



PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLE

TROUBLING DANCE EDUCATION FROM A NORDIC POLICY PERSPECTIVE: A FIELD WITH AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AND CROSS-SECTORAL POTENTIAL

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to create an overview of existing structures for dance education in the public educational systems and of cross-sectoral collaborations of a number of Nordic countries including Norway, Finland and Denmark. A case study methodology of the field of dance education of each of the countries is used for an analysis that seeks to better understand the different kinds of structures we find in these countries. We trace ways of organising, dividing, and defining the field based on different types of documents such as policy documents, white papers, webpages, reports, research articles, and curricula. The analyses of case descriptions result

in insights into which opportunities or lack of opportunities structures give for children and young people's long-term engagement with dance as an arts educational practice, how well the systems for educating teachers seem to support dance in education, and, looking to dance education in New Zealand, there is a discussion about what might be ways forward to strengthen the field in the Nordic countries.

Keywords: Dance education, policy, Nordic region, educational structures, cross-sectoral collaboration.

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Human beings like to move to music: most young children do this without thinking about it. They also sing and draw and play role games (Griffiths, 2012). Music and Visual arts / and crafts¹ are subjects in their own rights in the formal educational system in Denmark, Norway and Finland. These subjects contribute to helping children develop their skills and knowledge about these art forms. In countries, where dance is not a school subject on its own, the interest many children have in dance is not given the same opportunity to deepen knowledge and skills in the field. However, dance does, in different ways, exist in the margins of school in each of the countries of Denmark, Norway and Finland. The aim of this article is to create an overview of existing structures for dance education in the public educational systems and cross-sectoral collaborations in these Nordic countries, to explore what similarities and differences there are, and what these might mean for the provision of dance education. Finally, we look to New Zealand as a country that has included dance as an independent subject in school, thinking about what dance education might become in the future also in the Nordic region.

Different types of documents such as policy documents, white papers, webpages, reports, research articles, and curricula are analysed using a case study methodology (Flyvbjerg, 1988) to explore the place of dance in education of Norway, Finland, and Denmark considered as three cases. The case descriptions are based on two themes: 1) The frameworks in which dance is taught in formal educational settings, and 2) the systems for educating those who teach dance in schools at the different educational levels. The case descriptions are analysed using an inductive approach to document analysis (Lynggaard, 2020) to help identify sub-themes that are central in the descriptions.

The article focuses on dance as an art form which involves the engagement of expressive, sensuous, physical, creative, social and cultural skills, and knowledge (Svendler Nielsen, 2009). We thus define dance education as based in the art form dance, and we understand dance education as a place where creative and artistic processes in dance take place. A creative approach to teaching dance has been the base for initiatives made by dance educators to strengthen the field of dance with and for children and young people in both formal and non-formal education in the Nordic countries since the 1980s (Svendler Nielsen & Vedel, 2021; Korpinen & Anttila, 2022; Ørbæk & Engelsrud, 2019).

Case: Denmark

In Denmark dance has been part of the curricula for Physical Education (PE) and Music for primary school ages (6-15 year olds)² since 1975. To begin with it was called 'expressive activities', introduced into the subject *Idræt* [PE], which previously was called *Gymnastik* [Gymnastics]. At the same time 'rhythmics' became part of the new subject *Musik* [Music] which previously was called *Sang* [Singing]. Since 1975 'dance' has become a more explicit part of changing curricula and since the reform in 2005 the area has had its own specified learning goals. The focus of dance in the curriculum in Denmark has been the child as creator. This approach is rooted in both movement and music pedagogy as introduced by Astrid Gøssel in the first half of the 20th century (Barker Jørgensen, 1981), and especially from the 1970s when PE teachers Birgit Trier Frederiksen and Ingrid Mortensen introduced Laban's modern educational dance to

colleagues in courses at national level (Svendler Nielsen & Vedel, 2021). Dance as an art form at primary school level also exists as sporadic residency projects for artists funded by the National Arts Foundation and as projects supported by other types of state and municipal funding. Institutions in the field of contemporary dance have contributed to strengthening dance in formal education in cross-sectoral collaborations through possibilities that various curricula have opened for, the most recent being 'Open School' as a focus area, for which schools all over the country must collaborate with other sectors in society, including the cultural sector.

