

Bridging the Blueprint and the Classroom: How Constructivist Principles Manifest in Chinese Choreography Curricula

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1026EDU0503>

Received: 01 August 2026; Accepted: 06 August 2026; Published: 14 August 2026

ABSTRACT

Chinese dance choreography education faces a persistent paradox. Although course syllabi universally list creative thinking as a core objective, graduates frequently exhibit rigid technique application and difficulty transforming lived experience into choreographic expression. This suggests the problem lies not in goal articulation but in how the curriculum framework is structured. This research provides insight into how the five principles of constructivist learning (experience-driven learning, socially collaborative, ability to self-regulate and reflect, use of multiple representations, and situated learning) are embedded in choreography curricula, and it looks at how these principles are represented differently across different course categories. Findings indicate that while the four traditional courses have a strong emphasis on experience-driven learning and self-regulation and reflection, they lack significant representation of situated learning and social collaboration. The site-specific dance course demonstrates a distinctive embedding pattern in which all five constructivist principles are present, with situated learning serving as the organising principle that connects the other dimensions. Based on these findings, this research hypothesises a reciprocal model to provide a clearer understanding of how teacher behaviours and curriculum documentation interact in a reciprocal manner through a cycle of principle interpretation, contextual application, and teacher feedback, rather than through a linear cause-and-effect pattern. Consequently, the reciprocal process identified in this study provides an approach for reforming the choreography curriculum using a diagonal pathway of understanding the principles of constructivist learning as they apply to dance education practice.

Keywords: Constructivist learning theory, Choreography curriculum, Site-specific dance, Situated learning, Curriculum design

INTRODUCTION

The Paradox of Creative Training in Chinese Dance Education

Contemporary choreographic education typically occurs in studio spaces, where students develop skills on smooth floors with consistent lighting and clear social boundaries. While this model supports technical development, it limits students' opportunities to experience the nuances of real physical spaces. When students transition to professional environments, they encounter unpredictable conditions such as uneven surfaces, changing light, and mobile audiences. In these contexts, the choreographic skills developed in studios often do not transfer directly.

Some scholars have attributed this situation to rigid teaching methods or inadequate student foundations.

However, these diagnoses remain at the content level and do not address the central issue: Does the curriculum offer students the opportunity to integrate external technical learning with their internal learning experience?

The struggle to increase levels of creativity may not necessarily be reflective of the quality of instruction provided to students but rather the inability of the curriculum to provide students with the structural conditions necessary for creating new knowledge through observation and experimentation. The distinction between these two concepts is of great importance. It changes the emphasis from teacher demonstrations of choreography to the architecture of the curriculum. Individual teachers' effectiveness is limited by the curriculum; while they may make a significant difference when working within the same curriculum, the curriculum will ultimately determine the breadth of learning experiences available to all students.

Constructivist Learning Theory as an Analytical Lens

The Constructivist Learning Theory presents a productive and useful way to explore the concepts contained within the above-mentioned text. Constructivist learning theory describes how knowledge is not simply received by learners but rather constructed through learners' active interaction with their environment. Constructivism emphasizes three interconnected principles: learning is situated in authentic contexts, learning is social in nature, and learning requires active participation of the learner who brings prior knowledge and experience.

Constructivist learning theory has been thoroughly tested and verified within the sciences and within general educational settings; however, its influence in the area of arts education, especially within Dance Performance Training, which places a focus on learning through embodied practice, is one of the more under-researched areas of constructivist theory. However, choreography within Dance Performance encompasses different aspects of knowledge creation; intuition, aesthetic judgment, and tacit knowledge are a few of the numerous ways in which Dance has an element of knowledge acquisition that is less easily captured by using standard/established methods of constructivist theory. Some research, however, does suggest that Constructivist principles regarding the Context of a learning experience, the Social Nature of that learning experience, and the Active Participation of the Learner in a learning experience, may serve as a conceptual tool for understanding both Embodied and Creative Learning through dance choreography development/creation.

Once students are learning in the context of actual (as opposed to simulated) places and spaces, their perceptual pathways are awakened. Rather than merely responding to the propositions expressed by the teacher, students are able to interact with their environment and to "see" through the action possibilities available to them; observe, touch, walk, listen, and through their "conversation" with their environment create movement vocabulary through the "dialogue" generated by the body interacting with the space. This "converse" between the body and the environment provides educators with the opportunity to teach site-specific dance creation. Site-specific dance creation is an artistic practice derived from concrete spaces and therefore begins with perception and reaction to the physical characteristics, historical memory, and cultural significance of the space. During the process, space becomes more than a venue; it is part of the creative dialogue.

