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MY DANCING REFLECTS YOUR TEACHING: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL EXPLORATION OF AFRICAN DANCE PEDAGOGY

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate relationship between personal dance experience and pedagogical practice, asserting that "my dancing reflects your teaching." Employing an autobiographical approach, it meticulously describes and analyses diverse teaching methods and techniques prevalent in dance pedagogy, particularly within an African context. Drawing from childhood encounters, formal student training, and current experiences as a dance educator, this paper explores the profound influences of master teachers and communal learning environments. It concludes by proposing culturally resonant and practically applicable teaching methods, emphasising the holistic transmission of indigenous knowledge, values, and contemporary expressions in African dance education.

Keywords: Dance pedagogy, African dance, Autobiography, dance education, cultural transmission, embodied knowledge, mentorship, indigenous knowledge

1. Introduction

Dance, as both an embodied art form and a pedagogical practice, holds profound cultural, educational and social significance. Within African contexts, dance transcends performance; it is a living archive of indigenous knowledge, values, spirituality and collective memory. Yet, the relationship between personal dance experience and teaching practice has not always been fully explored in scholarship. How one learns to dance, through childhood exposure, communal participation, or formal training, inevitably shapes how one transmits that knowledge to others. This dynamic is captured in the phrase “*my dancing reflects your teaching*”, which highlights the inseparability of personal embodiment and pedagogical approach. In this regard, this paper situates itself within this nexus of lived experience and teaching practice, adopting an autobiographical lens to critically examine the author’s journey as a learner and educator of dance. Beginning with formative childhood encounters, through structured training as a student, and into the present role as a teacher, the narrative highlights how African modes of learning, particularly the influence of master teachers and community-driven contexts, have shaped pedagogical philosophies and strategies.

The Echo of a Teacher's Step

Oh LORD, make our manifestations in accordance with your will and your actions with your people.

The invocation above, which is a prayer for purpose and alignment, really speaks to my path as a dance practitioner, a teacher and a scholar. My journey has been anything but straight; it started with a basic curiosity, developed into an unquestionable passion, and then matured into a deep calling that influences every facet of my life's work. My name is Kofi Anthonio, and I believe that dance is much more than just movement; it is the very expression of history, culture, and the limitless potential of human expression. My teaching philosophy, which is based on the progressive philosophies of Open Journals in Education (OJED, 2015), is the result of years of learning, unlearning, and relearning how to genuinely engage students in this profound art form, as I consider my career trajectory in dance education.

In the early days of my life as a student, like most learners, I was largely unaware of the great significance traditional and modern African dance held for cultural identity. I had a rudimentary understanding of movement at best. Yet with time came a deep appreciation for how African dance is really an embodiment of history, of struggles, and of victories. Dance became for me that language, an active articulation of time-two worlds where through dance every step and every gesture bears upon it the wisdom of the ancestors. This paper, therefore, is an exploration of how the teachings I received have indelibly marked my own dancing, and consequently, my approach to educating the next generation of dancers.

2. The Foundations of My Dance Journey: Early Encounters and Indigenous Pedagogy

My first experiences with dance were not limited to organised classes or official studios. Rather, they took place in the lively, social areas of my youth. Dance is an integral part of Ghanaian culture and is spoken in both serious rituals and joyful celebrations, as well as during quiet times of introspection. The foundation of my knowledge was this unofficial, frequently unwritten pedagogy.

