From 2001-2004, the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO) engaged in an extensive and encompassing research project funded by the United States Department of Education. Two administrators in the NDEO office, six key personnel, and 53 field researches amassed a body of literature about the teaching and/or learning of dance focused in the United States from 1926 until the present date. They scoured over 13,000 primary source materials from journals, libraries, universities, and even closets for published and unpublished documents.

The Research in Dance Education (RDE) project grew out of a long-term national need in dance education – a need to know what researchers in dance and allied fields have studied over 80 years, what they learned, and if, and how, existing research impacted teaching and learning in and through dance.” (Bonbright, 2004, p. ii)

An outcome of the project was a 130-page publication, Research Priorities for Dance Education: A Report to the Nation (RPDE), that was a summary of the information gleaned about research in dance education over the 76-year period encompassed by the study. An additional and ongoing outcome of the project was an online database, initially called the Research in Dance Education database (RDEdb), that served as an index of literature pertaining to the teaching and learning of dance in the United States. At the end of the study, the database contained information from 2,338 entries. The RPDE was based on calculations from these documents. However, in 2007 the RDEdb name was changed to the Dance Education Literature and Research descriptive index (DELRdi). The index continues to grow and currently contains over 4,900 documents. It is available to the general public online at the NDEO website: www.ndeo.org.

This paper will provide the rationale for the Research in Dance Education project and the questions it sought to answer. It explains the methodologies used in data collection and analysis of the data, a description of the analysis of the data, and the conclusions drawn by the
results found in the analysis. It will highlight major recommendations for future research in dance education. The conference paper will also instruct the audience about how to access and use the database, and suggest practical and effective purposes for its use.

Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

Dr. Jane Bonbright, Executive Director of the NDEO, often represented the field of dance education in legislative meetings or arts conventions. The request made from all the major arts organization was, “What research do you have that would support your position?” Music and Visual Arts Education organizations could respond with concrete information. Dance educators were not aware of a cogent body of literature toward which to direct the public. The RDE project therefore was organized to answer the following questions:

- What research exists in dance education? When was it done? Where is it located?
- What patterns, trends and gaps may be identified by analysis of these data?
- What are the implications for understanding the scope of this information for dance, arts education, and U.S. education?
- What recommendations for the future of dance arts education may grow out of this project? (Bonbright, 2004, p. ii)

As the project progressed and data came in from field researchers, an additional issue became apparent. Researchers in dance education had no idea what research had previously been explored, were not citing excellent research in their reviews of literature, and were therefore examining the same topics repeatedly as if they were pioneering the issues. A great need for the project was apparent.

Methodology of the RDE Project

The Research in Dance Education project was executed in three phases:

- Phase I: Data Collection
- Phase II: Data Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations
- Phase III: Development of the national online information database and descriptive index and establishment of Centers for Dance Education.

Phase III established mechanisms for the continuance of a document collection and dissemination of the research.
Phase 1: Data Collection

The period of data collection involved over 60 personnel. Dr. Jane Bonbright conceived of the project and wrote the grant proposal submitted by NDEO to the U.S. Department of Education. She served as its Project Director, oversaw all aspects of the project, and managed all finances. Dr. Rima Faber was Research Director. She coordinated the three Research Team Chairs and their three Coordinators, and the 53 Field Researchers, made assignments to the teams and reviewed each report on the documents assigned before they were entered into the database.

As alluded above, the structure of Data Collection involved three Content Areas:

- Unpublished Documents: theses, dissertations, monographs, proceedings, unpublished papers or technical reports
- Published Literature in Dance Education: journal articles in periodicals focusing on dance
- Published Literature in Other Disciplines: anthropology, arts and aesthetics, child development, cognition and neurology, educational psychology, medicine and science, body therapies, etc.)

Each team was led by a Chair and a team Coordinator who were considered “Key Personnel.”

- Unpublished Documents:
  Chair, Thomas K. Hagood
  Coordinator, Carol Press
- Published Literature in Dance Education
  Chair, Karen Bradley
  Coordinator, Loren Bucek
- Published Literature in Other Fields
  Chair, Sara Lee Gibb
  Coordinator, Susan Koff

Chairs and Coordinators assigned specific documents to the Field Researchers and mentored them in their reviews and the completion of their assignments. Coordinators worked directly with the Field Researchers and then passed their completed work to the Chairs, who examined the work again before sending it to the Research Director for

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final review. Each document in the database therefore went through three levels of inspection before entry.