In upper secondary school, dance is both part of PE and exists as an elective subject called Dance. Dance is thus part of formal exams in PE (from 2005), which means that all students in upper secondary schools are taught this area. Additionally, in some schools they have the possibility to choose the elective dance subject. Dance plays an important part within the Bachelor's programs of PE offered at four universities in the country which qualify future teachers to teach PE at upper secondary level. Dance as an elective subject is presently offered at around 25 upper secondary schools in the country. Teachers are qualified to teach dance as an elective subject if they have an elective course package of 90 ECTS, which was offered at only one university in the country (the University of Copenhagen) from 1989 till 2017. At present there are no new candidates being educated to teach the dance subject in upper secondary schools, but in a collaboration between the Faculties of Humanities and Science of the University of Copenhagen (specifically the programs of Musicology, Theatre and Physical Education), there is a plan to develop a curriculum which will provide the qualifications needed to teach dance as defined by the Ministry of Education's subject specific minimum qualifications. These include basic knowledge, theories, methods and analytical approaches within dance studies as an artistic and ethnographic field (Ministry of Higher Education and Science, 2018).

In Denmark the landscape of the educational structure looks as follows: The Ministry of Education designs national curricula for primary school (years 0-9 as compulsory and year 10 as optional), and upper secondary school education (three years). The area of teacher training for primary level belongs to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and is offered by university colleges which only offer programs at Bachelor's level. Each university college designs its own programmes, but there are requirements for their contents from the Ministry. This is different for university programmes (which offer programmes both at Bachelor's and Master's levels) as each university defines the contents of the programmes they offer, however, also with reference to a specified framework of general competences for the different types of degrees. To become contracted as a teacher at upper secondary level, a major and a minor degree from a university is required (120 or 150 ECTS in total depending on which faculties the degrees are from). In programmes for primary level teachers it has been possible to specialise in music, visual arts, and drama (as part of the subject Danish), but because the same possibility did not exist for those interested in dance, there was an urge to develop an alternative pathway. The Danish National School for Performing Arts has offered a degree in dance education since 2010. This has given dancers with an interest in education qualifications to teach, and based on this qualification they can be hired by dance institutions that run projects in schools. First, this degree was at post-graduate

level, but from 2018 it was accredited as a Master's titled "Dance & Participation". This institution, however, is under the Ministry of Culture, and as upper secondary school teachers need a Master's degree from a university, and primary school teachers need a degree giving teacher qualification from a university college, the graduates from the National School of Performing Arts can lead projects in both types of schools, but they cannot be hired for permanent jobs in the education system.

Although dance is formally part of the primary school subjects PE and Music, most teachers find it hard to teach. Many teachers do not feel that their degrees have made them competent to teach dance as part of PE and Music (Svendler Nielsen & Vedel, 2021). Although from 2014 an exam in PE has been introduced after grade 9, in which dance is one of the key learning areas, it is still the 'stepchild' of PE and is not being taught to its full potential (von Seelen et al., 2018). Many projects and initiatives have since the 1990s focused on contributing to making teachers more qualified to teach dance as an art form, and to making artists more qualified pedagogically. Initiatives have also focused on creating knowledge about how to establish good models for partnerships between the sectors of education and culture, and hence teachers and artists (Hastrup et al., 2017). Institutions in the field of contemporary dance have had a key interest in nurturing dance in schools. Hence, from 2001 a national dance consultancy framework was established, inspired by Sweden, where there had been dance consultants in each region for a number of years (Vedel, 2011). The Danish version was developed by the association *Dans i Uddannelse* [Dance in Education], which existed from 2001-2011 and in its first years got yearly funding from the Ministry of Culture to employ two national part-time dance consultants. Around 2005 the framework of dance consultancy was embedded in *Dansens Hus* [The House of Dance], today called *Dansehallerne*³, which is an organisation that comprises various stakeholders in the field of contemporary dance (Council of Contemporary Dance in Denmark, 2007). The two dance consultants worked to create a system to help support the field of contemporary dance as an art form to be part of the provision of public schools. The ambition was that all children and young people should have opportunities to encounter dance both as creators and performers and as an audience of professional performances. The dance consultants therefore developed a strategy for the dance field nationally and started several educational dance programs. The largest in terms of participants was *Dans på Skemaet* [Dance in the Curriculum] (2002-2005), which was implemented in municipalities all over the country. This programme offered dance projects led by the dance consultants, who had a pool of dance artists who came to the schools to teach: some places for three weeks and other places for half a year, from one school class to whole year groups. This resulted in models for how dance could become an integrated part of school and in teachers and pupils getting to know the field and its potential (Fock & Vedel, 2004). Another programme, *Dans for Børn* [Dance for children], existed for the longest time, from 2007-2019, and was funded by the National Arts Foundation. It has contributed on a small scale to reaching the goals of the curriculum, stating that children should learn to create, perform, and reflect in dance. At the same time as contributing to the eco system of the professional field of dance, the educational dimension was promoted by offering workshops for teachers prior to the visits with the children (Svendler Nielsen & Vedel, 2021).