2.1. *Learning By Osmosis: Community and Family as First Teachers*

With dance, one could say it is passed from one generation to another. I learned by observing the elders, participating in communal occasions with sheer enthusiasm, and simply imitating the movement that came naturally to me from the surrounding rhythms. The memories of the competitive times in dance at Hannah School Complex in Madina would forever be etched in my mind, alongside the 'blood encouragement' from Uncle Sela and other family members who, from an innate understanding of movement, cheered us on. This kind of culturally conducive learning system, steeped in observation, imitation, and uninhibited and active participation, granted me that culture-grounded and intuitive grasp of movement and rhythm as well as the sacred channel of meaning tying a number of dances in Ghanaian cultural life. I became a living archive: my body stored not only steps but also stories meant to be spoken, philosophical sayings, and the collective memory of those who shared the experience. This early exposure, wherein the boundaries of play, ritual, and performance blurred with ease, laid a solid groundwork that formal training could never hope to fully cover. As the great Pearl Primus (1998) observed, "dance in Africa is not a separate art, but a part of the whole complex of living," a truth I experienced long before I read it.

2.2. *The Unseen Hand: Early Mentors and Their Silent Lessons*

Beyond the immediate family, there were always older dancers or respected community members who, through their sheer presence and subtle guidance, acted as my first "teachers." Their corrections might have been as gentle as a guiding touch, as profound as a shared glance, or as precise as a rhythmic clap that subtly shifted my timing. This mentorship, often unspoken, taught me not just the mechanics of the

steps, but the very *spirit* of the dance—its emotional weight, its social function, and its unbreakable connection to our shared identity.

3. Formalising the Steps: The University and the Giants of Ghanaian Dance Pedagogy

An important turning point in my journey was when I started taking dance courses formally, especially at the University of Ghana's School of Performing Arts. Here, under the direction of renowned individuals who methodically codified, preserved, and innovated Ghanaian dance, the intuitive knowledge acquired during childhood met structured methodologies. From graduating with a First-Class degree in dance to going on to Legon for Master's and PhD programs, my academic journey was an ongoing conversation between tradition and theory. In terms of structured dance education, I can clearly recall the "gap I identified between Junior High School and University," which motivated me to close that gap through my own teaching.

3.1. *The Ghana Dance Ensemble: A Legacy Forged*

The Ghana Dance Ensemble (GDE) was established in October 1962 and stands today as a monumental symbol of Ghana's commitment to its cultural heritage. Its formation was essentially the fruition of a collaboration between the Government's Institute of Arts and Culture and the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, deeply rooted in President Kwame Nkrumah's vision for national unity and cultural emancipation. The GDE was established as a professional company to promote Ghanaian music and dance arts internationally under the discipline of fieldwork and research experimentation. There had always been a need for the company to find and train "young, talented artistes with mastery of particular dance forms from different parts of the country" to display a dizzying array of dances in their repertoire. It is from this rich historical background that my own life was nurtured (Fabian, 1996) (Gde GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE Celebrating the Soul of Ghana, n.d.).

3.2. Professor Albert Mawere Opoku: Architect of the Stage

My formal training introduced me to the monumental life works of Professor Albert Mawere Opoku, First Artistic Director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble (1962-1976). Professor Opoku was a visionary sculptor who painstakingly researched and documented varied traditional Ghanaian dances and fashioned them from the brilliant and effervescing communal practice into engrossing stage works. His teaching demanded precision and clarity of indigenous forms and also their theatrical presentation. He taught us how to condense the vastness of a village square performance onto a very small proscenium stage, yet without losing any of its power or spiritual presence. His systems and principles in choreography remain to this day the backbone of the GDE repertoire, including in particular the stately Akan Ceremonial Dance Suite and in a wholly impassioned fashion from 1965, the Lamentations for Freedom Fighters (Gde GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE Celebrating the Soul of Ghana, n.d.). This really inculcated in me the discipline of working with such complex cultural metaphors in a form of choreography in very basically presented, simple, and emotionally powerful kinetic imagery. Thus, he really "set Ghanaian dance for the formal stage," simply bursting with "brilliant energy of new nationhood."