Research Gap and Study Objectives

While research regarding the artistic aspects of site-specific performance has been done to a limited extent, research has been lacking systematically studying how it is being used as pedagogy. Most of the studies have primarily focused on the methods of art creation or teaching pedagogically by teachers. There are very few studies that have analysed the contents in a systematic fashion regarding the curricula of site-specific performance pedagogies. We have identified four major categories of overlap between these two groups of studies that have created a void.

There are theoretical gaps in our knowledge regarding the lack of a systematic analysis framework to use Constructivist Learning Theory as a lens from which to analyse the pedagogy used for teaching site-specific performance; i.e., an understanding of how the main concepts of Constructivism in pedagogy are operationalized in site-specific performance pedagogies. Methodological gaps exist due to the limited empirical data available from process-oriented research using structured classroom observations; thus far the only empirical data available has been based on teacher self-reports or assessments of student work. There is very little published research in China regarding the site-specific performance pedagogy; hence we currently do not know if these same methodologies could be successfully applied in all educational institutions.

There are gaps in our pedagogical knowledge regarding how students develop Constructivist principles when studying the site-specific performance course structure. In this study we will try to answer these previously identified gaps, using a central question: "In what ways have Constructivist principles been incorporated in choreography curricula? Do the curricular designs vary between the different types of courses we evaluated? To answer this central question, we will take five different instances of choreographic courses (four traditional, one site-specific performance course) to serve as our sample to conduct a systematic analysis of the content from each of their syllabi and the findings of our interviews conducted with four of the instructors. By using this approach we will identify common patterns of Constructivist dimensions, and we will identify the differences that exist between the curricular structures of these distinct courses.

This study is based on a conceptual framework that will provide a theoretical and systematic basis for designing choreography curricula. By providing access to a structural framework to understand the assumptions of learning inherent in choreography curricula, we will provide a means to develop an improved structure and design of the choreography curriculum.

Based on the above analysis, this study addresses the following three research questions: (1) How are the five core dimensions of constructivist learning theory manifested in choreography curricula? (2) What systematic differences exist between traditional choreography courses and site-specific dance courses in terms of constructivist dimension embedding? (3) What pattern characterizes the relationship between curriculum texts and teacher practice?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research Design and Data Sources

A qualitative approach is used in this research study, using an analysis of syllabus contents combined with semi-structured interviews with teachers. The rationale for using two different data sources, one for syllabus analysis and another for teacher interviews, is that to fully understand how choreography curricula relate to constructivist principles requires both a view of the institutional or formal aspect of a curriculum design as well as a view of the individual or subjective interpretations made by teaching professionals.

To conduct the analysis of syllabi, five syllabi from the choreography core curriculum at a Chinese media school were selected; two are traditional core modules, the other two are emerging or newly added interdisciplinary courses (Solo Dance, Duet, Trio, and Group Dance), while 'Site-Specific Dance' is a newer form of course. Comparing newly created with traditional forms of syllabus design enables insightful comparisons between recent additions to the

discourse on curriculum of choreography. In selecting the syllabi to analyse, a systematic approach was taken to ensure that the core syllabus experience for students would be adequately captured. For instructor interviews,

semi-structured interviews were completed with four instructors who taught the above syllabi. The instructors ranged from having over five years of teaching experience (two of whom hold the title of Associate Professor) to Lecture. Interviews included semi-structured questions involving six areas of inquiry: their professional experiences, their views about curriculum design and implementation, their strategies for creating effective learning environments in their classrooms, their understandings of constructivist concepts, their observations of student performances and their own reflections on the effectiveness of their teaching. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were audiotaped and then transcribed verbatim.

The Five-Dimension Analytical Framework

The five dimensions of constructivist learning theory identified in this study were chosen based on their historical significance and how they relate to the field of choreography teaching and learning. The five dimensions are: Experience-driven learning; Social construction and collaborative learning; Self-regulation/reflection, using reflective journals, creative statements and so on; Multiple representations and expressions; Situated learning.