Since 2015 there has been a change in this positive development of the field of dance education in Denmark. New strategic focus points of *Dansehallerne* from around this time meant that the educational programmes were changed and some ceased to exist. Around the same time as the change in the provision of dance in the field of education of *Dansehallerne*, offers at the level of higher education also diminished. The University of Copenhagen no longer offers the elective package in Dance Studies, and most recently the degree of Dance & Participation of the National School for Performing Arts has been moved to a different part of the country. Stakeholders in the field fear that this will have consequences in terms of the interest of students in pursuing this programme in the future, as well as the school's ability to continue collaborations with other higher educational institutions.

Case: Norway

In Norway, dance is present in school in varied and distinctive ways that can be traced back to different philosophical thinking about, and aims with, dance. In primary and secondary school in Norway⁴, there are four compulsory subjects referred to as 'practical and aesthetic subjects'. These are called: Music, Visual Arts and Crafts, PE, and Food and Health. Of these, only PE continues as a compulsory subject in upper secondary school. Dance is not an independent subject in compulsory school, nor Drama and Theatre or Film and Media. Nevertheless, dance is taught through three lines in school: First, as a competence area in PE and in Music. Second, as collaborations between school and *Kulturskolen* [School of Music and Performing Arts], a non-compulsory but large educational system for the arts, where parents/carers pay for participation (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). Third, through school visits by professional dance artists arranged by The Cultural Schoolbag (TCS) through *Kulturtanken – Arts for Young Audiences Norway*⁵, to make sure children are exposed to and take part in high-quality professional arts in school, regardless of where they live in the country.

Dag Jostein Nordaker's doctoral thesis presents an analysis of dance as a knowledge area in Norwegian curricula for primary and secondary school (Nordaker, 2009). He describes how dance has been part of the national curriculum in compulsory education since 1939, but never as a subject on its own. He further describes how dance has long traditions in PE and Music. Through analyses, he discovered that dance as competence area in PE seemed to be more treated as an arts subject bringing something of specific artistic value into that subject, compared to Music (Nordaker, 2009, p. 139). In Music curricula, dance appears more as an educational tool for learning music. However, this has changed with the national curriculum renewal of 2020 (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020). In the revised national curriculum for Music, dance is clearly written in with artistic value, and dance is part of the competence goals in Music (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020). However, there is a big step from curricula to practice. To our knowledge, there is little research on dance in the subject Music in compulsory school in Norway, and thus little knowledge about dance practices in Music. In contrast, there is a lot of research on dance in PE in primary and secondary school. Trond Egil Arnesen et al. (2017) show how dance has a weak position in practice, and Øyvind Standal et al. (2020) that PE teachers only to a limited extent feel qualified and comfortable to teach dance. This tendency increases in the higher years in

schools. A focus on 'bodily learning' has been included in the revised national curricula (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2020), however only in the subject PE, and in the programme 'Music, dance, drama' in upper secondary school. It is not mentioned in the compulsory part of the curriculum.

Dance is to some extent offered in primary and secondary education through *Kulturskolen*, however not on a compulsory basis in all schools in Norway. In some municipalities a system called *Kulturdag* [A Cultural Day] has been developed, meaning that one day every week, on a regular basis, teachers from *Kulturskolen* visit a primary or secondary school, and together with the school teachers work to reach the goals for the practical and aesthetic subjects.

Dance is brought into schools in the form of dance performances or dance workshops through The Cultural Schoolbag (TCS). Each TCS visit includes several stakeholders such as professional dancer(s), pupils, teachers, cultural coordinators, and principals, who represent local, regional, and national interests (Christophersen et al., 2015). The TCS activities comprise traditional productions such as (dance) performances and exhibitions, and workshops and projects that require a more active role of the pupils. Over the years, a fairly large body of research has produced solid knowledge of the complex and often demanding interrelationships between the art/culture sector on the one hand, and education on the other (Borgen & Brandt, 2006; Christophersen et al., 2015).

In upper secondary school, no arts subjects are compulsory anymore. However, PE is still compulsory throughout all three years, where dance is a competence area. TCS also offers professional arts exposure on this school level, including dance. In upper secondary school, however, a range of 'programme disciplines' in the arts have arisen. One such is the study programme 'Music, dance, drama', created in 1994. This is the first time dance was included in a study programme in upper secondary school (Svee, 2008). 'Music, dance, drama' is offered at a number of upper secondary schools, but has a very different historical lineage compared to dance as a competence field in PE in compulsory school. When the study programme first emerged, looking at dance specifically, there was a clear emphasis on technical, physical and performance skills (Svee, 2008). Although this emphasis has gradually shifted towards more creative, reflective, and critical dimensions, the historical background to the study programme still is that it should prepare for artistic higher education (Østern et al., 2022). This has crafted a study programme that nurtures talent in dance to be able to audition for an artistic higher education in dance.