3.3. Professor Francis Nii Yartey: Innovator and Storyteller

After Professor Opoku, Professor Francis Nii Yartey, who served as artistic director of the GDE from 1976 to 1992 and later from 1993 to 2006 of the National Dance Company, provided a truly transformative force, so to speak, within the realm of dance. The emphasis during his tenure lay in a serious investigation of "African Dance Theatre (Gde GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE Celebrating the Soul of Ghana, n.d.). Nii Yartey pressed us to further investigate the story-telling capacity of dance, moving equally with traditional forms and modern-day consciousness. His pedagogy promoted comprehensive degrees of creative freedom and thematic explorations that continuously tested the limits of what Ghanaian dance could articulate. He taught us that dance is never fixed; it is a dynamic and evolving language that addresses today's pressing issues. These powerful choreographic declarations,

such as "The Legend of Okoryoo" (which intertwined dance, theatre, and poetry) and "The King's Dilemma" (a 1978 work founded on Northern Ghanaian dances), are his means of communicating compelling stories through movement. He truly "interrogates his own heritage and dialogues vigorously with other cultures" (Nii-Yartey, 2016).

3.4. Mr. Seth Newman Asare: Discipline, Spirit, and Cultural Authenticity

My interactions with Mr. Seth Newman Asare could be described as deeply formative experiences that cultivated within me a rigorous discipline and deep spiritual connection to dance. He was, in his own right, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Ghana and founder of International Christian Dance Fellowship (ICDF)-Ghana with much esteem, and Mr. Asare Newman stressed his technical movements with an insistence on the excellence and punctuality of performance. I remember my days when he would expect you to be mindful of every detail in class; otherwise, he would exclaim humorously, "I don't go back!" or "I don't remark!" in response to a missed cue. More than just technique, though, his in-class teachings were about African dances as legitimate expressions of faith and the dances were an offering to God, a way of communicating, and a means of realising cultural identity: this was the essence of the African dance tradition. His instruction in "drum language," where every drum strike and rhythm carries meaning, and in the meaning that accompanies every gesture, was profound and bolstered the holistic understanding of African dance. As was said in one of the tributes published after his death, he had "inspired me to remember, awaken and lift up the dances of my people as an offering of praise and worship to Almighty God."

3.5. Emmanuel Ampofo Duodu: The Bridge between Tradition and Theatricality

My knowledge of dance was also enhanced by Emmanuel Ampofo Duodu, a renowned founding member and later Artistic Director of the GDE (1993-1997). His work centered on the meticulous reworking of traditional dances for the stage, frequently renaming them and creating original works such as the poignant "The Slave Trade" and the humorous army drill "Nsabor (The Drill)." He offered a sophisticated viewpoint on cultural authenticity in performance through his painstaking investigation of Akan traditional behaviors and the geographic influences on movement and costume. A critical ability for any aspiring dance educator, he taught us the delicate art of maintaining the integrity of traditional forms while making them interesting and approachable for a wider audience. I remember watching him, an Akan, perform Ga Kpanlogo with such precision, illustrating the GDE's ability to weave a "seamless fabric of unity in diversity" (Gde GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE Celebrating the Soul of Ghana, n.d.). Indeed, according to Duodu (Baffour, n.d.), before colonisation, traditional music and dance were grouped into categories such as social, ritual, and court or palace music and dance, each with narratives that mandated the ethics of performance and arrangement of performers.

3.6. Dr. Benjamin Obido Ayettey: The Scholar-Practitioner

Studying under the distinguished scholar and accomplished performer Dr. Benjamin Obido Ayettey (Artistic Director of GDE 2002-2015) provided a special fusion of academic rigor and real-world experience. Dr. Ayettey, a Fulbright Scholar and former Artistic Director of the GDE, emphasised the analytical elements of dance in her classes, pushing us to comprehend the social, political, and historical backgrounds of movements (Gde GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE Celebrating the Soul of Ghana, n.d.). He demonstrated how dance could be a powerful medium for social criticism and cultural dialogue by skillfully fusing traditional and modern methods. His focus on the "drum language" as an exact movement guide struck a deep chord with my own intuitive understanding and offered a methodical framework for expressing these intricate relationships. His choreographic work, such as "Kusum Gboo," explored Ga religious and social culture, further cementing the idea of dance as a living cultural text. Furthermore, his scholarship, as seen in "Jumping like a Kangaroo: Music and the Dance in the Campaign Strategy of Ghanaian Political Parties" (Ayettey, 2016), exemplifies how he views dance not just as an art form but as a powerful medium for political and social expression, reflecting his belief in dance as a potent tool for social commentary and cultural discourse.