Experience-driven learning looks at whether courses teach students to generate pieces of choreography from their personal life experience, bodily awareness, or observation of their surroundings versus simply replicating others' movement patterns. Social Construction and Collaborative Learning determine whether students will have access to social mechanisms for the generation of knowledge through the creation of group work, peer evaluations, and/or collective discussions of ideas among each other. Self-Regulation/Reflection addresses whether or not reflective journals, creative statements, and other forms of summary writing will provide a framework for self-monitoring of one's creative process. Multiple Representation and Expression determines whether or not students are encouraged to express their ideas and creativity through various forms of media. Situated Learning is an analysis of whether or not courses locate their learning within an authentic or simulated sociocultural context, establishing significant connections between an individual's ideas and their environment.

Each dimension was coded according to specific criteria. Experience-driven learning was coded when a module required students to create from personal experience, bodily perception, or environmental observation. Social construction was coded when a module included group creation, peer evaluation, or collective discussion. Self-regulation and reflection was coded when a module included reflective journals, creative statements, or stage summaries. Multiple representations was coded when a module encouraged cross-media expression. Situated learning was coded when a module placed learning in authentic or simulated sociocultural contexts. When a unit simultaneously embodied multiple dimensions, a primary and secondary annotation approach was adopted.

During the analysis process, all teaching modules from all syllabi were categorized into one or more of the five dimensions. In the event that multiple dimensions were identified in the same module, the primary and secondary annotation approach was employed to record the complexity of the module accurately.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Interview data were processed using thematic analysis, following the six-phase procedure of familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and producing the report. The coding process adopted a theory-driven strategy, using constructivist core concepts as a priori reference points while remaining open to emergent themes. To enhance analytical credibility, researcher triangulation was employed: two analysts independently coded the same interview transcripts, then compared results and discussed discrepancies until consensus was reached, with the inter-coder agreement rate exceeding eighty-five percent.

Syllabus content analysis adopted a dimension-mapping approach. Each teaching module was segmented into

units of meaning, which were then systematically mapped onto the five-dimension framework. Classification results were independently reviewed by a second analyst and validated by two experts in constructivist educational theory.

The first author of this study is both the designer and one of the instructors of the Site-Specific Dance course. This dual role brings both advantages, including deep access to the teaching context, and potential risks of bias. To mitigate this risk, several strategies were adopted. Teacher interviews were conducted by a research assistant not involved in the course, reducing the likelihood of participant acquiescence bias. In the syllabus analysis, all dimensional judgments underwent independent review to avoid over-interpretation arising from insider knowledge. The researcher maintained a reflective journal throughout the research process, systematically recording subjective responses and potential biases during analysis. All participants provided written informed consent, and teacher names have been anonymized. This study received approval from the Ethics Review Committee of the researcher's affiliated institution.

Trustworthiness

This study addresses trustworthiness through the four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). For credibility, triangulation was achieved through syllabus content analysis and teacher interviews, with two analysts independently coding the interview data at over 85% agreement and syllabus classifications validated by experts. For transferability, thick description of the research context, curriculum design, and participant information is provided. For dependability, all raw data and analytical documents have been systematically archived to establish a complete audit trail. For confirmability, the researcher maintained a reflective journal to document subjective interpretations and potential biases, and direct quotations from participants and syllabi are used throughout the findings to ensure conclusions are grounded in data rather than researcher bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What Teachers Say: Four Recurring Themes

Thematic analysis of the four teacher interviews revealed four core themes. These were not pre-imposed categories but emerged inductively from the coding process.

Autonomy and Creativity. All four teachers identified students' independent thinking as a core precondition of learning choreography. One teacher stated: "Through improvisation activities, students are given the freedom to explore different means of expression and are encouraged to discover their personal style" (T1). Another added: "I encourage students to find problems through trial and error and find their own style in the choreography, which can make them more creative" (T3).

The idea of freedom, or the ability to think independently, was interpreted differently by each teacher. T2 clarified: "Freedom is not teaching nothing; it is teaching them how to find their own way." This qualification reveals a key tension in teaching choreography: the instructor must provide structure while protecting the students' ability to experiment and explore. T4 expressed a similar concern when discussing group work, noting that each group should divide tasks based on members' perceived strengths to produce the best possible outcome.

Collaboration and Interaction. All teachers agreed that collaboration is central to choreography instruction, yet their approaches differed. One teacher used peer review as a tool for students to evaluate each other's work. As T2 explained: "I use a peer review mechanism, where students evaluate each other in small groups and improve their own choreography by identifying problems and learning from others' strengths." This method allows

students to gain insight into the creative process through self-reflection while observing others' creative responses.