Over the last decades, various reforms have impacted Norwegian teacher education. Since 2017 teacher education in Norway is on the master's level. There are several ways to receive a teacher qualification in Norway (see Ministry of Education, NOU 2022:13, p. 44): 1) a five year primary and secondary school master programme specialising in either the lower or higher grades⁶; 2) a five-year master programme emphasising subject disciplinary skills to a higher degree, preparing mostly for secondary and upper secondary school⁷; 3) a five-year master's programme in aesthetic and practical subjects qualifying for primary, secondary, and upper secondary school in the chosen subjects⁸; 4) a combination of BA, MA and then a 1-year practical-pedagogical teacher qualification⁹. When this article is written, if you have a practical BA in arts or sports,

▶ you do not need a master's degree to be allowed to take the 1-year practical-pedagogical teacher qualification, however, this might change.

The only way to specialise in dance within teacher education in Norway today is to take a BA in dance, possibly an MA, and then take the 1-year practical-pedagogical teacher qualification. None of the integrated master's programmes offer specialisation in dance. In theory, the 5-year master's programme in aesthetic and practical subjects does offer dance and drama/theatre. However, this is a very new master's programme which has run only since autumn 2021. To our knowledge, no teacher education institution offers dance or drama/theatre as possible specialisations yet (utdanning.no, 2022). Since 2003, no practical and aesthetic subjects are required to become a qualified teacher unless you specialise in an arts subject, and it is possible to go through teacher education with no exposure to courses in aesthetic learning process or arts subjects. Although the Norwegian government in 2019 set out a new strategy meant to strengthen practical and aesthetic learning as an essential component at all levels of the educational system, kindergarten through teacher education (Ministry of Education, 2019), the strategy suffers from a lack of significant and binding measures to accomplish this goal (Karlsen et al., 2020). Research clearly shows that dance is only to some extent part of teacher education (Standal et al., 2020). Dance has, however, been more emphasised in PE teacher education (Rustad & Langnes, 2019), but only minimally within music teacher education (e.g. Husebye & Karlsen, 2016).

Three Higher Education institutions provide a one-year practical pedagogical teaching qualification (PPU) in dance, which qualifies for teaching dance in grades 5-13 in school: Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO), The Faculty of Performing Arts at the University of Stavanger, and the Department of Teacher Education at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology which offers a combined PPU for dance and drama. Kristiana University College offers a PPU in music and the performing arts, where dance is part. For students wanting to take a Master of Dance Education, there is no such offer in Norway.

Case: Finland

In Finland, active learning through arts and crafts subjects has had a central role at primary school level¹⁰ since the last decades of the 19th century when public elementary education began with the aim of supporting the creation of a unified nation and to provide equal educational opportunities for all (Hyvönen, 2006). Arts instruction was also valued in secondary (at that time 'grammar') schools as they were seen to support the construction of national identity and the development of modernist high culture. These were the overall purposes of art in Finnish society during the early 20th century (Astor, 2001). However, the arts comprised only music and visual arts. Neither dance, nor drama or theatre, were included in the curriculum. However, in the Finnish school system dance has always been taught as part of PE.

In the 1970's the Finnish public education system was reformed with the establishment of the comprehensive school, that is, a unified public education for all until grade 9 (primary and secondary level). The curriculum of the new comprehensive school initially retained the status of music and visual arts almost as before, but as the arts were gradually losing their patriotic-ideological function in society, the number of ▶

hours dedicated to music and visual arts began to be reduced (Hyvönen, 2006). The new curriculum allowed for increasing optionality. With this possibility, some schools started to include optional dance courses in their local curriculum. Schools and classes with a certain profile, for example, performing arts, started to emerge, especially in urban areas.

During recent decades the core curriculum for comprehensive school in PE has developed from emphasising skills in various forms of physical activity and sports to strengthening basic motor skills and a sense of bodily competence. Following the aims stated in the Basic Education Act (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014), the national basic education curriculum criteria for PE should provide a sustainable foundation and skills needed in life rather than only motor skills specific to certain forms of sport and physical activity. The focus should, thus, be on developing basic motor skills, promoting overall physical, social, and psychological capability and general well-being through physical activity. Different forms of physical activity are listed as examples. In this list, dance is included as *tanssiliikunta*, that can be translated as ‘dance-movement’.