3.7. Adjetey Klufio: The Global Ambassador and Fusionist

Adjetey Klufio's Path, from principal dancer of the National Dance Company to respected scholar and co-founder of the US-based Osagyefo Dance Company, is a flawless portrait of the global dissemination and active nature of Ghanaian dance. His "African Fusion Technique," which blends traditional African dance with innovative techniques like those of Lester Horton, is a testament to his inventive intelligence. I recall his impressive performing resume with the National Dance Company, including the honorary distinction of having performed for three United States Presidents: Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama.

One of the standout experiences in his career, and the joy of Ghanaian dance, was when he performed at BAM Dance Africa in New York City in 2012. The New York Times described his performance as "spectacular and subtle," strong testimony to the artistry he infuses into the dance. What this shows is the capacity of Ghanaian dance, when presented with skill and authenticity, to find and move diverse audiences worldwide.

Apart from performance, Adjetey Klufio is also engaged academically as an Assistant Dance Professor at Coker University and through initiatives like his "Nehor" podcast that offers a precious platform for dance discourse in Ghana. His profession truly demonstrates the "dancing reflects the teaching" even across continents and stylistic nuances, inspiring future generations to be proud of both their roots and global opportunities.

3.8. Dr. Sylvanus Kwasi Kuwor: Indigenous Knowledge and Communicative Sensitivities

Of the pantheon of my mentors, Dr. Sylvanus Kwasi Kuwor is remarkable for his deep insight into indigenous knowledge systems and the communicative sensitivities contained in African music and dance. He helped shape my insight that these performances are not forms of entertainment, but vital repositories of indigenous knowledge systems and performance-based communicative sensitivities (Anthonio, 2025; Durham & Geurts, 2024; Kuwor, 2018;). Dr. Kuwor's teaching was centered on the absolute interdependence of music, movement, and story, repudiating any reductionist approach to considering dance in isolation. He taught me to consider every movement, every rhythm as a carrier of deep cultural symbolism and historical record and to realise that dance is a potent means of cultural heritage and knowledge transmission. His work influenced my own doctoral research, which I conducted on how music and dance practices encompass worldviews and philosophies that persist over time and space. This aligns with the broader field of ethnomusicology, which explores the cultural and social aspects of music and dance, as extensively documented by scholars like Nketia J. H Kwabena (Nketia, 2000). Furthermore, the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge systems into dance education in Ghana has been a significant area of research (Frances E. Owusu-Ansah & Gubela Mji, 2013).

3.9. Mr. Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah: The Keeper of the Flame and Dynamic Leader

Another formative presence on my path was Mr. Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah, who was Artistic Director of the Ghana Dance Ensemble between 1997 and 2002, succeeding Emmanuel Ampofo Duodu. Mr. Sowah was not only a director; he was a dynamic performer and a painstaking custodian of the rich repertoire of the GDE. His leadership was directed to maintain the sanctity of the classical forms and infuse performances with renewed vitality. He was renowned for being a mighty performer and his determination to uphold the traditional dances in veracity and passion. As a former lecturer and former head, Department of Dance Studies, School of Performing Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, his academic and practice input was limitless. He ensured that the foundation principles laid by Opoku and Yartey remained vibrant, and he was a notable link in the leadership chain that shaped my knowledge of true Ghanaian dance. His commitment to the living tradition of Ghanaian dance shaped my own

commitment to performance and pedagogy (Gde GHANA DANCE ENSEMBLE Celebrating the Soul of Ghana, n.d.).