Another teacher took a different approach, emphasising role division to increase clarity and efficiency. T4 described: "When working in groups, I ask each student to divide roles according to their strengths, so as to maximise the effect of collective creation." Despite these different methods, both approaches encouraged students to create a collaborative product and gain experience in social cognition. All four teachers indicated that through collaboration, students learn to work together toward a final product, understand different perspectives, and reach consensus even when disagreements arise.

Reflection and Evaluation. Teachers consistently noted that reflection is an essential yet often overlooked component of learning choreography. One teacher described a specific practice: "I would ask students to write a reflection journal after they finished their work, recording the challenges and gains they encountered during the creative process" (T1). This practice allows students to externalise their thinking after the creative process has concluded.

Another teacher approached reflection from a different angle: "After learning the techniques, I ask the students to think about how to combine the techniques with their personal thought and emotional expression" (T3). In this case, reflection occurs in the moment, as students work with newly acquired techniques alongside their own artistic expression.

The first practice can be classified as summative or retrospective reflection, an opportunity for students to review the process they went through in creating their work after it has already occurred. The second practice involves reflection occurring simultaneously with skill acquisition. Both methods engage students in ongoing reflection as a sustained component of the learning process.

Practice and Contextualization. Teachers also employed different approaches to situational context. One teacher used authentic environments to provide real-world learning experiences. T1 explained: "We sometimes take students on field trips, such as outdoor environmental choreography, so they can experience dance creation in different situations, which is very helpful for them to understand the cultural context." This approach allows students to engage with multi-sensory responses and make quick judgments in unpredictable settings.

The second teacher relied primarily on simulated contexts. T2 described: "In class, I simulate certain situations, such as a bus situation, and let students improvise in this situation." This method provides a lower-risk, intermediate learning experience. The contrasting practices of these two teachers represent a continuum from simulated to authentic learning. Both approaches provide valuable but qualitatively different learning opportunities for students.

What Syllabi Reveal: The Distribution of Five Dimensions

If teacher interviews reveal how principles are internalized at the cognitive level, the syllabus analysis reveals how they are structured at the institutional level. A systematic five-dimension mapping of the five syllabi was conducted.

Distribution Patterns Across Traditional Courses

In the four traditional courses, the dimension distribution exhibited three notable characteristics. First, experience-driven learning permeates all courses. From image capture and improvisation training in the Solo

course to transformation of life materials in Group Dance, all syllabi require students in their early modules to extract creative material from personal experience. This indicates that starting from experience has become a foundational methodological consensus in choreography teaching.

Second, social construction and collaboration increase with course scale. It is almost entirely absent in Solo, emerges tentatively in Duet, and strengthens significantly in Trio and Group Dance. This gradient reflects curriculum designers' intuitive grasp of matching collaborative complexity to course scale. However, the forms of collaboration remain largely confined to movement coordination and task division, without yet developing to the level of meaning negotiation.

Third, situated learning is uniformly weak across all four courses. All are conducted primarily in standardized rehearsal halls. Although creative tasks occasionally involve situational themes, these are largely simulated settings. Students rarely have opportunities to construct dance meaning in authentic sociocultural spaces.

Table 1. Constructivist Dimension Intensity Across Four Traditional Choreography Courses

Dimension	Solo	Duet	Trio	Group
D1 Experience-Driven Learning	High	High	High	High
D2 Social Construction	Not Present	Moderate	High	High
D3 Self-Regulation	High	High	High	Moderate
D4 Multiple Representations	Moderate	High	High	Moderate
D5 Situated Learning	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present	Not Present

Note: Intensity levels indicate the relative presence of each dimension across course modules, based on systematic coding of syllabus content. High means the dimension is explicitly targeted in multiple modules. Moderate means the dimension is present but not systematically developed. Not Present means the dimension is absent across all modules.

Complete Integration within a Specific "Dance Course" within the Site Dimension

Whereas most "traditional" dance courses incorporate embedded learning systematically across all five dimensions, the curriculum for the site-specific dance incorporates completely embedded experiences within the four primary learning areas.

For the Primary Learning Area of the Experience Dimension, for example, within the Experience Level, the Second Unit of the Site-Specific Dance provides a direct opportunity for students to engage their bodily awareness through movement within the context of actual settings. In addition, within the curriculum, students' movement will directly respond to their current environmental experience, thereby creating a creative pathway between perception and the expression of their creativity.