In upper secondary school, the tradition of the so-called ‘old’ dances is very popular among students and most choose the optional course on these ballroom dances. The course leads to participation in the upper secondary school ball. There is also an increasing amount of optional courses related to embodiment and well-being in upper secondary schools, but the amount of obligatory PE courses in the national core curricula remains low. There is, however, great variation in local curricula around the country. Some cities have schools with a performing arts focus both at primary, secondary and upper secondary level. Some upper secondary schools also offer a possibility to complete a diploma in dance. This diploma system has been in place for some decades, and it is possible to complete a diploma in music, visual arts, PE, and in several other practical subjects. The diploma documents active studies in a certain practical field, but does not give any further qualifications.

The latest curricular reform of comprehensive school took place in 2014 (Finnish National Agency of Education, 2014). The notion of embodiment was added to the section that describes the conception of learning. Embodied, or active and collaborative learning, have become more prominent in pedagogical discourse in the school context, although it is unclear to what extent active learning approaches are applied in schools. Embodiment and embodied expression now appear also in the PE curriculum, and also in some other areas of the core curriculum, for example, music. This development is a positive sign towards increasing the status of dance and bodily expression in PE, and towards integrating dance in other subjects, as well.

The core curriculum of formal school education informs and shapes the content and focus of teacher training. In seminars for primary school teacher education in earlier times, arts and crafts subjects played an important role. These seminars were discontinued after the comprehensive school reform, and teacher training was transferred to university. The primary school teacher training programme became a master’s level university degree with a major in educational studies. As various school subjects became minors, the time allocated to the study of arts and crafts subjects was reduced (Hyvönen, 2006, p. 51).

An exception, albeit temporary, to this development was the so-called TAIKA primary school (or ‘classroom’) teacher training programme at the University of Oulu. The background for TAIKA started during the 1990s, when a growing interest in the philosophical and theoretical backgrounds of art education emerged in the Faculty of Education. Leena Hyvönen, Professor in music education, was deeply involved in the development of the programme, and she introduced the notion of embodied experience as the philosophical basis of the education (see Hyvönen, 2004). The launch of TAIKA required long-term groundwork and efforts to convince the faculty administration, and in 2006 the Faculty Council approved the planning and funding. The programme was built on a foundation of arts education theory and philosophy and interdisciplinary studies in arts and crafts subjects. As the lack of courses in dance and theatre or drama education, art philosophy, art education and its research, and arts education projects were the most obvious shortcomings of the teacher training, they were included in the TAIKA curriculum. Unfortunately, TAIKA ended in 2020 as the University of Oulu made a transition to a unified primary school (or ‘classroom’) teacher education programme.

Primary school teacher students who train to what in Finland is called ‘generalist teachers’ can choose to specialise in PE (or another ‘practical subject’) through a minor. The teacher education programme of PE teachers at the University of Jyväskylä – till today the only one in Finland – includes both obligatory and optional studies in dance and dance pedagogy. Thus, all PE teachers have at least basic knowledge in dance education. The focus on dance in this programme is broad, and includes both creative dance and instruction in different genres and styles.

All in all, there are many teachers who do include various forms of dance in their classes, also at upper secondary school level.

The University of the Arts Helsinki has educated dance teachers since 1997. So far, over 120 dance teachers with a Master’s degree have graduated from this programme that gives full qualifications to teach dance at all levels of the school system. Most schools that have a dance profile or class with a dance emphasis employ graduates of this programme. However, most graduates teach dance outside the school system, as such positions are still very few.

It is noteworthy that for many years dance has been the second largest art form as extracurricular activity in terms of the number of participants (Koramo, 2009). Schools can choose to collaborate with institutions that offer basic education in the arts.

Finland has a unique, state subsidised system for extracurricular arts education, that is, *Basic Education in the Arts*.¹¹ The law of Basic Education in the Arts (BEA) was formulated in 1992. With its goal-oriented emphasis, it embraces talent development. Instead of a general educational purpose, the system aims to prepare students for artist education (Astor, 2001). With this system still firmly in place, albeit with a renewed curriculum that takes into account students’ holistic development, Finnish arts education is still foundationally based on a modernist view of art as a specialised field of human life, not meant for everyone. The system has been criticised because of regional differences in accessibility, gender equality, special education requirements, the rights of marginalised cultures, curricular composition and representation (Juntunen, 2018; Ilmola et al., 2021; Anttila, 2021). The BEA system, therefore, can be seen as an added element to increasing inequality in art education since the 1970s.

It can be argued that the lack of attention to embodied, creative expression in the core curriculum has contributed to neglecting Finnish dance heritage in the public school context. Folk dance, social dances, and rhythmic gymnastics are all part of this cultural heritage, as well as creative, free or modern dance that are connected to these cultural dance forms. From this viewpoint, contemporary dance forms that increasingly interest young people today could be connected to Finnish cultural heritage through creative movement and dance.