4. My Pedagogy: Weaving Tradition with Innovation

As a contemporary dance educator, I have also consciously worked to incorporate these influences in both philosophy and teaching. I try to create an educational environment that fosters respect for the beautiful and rich legacy of African dance but at the same time equips students with technical skills and other analytical skills necessary for contemporary artistic expression. From the OJED (2015) philosophy, with its emphasis on cultural relevance and student-centered learning, my style was formed, whereby I view myself as a mentor-a guide helping students realise their own special potential rather than an authority.

4.1. The Holistic Approach: Body, Mind and Spirit

Influenced by my own practice and the knowledge of my teachers, I emphasise a holistic approach to teaching dance. That is:

Rhythmic Literacy: Not simply the counting of the beats, I teach students to acquire the true "language of the drum," how certain rhythmic patterns govern movement quality, emotional content, and even philosophical concepts, as Dr Kuwor, Dr. Benjamin Obido Aywett, and Mr. Oh! Nii Kwei Sowah taught me. This understanding is deeply rooted in the foundational scholarship on African music, which highlights the intricate relationship between rhythm, language, and culture (Nketia, 1974) (Nketia, 2000). This includes the "vocalisation of drum text" and "textualisation of drum text" as central learning materials (Anthonio, 2025).

Cultural Contextualisation: All the dances are preceded with their rich historical, social, and spiritual contexts. This makes students aware of why they are moving in a particular way so that they may be connected to the essence and cultural authenticity, something promoted by Professor Mawere Opoku and Emmanuel Ampofo Duodu. My own research work during my doctoral studies on the indigenous knowledge systems of the Anlo Ewe, examining how their music and dance reflect worldviews, supports this even further.

Embodied Storytelling: Drawing inspiration from Professor Nii Yartey's practice, I invite students to realise the storytelling potential in their movement, using dance as a rich storytelling and social commentary medium, illustrating the idea that "If dance is an expression of life, then it must empower others to express their own lives through movement." This includes the "description of movement using the coded meaning explored by the indigenes."

4.2. Balancing Technical Excellence with Creative Expression

My philosophy is that dance is a creative practice – one that requires technical excellence but also emotional depth and personal expression. I tell my students, "Technique is the language of dance. But creativity is its soul." While technical skill is important – providing the tools to express ideas clearly and powerfully – I also encourage students to see technique as a means of self-expression, not a set of rules. As Bannon (2010) says, "the integration of our physical, intellectual and emotional selves that can occur in learning in dance has been advocated by many theorists and practitioners as essential to understanding the holistic benefits of education in and through dance". This resonates with me.

I want to create a space where students feel safe to take risks, to try new things, to experiment with movement, to play with different rhythms and to step outside their comfort zones. Dance is an act of vulnerability – it is about showing up as yourself, whether you are performing for an audience or in a studio surrounded by peers.

4.3. Collaboration, Creativity and Cultural Awareness

Any form of art requires a team to be a success. I believe that the greatest creative leaps are found in collaboration between people coming together to share ideas, learn new things, and challenge one another. My instructive approach is a collaborative creative process, in which students work together on the choreography, the performance, and then the editing of an idea. It encourages collaboration and boosts the creativity so pivotal in dancing.

In accordance with the mission of OJED to foster global awareness and understanding (Geneva Gay, 2018), I also ensure that my students experience diverse forms of dance, African traditional dances to modern dance, classical ballet to breakdance (hip-hop)(Amegago, 2011). The diversity of this experience allows them to have a greater appreciation of dance as a global art form, above any one tradition or culture. Through embracing diversity, students come to value the language of dance that unites us all across cultures. My MFA thesis on the application of video as an instructional tool in traditional African dance showcased the potential of technology to close age gaps and keep indigenous forms alive, emphasising that "Technology is a bridge, not a barrier." This emphasis on integrating technology for cultural transmission aligns with contemporary research on digital dance literacy and curriculum development (Risner & Anderson, 2008).