For the Social Collaboration Dimension, within the Collaboration Level, the Fifth Unit of the Site-Specific Dance provides opportunities for groups to engage in the complete process from site selection—selecting a site to present their work—through the presentation of their work. Group members must negotiate their respective roles and collectively make decisions to complete this process. As a result, Social Collaboration moves beyond simple Movement Coordination (i.e., working together on simple movements) to Co-Constructing the Creative Process (i.e., working together on all aspects of creating a work).

For the Situated Learning Dimension, every teaching unit is delivered in non-traditional learning spaces (e.g.,

campus plazas, parks, historical markers and inside of buildings); therefore, the context in which learning occurs is not simply the environment surrounding the learner; it is an active participant in the process of generating knowledge.

The most significant finding is that, in the Fourth Unit, a single Teaching Task can activate Creative Motivation, Spatial Documentation through Video and Text, and the Creation of a Spatial Narrative all within one Authentic Site. The activation of multiple dimensions at one time is a very uncommon occurrence within traditional courses.

The Nature of the Difference

The traditional course structure and the Site-Specific Dance course structure differ in their organisational logic. Traditional courses emphasise experience-driven learning and self-regulation as primary components, while the Site-Specific Dance course incorporates situated learning as an additional structural element that reconfigures the relationship among the other dimensions. Even though there are shared elements of Social Collaboration in both types of courses, the way that each type uses Social Interaction within the Learning Process and the way that each type uses Various Mechanisms of Collaboration will always be significant points of difference.

Three Propositions Emerging from the Analysis

Proposition One: Intrinsic Congruence

The data suggest that basic assumptions of constructivism are inherent in both traditional instruction and the site-specific dance instruction course structure. This congruence can be seen in the fact that both types of course structures are centered on a creation-based learning style. In a choreography course, students learn primarily through creation rather than by studying theory and then applying it. The essential element of construction of knowledge through performance aligns well with constructionism as a theoretical framework.

Additionally, both course types share an experience-based approach. Due to the large number of courses that utilize the experience-based approach in traditional instruction, it is apparent that the experience-based route of learning has become foundational within the established pedagogical model of choreography. The experience-based model is aligned with the experiential learning theory, where learning begins with an authentic experience and proceeds through reflective thought and theory to be transformed into a new action.

However, congruence does not imply that the two course types will utilize constructivism systematically. The previous statement implies that the fundamental structure of choreography courses is conducive to establishing a foundation that would allow the potential adoption of the constructivist approach. Transitioning from a possibility of using constructivism to an actuality will depend on other mediating variables, such as the type of course and the practices of the teacher.

Proposition Two: Course Type and Pathway Differences

The major differences between the distribution of constructs between traditional and Site-Specific Dance Course structures are attributed to the significantly different instructional models of task structure, instructional space, and collaborative models. The traditional instructional course structure maintains a core premise of developing technical refinement and optimising structure based on standardised space and multiple iterations of the movement tasks assigned to students by the instructor. The technical refinement model strengthens the foundation of skill development but simultaneously limits the development of the environment for the emergence of situated learning. The site-specific dance course emphasises contextual authenticity and open-ended tasks,

providing students with opportunities to face unpredictability and make immediate decisions. The site-based nature of the course offers a different pathway for learning, one that emphasises situated learning and provides contextually relevant options for developing other dimensions. These variations should not be viewed in hierarchical terms; rather, they reflect different pedagogical priorities suited to different learning goals. The strengths of the traditional instructional model of choreography lie in the development of technical refinement, while the weakness of the open-context model is illustrated in the development of contextual awareness. Therefore, while both models of choreography instruction possess inherent strengths and weaknesses, they also reinforce one another in the instructional process.