Dance in education across Denmark, Norway and Finland

Reading through the case descriptions of Denmark, Norway, and Finland we have found sub-themes of relevance to the field of dance in education across the countries. These are related to the differences and similarities of structures that exist as a base for dance in formal education and the strong cross-sectoral involvement of the field.

Structural differences and similarities

The systems of the three countries, although geo-politically very similar, are not directly comparable as each of them has a different way of structuring basic education and higher education. Each of the countries divides the compulsory school years in different ways: Norway and Finland have a clear division of younger and the older children in primary, secondary, and upper secondary school, while in Denmark there is an initiation phase (years 0-3), middle phase (years 4-6) and 'leaving' phase (years 7-9(10)) at compulsory level, and then various options of upper secondary education.

To become a teacher for primary, secondary, and upper secondary school has different academic demands in Denmark, Norway and Finland. In Finland, the teacher training programme has been at master's level since 1979. Teachers have a master's degree in education with a minor in a specific subject field, which is the school subject that the teacher is qualified to teach, and arts departments of universities educate teachers in the artistic fields. In Norway, there was a change in 2017, when teacher training for primary, secondary, and upper secondary level also all became a degree at master's level. However, thus far still no university offers dance as a specialisation as part of the five-year master's programme in aesthetic and practical subjects qualifying for primary, secondary, and upper secondary school, and a dance education master's is not offered in Norway either. There is, however, a possibility to take a 1-year practical-pedagogical teacher qualification after a BA in dance, and thus become qualified to teach dance at upper secondary school. In Denmark, teacher training for primary school (years 0-9(10)) is still at bachelor's level and the teachers are more generalist, though also specialising in a number of school subjects, whereas teachers for upper secondary school have a master's degree. Across the Nordic countries a master's in dance studies called Nordic Master of Arts in Dance Studies (No-MA-ds) was offered in collaboration between universities in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden from 2004, and from 2007 including Finland (Damsholt, 2014), but from 2019 only between Norway, Finland, and Sweden. However, from 2020 no new students have been admitted to the programme.

All of the countries have national curricula for all school levels, although schools can choose to have certain profiles and only offer some elective subjects depending on the

interest of the school and competence of its teachers. At upper secondary school level in Norway and Denmark, no art subjects are compulsory anymore, but PE is, and as it is compulsory during all three years, it is one of the largest subjects. In Denmark since 2005, dance has played a more important part of PE as it was then defined as a content area, described as an artistic area focusing on creating dance and including cultural and performance aspects. Teachers from then on had to teach dance as an artistic area. Since 2017 in Denmark PE has been an exam subject, which means that all upper secondary school classes may be selected to have an exam in this subject after their third year.

Finland and Norway have recently included a focus on embodiment in their school curricula. In Norway the focus is on 'bodily learning', and it is only included in the national curricula of the subject PE, and in the programme 'Music, dance, drama' in upper secondary school. It is not mentioned in the compulsory part of the curriculum, as in Finland. In Finland, embodied ways of learning is articulated as one competence field that should be implemented in all subjects. To focus on embodiment and embodied learning in curricula might be how dance can be promoted, both as a subject in which embodied expression and awareness is central, and as a means for supporting learning in other areas in interdisciplinary processes.

Finland has the state subsidised system called Basic Education in the Arts. This allows for all children to be engaged in extra-curricular activities that often take place in the school buildings just after the formal school day has ended. This in principle makes participation in arts education accessible to everyone, but as in practice it focuses on talent development, it becomes exclusive rather than inclusive. Norway and Denmark also have extracurricular programmes in the arts, but parents/caretakers pay for their children to take part, and similar to the Finnish programme, these activities are then, in practice, not for everyone.

In Norway, research has shown that dance for a long time has mainly been considered an arts subject within PE, but within Music, dance has been used more to support music-making (Nordaker, 2009). This is visible also in Finland and Denmark. It is clear that the area of PE has been more active than the area of Music in the developments of dance as an art form, both in relation to primary, secondary and upper secondary school level. This has happened in collaboration with both the cultural sector and with the artistic academic field of dance. In all three countries there is solid research about dance in PE, but little about dance within the context of Music.

At upper secondary school level the picture is similar, although here there are schools in all of the countries that offer dance either as an elective subject in its own right, or as part of an artistic profile. It is, however, not as common for upper secondary schools in Denmark to be part of collaborative projects with the cultural sector, or to invite artists to lead projects, as it is in Norway and Finland.