4.4. Reflection, Assessment and Continuous Learning

Lastly, in my opinion, assessment in dance is not about traditional grading. Its goal is to encourage introspection and ongoing development. In my opinion, evaluation ought to be a continuous procedure in which students get helpful criticism that directs their growth as artists. In order to help students take charge of their education, I promote self-evaluation and introspection in my classes. This process of encouraging students to critically evaluate their own learning and performance aligns with research on the importance of reflection in educational settings (Leijen et al., 2012).

"The journey of a dancer never ends. Every class and every performance is a chance to improve. This conviction guides my approach to evaluation. I see errors as priceless teaching moments rather than as failures. I assist students in honing their abilities and expanding their knowledge of the profound art form as well as themselves by giving them constructive criticism. The idea that "teaching and learning involves far more than dance technique and control, and that teachers need a wide range of teaching strategies to motivate and engage their students" (Sööt & Viskus, 2014) is in line with this.

5. Proposed Teaching Methods and Techniques for Practical Dance Pedagogy

Based on my experiences and the enduring legacies of my teachers, I propose the following methods for effective dance pedagogy in an African context, designed to be both culturally authentic and adaptable for the modern student:

5.1. Immersive Rhythmic Training through Song-Dancing and Textualisation

This method begins each session with focused rhythmic exercises using traditional drums (e.g., *Agbadza*, *Gota*, *Kpatsa*, *kpanlogo* drums) and body percussion. Crucially, it integrates "song-dancing" as an "integrative pedagogical methodology" (Anthonio, 2025), where students vocally imitate drum patterns using syllables or phonetic sounds. Students learn to identify and respond to specific drum patterns before translating them into movement. This includes the "vocalisation of drum text" and "textualisation of drum text" as direct methods. For instance, in teaching the *Gota* music and dance, we might use vocalisations like: "Giden toto tete dza / Dza dza dza dza gen gen" for the beginning drum text, "Kere le kere le kere le / kere le kere le" for the turning drum text, and "Tento tento tento to to / Dra dza giden to" for the end phrase (Anthonio, 2025). This vocalisation aids students in internalising complex drum patterns and enhances their rhythmic sensitivity. As Mr. Seth Newman Asare taught, the drum is the "language" of the dance. Mastery of rhythm is fundamental to authentic African dance. This

deepens the "musical structure" aspect of dance transmission as described by Staro (1991). The integration of song-dancing and textualisation "enhances students' emotional connectivity, rhythmic awareness, and performative authenticity" (Dzameshie, 2015; Opoku, 2017).

5.2. Cultural Storytelling and Contextualisation through Textualisation of Drum Rhythm

This method involves presenting the historical, social, and spiritual context of a dance through oral narratives, visual aids (including video demonstrations of traditional settings), and interactive discussions before teaching a new dance. This is complemented by the "textualisation of drum rhythm," where verbal descriptions represent rhythmic patterns and characteristics (Anthonio, 2025). This technique allows drummers and musicians to communicate complex rhythms and musical ideas through language (Nketia, 1974; Agawu, 2003). Students are encouraged to research and share stories related to the dance. We incorporate elements of traditional storytelling (e.g., call and response, proverbs) into warm-ups or cool-downs, bringing the "verbal-textual" and "gestural" systems to life. For the Gota dance, the textualisation of drum rhythms provides direct instructions such as: "Get ready to start the dance" for the beginning drum text; "Turn around Turn around Turn around / Turn around Turn around" for the turning drum text; and "Get ready get ready get ready... dy... dy / Let us stop... now" for the end phrase (Anthonio, 2025). This also involves "description of movement using the coded meaning explored by the indigenes." Understanding the "why" behind the movement, as emphasised by Professor Mawere Opoku and Emmanuel Ampofo Duodu, deepens engagement and ensures cultural respect. This aligns with OJED's focus on cultural relevance and addresses the concern that students might learn "only movements without the history behind them or the intent and purpose of the movements" (Sims & Erwin, 2012).