Operational Definition of Dance Education:
An operational definition of Dance Education was developed in consideration of the needs of education in the United States plus the needs of dance education. A Grid Matrix was designed that included 20 Educational Issues across the top with 14 Populations Served and 27 Areas of Service down the left side. The resulting grid permitted cross-referenced totals to be tallied for each of the fields in order to determine statistics for analysis.


Dance Populations Served: Early Childhood and PreK, Grades K-4, Grades 5-8, Grades 9-12, Higher Education, Different Abilities, Seniors and Elderly, After School Programs, Outreach Programs, Private Studios, Artists, Administrators and Policy Makers, Community and Family, and World Cultures. (pp. 5-6)


The Issues were determined from a study by the U.S. Department of Education in 1998 that identified national educational issues of concern, plus issues that are nationally addressed or could potentially be addressed in dance education. The Populations Served were derived from the diverse populations that NDEO serves “to advance dance education centered in the arts.” The Areas of Service were identified from technical and professional services supporting teaching and learning in and through dance.
Time Period of Research:
The starting point of the 76-year span of the research in the project (1926-2002) was determined by the advent of focused dance education research in the program of Margaret H’Doubler when, in 1926, she established the first dance major program in American higher education at the University of Wisconsin. For purposes of data analysis, the cut-off date of the research tallied into the report statistics was August 31, 2002.

Procedures Manual (Bonbright, 2001):
In order to establish consistency of definitions and organized procedures, a comprehensive Procedures Manual was developed that outlined RDE methodologies, tools, procedures, content areas, definitions, timelines, and flowcharts of key personnel. A comprehensive Database Manual detailed all aspects of collecting data specific to the 150 fields. The RDE Procedures and Database Manuals were used by RDE Personnel to answer policy and procedural questions and standardize the collection and review processes.

Review Process:
It must be stressed that only primary source materials were reviewed; not abstracts or other synopses. Each Field Researcher provided a complete citation for each document including institutional or publication information and the document’s location. Basic content grid identification provided the fields to which the document applied. Methodology information was provided as well as a description of the document’s content. If a document included essential research characteristics, further description was provided to help flesh out deeper information about the content and results of the research.

The Research Methods, Research Techniques, and Essential Research Characteristics listed in the study were determined and defined through advisement and consultation with prominent dance and education researchers. It is recognized that different “schools” of research use a variety of definitions, but the delimitation of those definitions chosen for the study are outlined in the Procedures and Database Manuals.

For the purposes of the study, the documents were referenced in the categories of:

Research Methods: Descriptive, Correlation, Ethnographic and Anthropological, Evaluation, Curriculum, Historical or Biographical, Philosophical, Experimental and Quasi-Experimental. (2004, p. 9)

Essential Research Characteristics:
1. Does the research design pose clear and unambiguous question(s), problem(s), or effect(s)?
2. Does the design include a clear and reasoned discussion of appropriate methodologies for addressing a question(s), problem(s), or effect(s)?
3. Does the design include an organized and comprehensive review of related literature?
4. Does the design present clear and reasoned discussion of techniques and methods for collecting, recording, and storing data?
5. Does the design include a clear and concise analysis of the data and present a clear and organized set of conclusions?
6. Does the design present an organized and relevant set of references and bibliographic citations? (2004, p. 9)

Phase II: Data Analysis

Between the study dates of June 1, 2001 and August 31, 2002, a total of 2,339 documents were accessed for inclusion in the analysis report. A total of 21 grid matrix reference charts were developed to show composite reference numbers for each of the 820 content field cells in the Grid Matrix. From these statistics, patterns, trends, and gaps could be determined that provided interesting and important information about dance education research and literature.

Time Periods:
For purposes of analysis, the seventy-six years of the study were divided into four time periods based on important evolutionary changes in the field of dance education.

- 1926-1950: From the initiation of the first dance major program in higher education to the post World War II era.
- 1951-1964: From the post World War II years to the period of educational and social reforms of the Johnson Administration’s Great Society programs.
- 1965-1979: From the years of the Great Society reforms to the end of the decade of the “dance boom” in higher education and the initiation of federal interest in, and support of, the arts in the United States.
• 1980-2002: From the end of the “dance boom” to the development of dance as an art form in education with federal support expanding to arts education legislation, policy, and funding. (2004, p. 7)

Chapters:
For the purposes of reporting, each Content Area Chair and Co-Chair co-authored a chapter providing analysis of their area of the project in the Research Priorities for Dance Education: A Report to the Nation. Dr. Jane Bonbright wrote the first chapter of the publication, an explanation of the methodology of the study. Dr. Rima Faber provided a synthesis and analysis of all three content areas. The final chapter of the RPDE offers recommendations to further research in dance education.