In none of the countries of Denmark, Norway and Finland has dance ever been a subject in its own right at primary and secondary school level, but in Finland a vision for performing arts (including dance and theatre) was launched in November 2022, some years after visions for music and visual arts. It is part of the vision that dance and theatre must be added to the core curriculum, and this was supported by the Minister of Education. But overall, it remains unclear how awareness of dance as a contemporary cultural phenomenon and as a form of performing art can be cultivated within Finnish

formal education. Dance education in formal education in all of the three countries is dependent on the interest, enthusiasm, and expertise of individual teachers.

In Norway, with the last national curriculum renewal (Ministry of Education and Research, 2020) dance has been written in a much more prominent way into the subject of Music. It is written in a way where dance is also given space as an arts subject, which is different from previous music curricula. In Norway, there is also a political interest in 'practical and aesthetic subjects', but in all of the countries there is evidence that school teachers at all levels find it challenging to teach dance. Although dance is part of the curricula of PE and Music in Norway, it is still the decision of teachers as to what extent and how dance is taught as an art form (Standal et al., 2020). There is, thus, clearly a challenge concerning a gap between policy and practice (Arnesen et al., 2017).

Dance in cross-sectoral collaborations

At both primary, secondary and upper secondary level there are different initiatives and measures to strengthen collaboration in the field of dance between formal education and the cultural sector. Through these initiatives freelance artists are funded to perform or carry out projects in schools for shorter or longer periods of time. Collaborative measures that have become more long-term strategies also exist between schools and the cultural sector. In Norway and Finland there is collaboration between the formal educational system and the cultural sector, which in Norway is called *Kulturskole* [School of Music and Performing Arts], and in Finland such collaboration takes place through Basic Education in the Arts. Denmark had *Dans for Børn* [Dance for Children], which existed as a collaboration between the formal educational sector and the cultural sector from 2007-2019, and in this period engaged many schools and children around the country on a yearly basis. Although both School of Music and Performing Arts in Norway and Basic Education in the Arts in Finland are connected to formal education, they have a lineage to a philosophy seeking to prepare students for professional arts education. This means a goal-oriented emphasis embracing talent development. Consequently, both in Norway and in Finland, non-formal educational offerings, although accessible to everyone, suffer from a lack of inclusive practices. In Denmark, municipalities are responsible for implementing the school laws, which is a challenge when new laws mean that practice must change. For example, the focus area of Open School in the reform of 2014 did not have funding for its implementation at state level, and each municipality has had to find ways to support it. Therefore, the idea that, for example, artists could become more permanently involved with schools has not really been successful (Haastrup et al., 2017). At both state and municipality level there are programmes that schools and/or artists can apply for, but they are mainly supporting on a small scale. In Denmark, some of the national cross-sectoral programmes in dance have ceased to exist due to lack of funding both for the specific programmes and the institutions that lead them.

Future perspectives for dance as a field of education looking beyond the Nordic region

To end this article, we will discuss future perspectives for dance as a field of education in the three countries as compared to the case of New Zealand as a utopia in the field.

A location where dance has been part of the school curriculum for over two decades

is the small Pacific nation of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The curriculum of Aotearoa/New Zealand includes dance as a subject in all year levels - from year one of the education system, through to the end of schooling (Snook & Buck, 2014). In the primary school (years 1 to 8) teachers are expected to deliver dance as a curriculum requirement. In secondary school (years 9 to 13) specialist dance teachers deliver dance as part of the curriculum. Dance was recognised as a stand-alone curriculum area for the first time in 2000, in *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum (ANZC)* (Ministry of Education, 2014), and was implemented in schools in 2003. In 2006 dance was approved as a subject for university entrance, and by the end of 2008 it was the fastest growing curriculum subject in Aotearoa/New Zealand schools, with the National Qualifications Authority (NZQA) explaining that there was an 'explosion' of dance in upper secondary schools (Bolwell, 2009). In turn, this led to a revision of dance within higher education, which arguably paved the way for dance scholarship to flourish.

Over the years, the Aotearoa/New Zealand government has provided considerable investment in and professional support for the implementation of dance in the ANZC (Ashley, 2014). However, it has not been 'plain sailing', and dance is still often marginalised in schools, has vulnerabilities regarding resources and time in full school schedules, and the need to be relevant for the needs of a diverse range of learners (Snook & Buck, 2014). There has been investigation exploring how confident and/or prepared or not teachers are to deliver dance in their classrooms (Renner & Pratt, 2017). Work has also been offered in relation to the inclusion of indigenous dance practices (Reihana-Morunga, 2022), culturally responsive dance pedagogies (Melchior, 2016), and dance in early childhood education (Sansom, 2011).

