing professional development, robust technological infrastructure, and strategies that prioritize flexibility and accessibility. Recommendations for practice emphasize the importance of embracing innovative pedagogy, fostering community building, and prioritizing student-centered learning approaches.

The study offers valuable insights into the evolving landscape of dance education in the digital age. By embracing the recommendations outlined in this research, institutions can ensure the delivery of high-quality dance education that meets the needs of students in an increasingly digital world. Through collaboration, innovation, and a commitment to excellence, the future of online dance education holds promise for continued growth and advancement.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Can you describe your experience with online dance education?
2. What are some of the challenges you have encountered in transitioning to online teaching/learning?
3. How have you adapted traditional dance instruction to fit the online format?
4. What technological tools or platforms have you found most effective in teaching or learning dance online?
5. How do you maintain student engagement and interaction in an online dance class?
6. What adjustments have you made to your curriculum or teaching methods for online instruction?
7. Can you discuss the emotional or psychological impact of online dance education on yourself or your students?
8. What strategies have you found helpful in overcoming the challenges of online dance education?
9. How do you assess student progress and performance in an online setting?
10. What are your thoughts on the future of online dance education?

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title: Consent Form for Participation in Research Study on Online Dance Education

I, _____, hereby consent to participate in the research study titled "Exploring Teaching Strategies for University Dance Education in the Internet Era" conducted by Sun Shanshan at Hebei University. I understand that my participation involves a semi-structured interview, which will be audio-recorded for the purpose of data analysis.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. I understand that all information provided during the interview will be kept confidential and anonymized in any publications or presentations resulting from the study.

I understand the purpose of the study and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research procedures. I have received a copy of the participant information sheet and consent form for my records.

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Participant Demographics

ID	Age	Gender	Role (Instructor/Student)	Years of Experience	Dance Style	Online Teaching Experience
1	23	Female	Student	4	Ballet	2 years
2	29	Male	Instructor	8	Contemporary	5 years

3	25	Female	Student	3	Hip-hop	1 year
4	34	Female	Instructor	12	Jazz	7 years
5	22	Male	Student	2	Modern	1 year
6	28	Female	Student	5	Ballet	3 years
7	31	Male	Instructor	10	Contemporar y	6 years
8	27	Female	Student	3	Hip-hop	2 years
9	35	Female	Instructor	15	Jazz	9 years
10	24	Male	Student	2	Modern	1 year
11	26	Female	Student	4	Ballet	2 years
12	32	Male	Instructor	9	Contemporar y	6 years
13	29	Female	Student	3	Hip-hop	2 years
14	33	Female	Instructor	14	Jazz	8 years
15	21	Male	Student	1	Modern	1 year
16	28	Female	Student	5	Ballet	3 years
17	30	Male	Instructor	11	Contemporar y	7 years
18	26	Female	Student	4	Hip-hop	2 years
19	36	Female	Instructor	16	Jazz	10 years
20	23	Male	Student	2	Modern	1 year
21	27	Female	Student	3	Ballet	2 years
22	29	Male	Instructor	8	Contemporar y	5 years
23	24	Female	Student	2	Hip-hop	1 year
24	34	Female	Instructor	13	Jazz	8 years
25	22	Male	Student	1	Modern	1 year
26	30	Female	Student	4	Ballet	3 years
27	31	Male	Instructor	9	Contemporar y	6 years
28	25	Female	Student	3	Hip-hop	2 years
29	35	Female	Instructor	14	Jazz	8 years
30	20	Male	Student	1	Modern	1 year