Some Significant Findings:
1. It was discovered that much of the research and literature for dance education is being authored by dance educators in higher education. This is logical for several reasons:
   • Professors in higher education are expected, if not required, to engage in research and publish their work for academic recognition.
   • Students in higher education are required to write papers, theses, and dissertations depending on their level of matriculation.
   • Institutions of higher education provide the resources and environments in which to pursue research.

   However, it was also revealed that over half of the research performed in higher education is written about topics of higher education (55.1%). One third of the research focused on issues of K-12 education (33.3%). “This left the remaining 10 populations significantly under-researched and underserved: Artists, Private Studios, Community and Family, Administrators and Policy Makers, World Cultures, Different Abilities, Early Childhood, After School, Seniors and Elderly, and Outreach. (2004, p. 60)

2. The major portion of literature on dance education in K-12 institutions came from journal articles and not from unpublished documents (theses, dissertations, papers or proceedings). Review of the documents revealed that many of the studies “lasted only the duration of the dissertation or thesis project, and did not become an ongoing aspect of the school’s educational mission. These factors are unfortunate for both dance programs and research in the United States.” (2004, p. 62)

3. Only 3.9% of the research focused on dance education in early childhood, 91 documents in 76 years. Field Researchers located only 11 documents before 1965, the year Head Start was established. Likewise, research in Cognitive Development received only 2.2% of the research
attention, 51 documents total. “Many agencies at federal, state, and local levels support Early Childhood education programs and teaching and learning in Early Childhood. Curricula and funding for programs in Early Childhood must benefit from informed data about the impact of dance education in early childhood” (2004, p. 65).

4. Topics concerning areas of standards (0.3%), assessments (2.2%), certification (0.9%) licensure (0.2%), and funding (2.5%) received remarkably little attention. These are topics that greatly affect the quality and quantity of dance education offered throughout the United States. (2004, p. 67)

One hundred and twenty-nine pages of findings are available in the summary report Research Priorities for Dance Education: A Report to the Nation publication which is available through the NDEO website. The publication may be purchased in the online store, or may be downloaded from the Research section of the website.

Phase III: The Research in Dance Education Database and the Centers for Research in Dance Education

The Research in Dance Education Project developed two major outcomes to continue the work of the project, address the recommendation for dance education research presented in Chapter 6 of the report to the nation, and fulfill the needs of the nation.

1. The Research in Dance Education Database (RDEdb)
2. The establishment of Centers for Research in Dance Education

After the completion of the project, Dr. Rima Faber stepped down as Research Director, and Dr. Anne Dunkin assumed the position of Director of the Research in Dance Education database. Dr. Dunkin had been a major Field Researcher for the project’s collection of documents. She continues to search and access documents and review them for the expansion of the database. She represents the DELRdi at NDEO conferences, mentors the Directors of the Centers for Research in Dance Education, and determines the needs of the online programs as the project grows and evolves.

The Dance Education Literature and Research descriptive index

The Research in Dance Education database survives as a descriptive index embedded in the website of the National Dance Education Organization (www.ndeo.org). The RDEdb has grown from the 2,339 documents analyzed in the RDE study and morphed into the Dance
Education Research and Literature descriptive index (DELRdi) that includes over 4,900 entries and the addition of international documents written in English. During the collection period it began as a simply constructed Access database that migrated into a relational web-based program shortly after completion of the project. In 2009, when NDEO entered a new website program with Club Express, an entirely new and greatly improved modular program was constructed for the DELRdi.

Public Access to the Database:
The database may be accessed by the general public by entering the NDEO website at www.ndeo.org. The menu on the left of the screen contains a listing for “Research (DELRdi).” When highlighted, this icon provides several choices. The first choice listed is a link to enter the database to search for documents. The second choice, “About DELRdi,” provides a brief description of the project and the descriptive index, how to access it and use it as a member or non-member, and how an institution of learning can obtain a library license. The third choice contains instructions about submitting work that you notice is missing from the database, including a permission form for reproducing the abstract of the work or full text. The fourth choice is a brief description of the project, the RPDE including the ability to download the report in its entirety, a brief description of the DELRdi, and an overview about the Research Centers established for the continuance of the work. The fifth choice is a more in-depth description of the Research Centers and their work. And the last link provides a more complete description of the RPDE, the ability to download the book in its entirety, a listing of the Recommendations for Research in Dance Education, and a call to action to fulfill the needs of the nation.

Levels of Access:
The DELRdi is available to everyone, but there are three levels of access: “Guest” access for the general public; member access for active members who can enter through logging in; and Library access at institutions that hold a library annual subscription to the database.