The context of Aotearoa/New Zealand offers an example of how dance has been implemented in the general education system in a comprehensive way. From the 'outside' it may look like a utopia. It could be argued that the position dance holds within the school system, and in turn the substantial interest in studying dance in higher education, has led to a microcosm of dance education scholarship, interest, and understanding growing at a prolific pace in Aotearoa/New Zealand. One example of this growth is in the number of doctoral students in dance studies. In 2009 there were 3 doctoral students in dance studies at the University of Auckland when the PhD programme had just commenced, but today there are 67 PhDs in dance studies (41 PhDs primarily supervised by the dance studies programme, and 26 where dance studies provides the secondary supervisor).

Strengthening dance education in the Nordic region

Dance can be considered an independent subject area, but it is also an area that can contribute to building bridges between other areas. However, whether children and young people are taught dance as an art form at any level within formal education in all three of the Nordic countries studied here seems to be dependent on the prime movers (In Danish: 'ildsjæle') of each school (Bamford & Qvortrup, 2006). The future opportunities for dance as a subject area in growth from primary to university level seem most positive in Finland due to the recently published vision for the performing arts. In Norway there is also positive development, as the government in 2019 decided on a strategy for strengthening practical and aesthetic learning. In Denmark the situation

▶ has changed from 20 years of positive development of the area within institutions, and as collaborations across sectors promoting dance from both the educational and the cultural sector, to a subsequent decline in activities.

Looking at the situation of Aotearoa/New Zealand, it seems that to strengthen the field of dance in education in the Nordic countries there would need to be a political interest in including dance in the compulsory/core curriculum either as a subject in its own right, or as part of a broader performing arts subject. In all of the countries the curriculum at primary, secondary and upper secondary level determines what the contents and focus are in teacher education for the different levels. To include dance as a subject in its own right in the curricula would then presumably also create the need to educate teachers for the field. As higher education is research-based, there would also then be a need for more academic positions in the field.

Interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral collaborations are complex and sometimes challenging (Haastrup et al., 2017; Borgen & Brandt, 2006), and it is perhaps especially important to consider this when working in a field in which practitioners again and again have to redefine it, and might not feel acknowledged, because the field itself is not acknowledged. Dance is a field that has, we argue as a result of this investigation, an interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral potential which could be exploited further. However, as long as dance is not a subject in its own right, developments in the field suffer from lack of resources and academic positions that could develop the field in both teaching and research.

In conclusion, it has become clear in the cross-case analysis of the state of dance in the education systems of Denmark, Norway and Finland compared with the situation in Aotearoa/New Zealand, that when dance is formalised as a subject in its own right, or there are clear demands from the ministry level as to what students need to learn and be assessed in, it means that the field is developed and strengthened. A big game-changer would be if dance became a compulsory school subject on its own, or, more plausibly as an idea, that the school subject Music could be changed into a 'Performing arts' subject including music, dance, and drama. That would allow for academic positions in teacher education that would further develop dance education as a research field in the Nordic region in the same way as other practical and aesthetic subjects have developed as recognised fields in this region.

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NOTES

- ¹ In Denmark, Norway and Finland the subjects within the field of arts have different traditions and therefore different titles. Hence, in the case studies there will be variations in the use of for example 'visual arts' and 'visual arts and crafts'.
- ² In Denmark the compulsory school years 0-9(10) are called *grundskole* [primary school] and includes 6-15(16) year olds as year 10 is optional. *Grundskole* is divided in three phases: initiation, middle and leaving. Upper secondary school is called *gymnasium*, lasts three years (grade 1-3) and includes ages 16-18 approximately.
- ³ Dansehallerne is a Danish national centre for contemporary dance, the Danish name is also used in English <https://dansehallerne.dk>
- ⁴ In Norway compulsory school years are divided in primary (grades 1-7, ages 6-12) and secondary school (grades 8-10, ages 13-15). Upper secondary is called *videregående skole*, and usually lasts 3 years, usually carried out in the ages 16-18, although some programs are longer.
- ⁵ <https://www.kulturtanken.no/en/about/>
- ⁶ In Norwegian: *Grunnskolelærerutdanning*.
- ⁷ In Norwegian: *Lektorutdanning*.
- ⁸ In Norwegian: *Lærerutdanning i praktiske og estetiske fag*.
- ⁹ In Norwegian: *Praktisk-pedagogisk utdanning*.
- ¹⁰ In Finland the compulsory school years are divided in primary school (grades 1-6, ages 7-12) and secondary (grade 7-9, ages 13-15) altogether 'comprehensive school'. Upper secondary school refers to grades 10-12 (ages 16-18).
- ¹¹ Basic Education in the Arts: <https://okm.fi/en/basic-education-in-arts>