5.3. Observation-Imitation-Innovation Cycle

This method involves presenting a traditional dance sequence, allowing students ample time to observe and imitate, and then challenging them to improvise and create variations based on the learned vocabulary. We start with clear, embodied demonstrations (the "visual system" of transmission). We provide individual, constructive feedback during imitation, then give open-ended creative prompts for improvisation that encourage personal expression within cultural boundaries. This mirrors indigenous learning methods while fostering creativity and adapting to contemporary performance needs, a balance championed by Professor Francis Nii Yartey and reflective of Anu Sööt and Ele Viskus's (Sööt & Viskus, 2014) call for moving beyond mere imitation.

5.4. Interdisciplinary Exploration

This approach incorporates poetry, visual arts, live music, drama, and even traditional crafts into dance classes. We study traditional art forms and costumes (such as the Kente cloth, which represents unity in diversity), work with musicians to provide live accompaniment, or draw inspiration for movement from spoken word or traditional proverbs. African arts are multi-textual and interdisciplinary by nature. This method offers a deeper, more genuine learning experience, as demonstrated by Professor Nii Yartey's dance theater and backed by Risner & Anderson (Risner & Anderson, 2008) on the function of technology. As the renowned African writer Chinua Achebe once said, "Art is man's constant effort to create for himself a different order of reality from that which is given to him." Dance, in this context, becomes a powerful tool for constructing and understanding our reality.

5.5. Reflective Practice and Critical Discourse

This approach includes peer feedback sessions, facilitated group discussions, and structured journaling. Video playback may be used for self-evaluation. Students examine their own and other people's performances, think back on their educational journeys, and have critical conversations regarding the development and applicability of African dance in modern culture. In line with the significance of reflection in dance pedagogy, this promotes critical thinking and academic engagement, two important

facets of Dr. Benjamin Obido Ayettey's scholarly approach (Leijen et al., 2012). It advances to true embodied knowing, surpassing the "transmission model of teaching" (Sööt & Viskus, 2014). As Nelson Mandela famously stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." In dance, this education empowers students to critically engage with their art and its societal impact.

6. Conclusion

The Dance of Life and the Future of African Dance Pedagogy

"My dancing reflects your teaching" is more than a personal sentiment; it encapsulates the profound and enduring impact of mentorship and cultural transmission in the journey of a dance artist and educator. From the communal rhythms absorbed in childhood to the rigorous academic training received under the guidance of giants like Professor Albert Mawere Opoku, Professor Francis Nii Yartey, Mr. Seth Newman Asare, Emmanuel Ampofo Duodu, Dr. Benjamin Obido Ayettey, Dr. Sylvanus Kwasi Kuwor, and Adjete Klufio, every lesson, whether explicitly taught or subtly imbibed, has shaped my artistic voice and my pedagogical approach.

My philosophy of dance education is a direct reflection of my belief that dance is an expression of life itself, fluid, ever evolving, and deeply connected to the world around us. The proposed pedagogical methods are not merely techniques; they are an homage to this rich lineage, designed to cultivate not just technically skilled dancers, but culturally aware, critically thinking, and creatively expressive individuals. As Staro (1991) defines, dance transmission involves "acting subjects (the one who transmits and the one who receives) and an object or a message to be transmitted through a medium or channel." My aim is to ensure this transmission is vibrant and meaningful, preserving the "rich traditions of African dance" and ensuring "its stories continue to be told—through movement, rhythm, and expression."

African dance pedagogy plays an even more important role in a world that is becoming more globalised. It is up to us all to preserve our beautiful legacy, encourage fresh expressions that speak to the realities of today, and make sure that the rich language of our bodies keeps telling our stories. We will preserve the rich traditions of African dance through expression, rhythm, and movement, making sure that the lessons taught by our teachers continue to influence and mold the following generation.

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