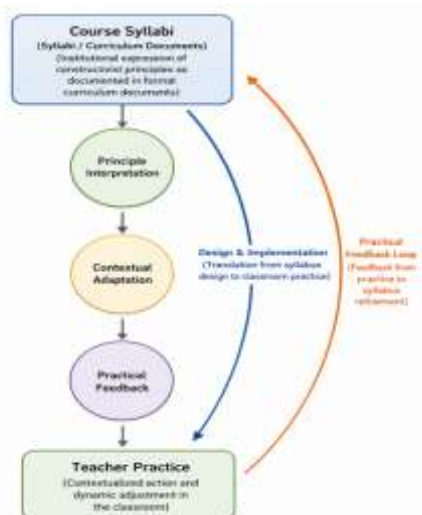
Proposition Three: Dimensional Balance and Completeness

The predominance of experience-based learning and self-regulation within traditional instructional models indicates that these courses support the learning pathway from individual experience to reflective deepening. However, the absence of situated learning in traditional instructional models creates a structural gap in knowledge construction through sociocultural contexts. The Site-Specific Dance course demonstrates an alternative possibility. When situated learning is taken as a structural precondition, the other dimensions are not weakened but reorganized in their interrelationships. This reorganization suggests that the full realization of constructivist principles is not a simple superposition of dimensions but their organic integration.

A Bidirectional Drive Model

Integrating the above three propositions, the overall picture of the relationship between constructivist learning principles and choreography curricula can be depicted. This relationship is not a static application of theory but a dynamic, bidirectional, and structurally mediated process. The study characterizes this process as the bidirectional drive model. The core logic of this model is that course syllabi provide institutionalized expression and structural guarantees for principles, while teacher practice transforms principles into contextualized action and dynamic adjustment. The relationship between the two is not a one-way design and execution sequence but a bidirectional drive operating through the cyclical mechanism of principle interpretation, contextual adaptation, and practical feedback. The cyclical relationship between these two domains is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Bidirectional Drive Model of Constructivist Principle Implementation in Choreography Curricula.



All choreography courses acknowledge, to varying degrees, constructivist principles such as experience-driven learning and reflective generation. However, once implementation is considered, pathway diversity emerges. Course type determines, through choices of task structure, instructional space, and collaborative models, which dimensions are prioritized and which are marginalized. Ultimately, dimensional balance becomes the structural condition determining the completeness of principle implementation. The absence of situated learning is not merely missing one dimension but may trigger a rupture in the entire constructivist learning chain.

This model moves the discussion from the binary judgment of whether this course is constructivist to a more refined analysis of how each constructivist dimension is differentially realized across course types and how systemic balance can be achieved through cross-curricular integration. It also provides a diagnostic tool for curriculum reform. Designers can use the five-dimension profile to quickly identify weak dimensions and unbalanced areas in their curriculum system and accordingly formulate targeted improvement strategies.

Dialogue with Existing Research

The findings of this study extend the work of Chen (2001), who observed in creative dance classes that guided questioning, rather than direct demonstration, effectively activated students' critical thinking. Chen's study focused primarily on the teacher's individual instructional strategies within the classroom. Building on this foundation, our findings suggest that the effectiveness of such guided questioning depends not only on the teacher's individual skill but also on whether the curriculum structure provides institutional space for this type of pedagogical approach. In the Site-Specific Dance course, the uncertain and unpredictable nature of authentic learning environments compels teachers to rely more heavily on guided questioning than on demonstration-based teaching. This shift is not simply a matter of personal teaching preference but appears to be shaped by the demands of the course type itself.

Our interview data support the observation that teachers' practice of constructivist principles often precedes their mastery of theoretical terminology. None of the four teachers could accurately define constructivism, yet their teaching strategies were highly consistent with its core principles. This suggests that in dance education, the uptake of a pedagogical theory does not depend primarily on teachers' ability to recite its terminology but on whether the theory has been internalised and translated into practical teaching strategies that respond to the demands of the classroom.

At the same time, our findings respond to Sawyer's (2022) discussion of creative learning environments. Sawyer argued that the most effective teaching does not choose between strict adherence to pre-planned design and complete improvisation but instead establishes a dynamic, responsive balance between the two. Our bidirectional drive model provides a concrete institutional analysis of this balance. In this model, course syllabi provide the anchor points for structured design, while teacher practice provides the space for improvisational responsiveness. The tension and coordination between these two domains, the curriculum as planned and the curriculum as enacted, is precisely the mechanism through which constructivist principles are translated into classroom practice.

The findings also suggest that cultural context shapes how constructivist principles are enacted in curriculum design. Traditional Chinese dance education has long emphasized technical transmission and mastery, which may help explain the limited presence of situated learning in conventional choreography courses. The implementation of collaborative and situated approaches depends not only on curriculum structure but also on teachers' cultural assumptions about teaching and learning, pointing to the need for culturally responsive rather than mechanical applications of Western educational theories.

CONCLUSION

Core Theoretical Contribution

This study introduces a bidirectional drive model as its main theoretical contribution. The new model shows that the connection between the content of the curriculum and the practice of the teachers cannot be seen as just a way to carry out a design and implementation process (one way from curriculum to practice), but instead, represents the ways that the two components interact with each other using a repeating cycle of interpreting the principles of the curriculum, adjusting to the context and getting feedback about how the curriculum is applied to practice. The curriculum provides a structure for the principles, while teacher practice converts the principles into practice contextualised, and then forms the basis from which teachers can continue to change/adjust their practice dynamically through feedback received through interaction with their students. This new model allows for a greater understanding of how to transition the theory of learning into an applied form.

Moreover, this study has provided detailed descriptions of the distributional pattern of the five dimensions of constructivism as evidenced in various choreography courses. In addition, it finds that, generally speaking, there is little to no situated learning occurring within the coursework traditionally referred to as choreography, and that there are structural consequences to this lack of situated learning. The results provide a basis for identifying the problem associated with reforming the curriculum, which is the need to address the difficulty of developing creativity, which may relate to a lack of experience and an inadequate use of techniques in developing creativity. Thus, in order to enhance creativity in dance education, it is recommended that situated learning be included as a structural component in the curriculum rather than simply requiring additional technique training hours.

Practical Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the study offers three specific recommendations for choreography curriculum developers.

First, conduct a five-dimension diagnosis of existing courses. Following the analytical framework of this study, curriculum developers can systematically examine their existing syllabi to identify weak-dimension areas and unbalanced zones in their curriculum system. This diagnosis does not pursue precise quantitative measurement but aims to reveal potential blind spots in the curriculum structure. Even a simple mapping exercise, identifying which dimensions are present and which are absent in each course, can yield valuable insights.

Second, embed situated learning elements into traditional courses. Traditional courses need not abandon their strengths in technical refinement but can introduce situated learning tasks in a modular fashion. Such an embedded strategy is more feasible than wholesale curriculum restructuring and is likely to be more readily accepted by teachers.

Third, create institutional conditions for cross-course integration. If the value of the Site-Specific Dance Course lies not only in itself but also in its capacity to supplement traditional courses' deficiencies in situated learning, then curriculum system optimization should not rely solely on adding new courses but should also focus on articulation and complementarity between different courses.

Fourth, the five constructivist dimensions can be translated into teaching strategies. Teachers might extend situated learning into authentic spaces, elevate collaboration from task division to structured negotiation, and embed reflection throughout the creative process rather than only at the end.

Limitations and Future Research

The authors acknowledge that the study has three limitations. For the first limitation, the findings are based on only one institution's curriculum; therefore, based on one specific institutional curriculum, additional institutional studies must validate or disprove the external validity of these findings. In order for readers to determine whether and how well the findings transfer to other settings, the researchers have provided ample contextual information that will allow readers to evaluate whether they would be valid comparisons to make based on their individual institutional contexts. However, in order to establish generalizability, the researchers suggest that additional studies testing the findings across multiple institutions would be useful.

For the second limitation, including only principle embedding, focused at the curriculum level, has prevented the proposed extended study from establishing whether or not structural differences identified within syllabi resulted in any identifiable student learning outcome differences.

This study was delimited to the curriculum design and teacher cognition levels, as our primary aim was to examine how constructivist principles are embedded in curriculum structures and how teachers interpret and enact these principles. While student perspectives on learning experiences would provide complementary information for understanding curriculum implementation, they were not within the scope of this investigation. Future research could build on this study by incorporating student interviews or surveys to further understand how students perceive different curricular structures.

Future research can be expanded upon in three additional areas: cross-institutional studies to investigate the generalizability of the findings; longitudinal studies to examine the temporal nature of constructivist teaching effects; and the inclusion of students' perceptions of the different curricular structures to provide a more complete picture of the link between the design, implementation, and experience of using those structures.

Ultimately, the value of constructivist learning principles in choreography curricula lies not in providing a mechanically replicable teaching template but in serving as a diagnostic question framework that prompts curriculum designers and teachers to persistently ask whether their curriculum provides sufficient structural opportunities for students' experiential transformation, social negotiation, and meaning-making. The analytical framework and empirical findings presented in this study represent an initial response to this question. This response may inspire further discussion and deeper exploration, both within dance education and across the broader field of arts pedagogy.

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