Guest access is available for free to everyone by entering the database at www.ndeo.org (the non-member side of the NDEO database), highlighting the Research (DELRdi) icon, and clicking on the DELRdi. Guests will be able to access a full citation of the works requested in their search. They will receive the same information offered by library card catalogues, but the location information received will be information about where the document can be publicly located rather than information specific to a library.

NDEO Members must log into the member side of the NDEO website in order to obtain a deeper member level of access. The result of their
search produces information containing the citation, location of the work, and a descriptive portrait of the work. This makes it possible to determine whether the work is appropriate for the research intended. NDEO is in process of collecting and including full abstracts of the documents, and is beginning to access full text for whatever documents are legal in consideration of copyright limitations.

Library subscriptions offer the greatest inclusion. When an institution subscribes to the DELRdi, access is given through an institutional IP address so that every student and faculty member of the institution may gain full and unlimited access to the descriptive index at all times. This total access is especially important in that all departments of a university can obtain whatever research is available concerning their field and dance education (i.e. anthropology, education, psychology, sociology, and other arts), and students and faculty of in all areas of learning can be informed about the educational importance of dance education. An annual Library subscription to the DELRdi costs $850.

Searching Data:
The search capabilities of the DELRdi have become quite flexible. Searches may be initiated either by the DELRdi document number, author, title, year, journal or publication, publisher or institution, or keyword search. Searches can be targeting by clicking on the research fields of the project listed on the right. Holding down the control tab while making selections will simultaneously highlight all the fields selected. Holding down the shift tab will highlight all the categories between those selected. In addition, there is an option for an “or” or “and” search. An “or” search will include documents containing information about each of the categories selected and will often provide a great number of document citations. An “and” search will select documents sifted for information about all the categories selected and will therefore limit the number of citations. Please know the “Reset” button on the bottom must be clicked before changing search criteria.

Data Available:
As mentioned above, citation and location data is available to everyone. In addition, NDEO members and individuals who have access through library subscriptions may obtain information including the research methodology, research techniques, the essential research characteristics, and a narrative descriptive portrait or the document abstract. If the research included characteristics of rich research, the review includes a narrative description of the research methodology, its importance to the field, and related possible extensions of the study. NDEO is now encouraging authors to sign a “right to reproduce” form so full text can be included in the DELRdi.
Uses of the Descriptive Index:
The DELRdi will broaden learning and enhance teaching in a variety of venues.

For students:
Students working on assignments or papers will find DELRdi a targeted resource for finding information about any topic concerning dance education. In the Research Recommendations included in the RPDE, students can learn which topics have been exhausted and which need more information to move the field of dance education forward. Students can gain clear perspective about the range and depth of the work previously accomplished, and can include an informative and complete Review of Literature in their scholarly work.

For faculty:
The DELRdi serves as an efficient tool for determining class resources for coursework. Faculty can search any author, topic, or research methodology to augment a curriculum design and enhance professional research. A broad perspective is available with the ability to learn what has been accomplished in related fields of study. DELRdi also makes it easy for faculty to check topic potential, or the resources listed by their students in papers or assignments. The inclusion of research is also important in preparing proposals for publication. Publishers require market analysis and lists of previous work on a given topic. DELRdi provides easy access to data.

For administrators:
Research will inform administrators who are directing dance education programs about the breadth and scope of excellent dance education and what is the most effective pedagogy. It will enable program directors to develop knowledgeable criteria for assessment of success.

For private schools of dance:
Studios and schools of dance will find written literature and research helpful in learning about classroom management, injury prevention, injury treatment, and new techniques of pedagogy. The DELRdi has also been proven useful in grant writing. Citing research often makes proposals far more official, supports claims, and provides greater in-depth data to inform the proposal readers.

For advocacy:
Research documentation is of paramount importance in effective advocacy for dance education. Legislators and officials need statistics and research to document argument.

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To Submit Research and Literature Documents:
In order for the Dance Education Literature and Research descriptive index to continue to grow, it must include current work from the field. Researchers and writers must inform the NDEO and Anne Dunkin about their work and, hopefully, submit an abstract (see directions on the NDEO website). NDEO now has the facility to post full text whenever possible. The DELRdi will continue to grow and remain alive as a vital resource with contributions from the community.

Centers for Research in Dance Education

The third phase of the Research in Dance Education project included the establishment of two Centers for Research in Dance Education: the first at Temple University, and the second at New York University. Other universities have expressed interest in establishing a Center for Research in Dance Education but each center must have a unique purpose and function.

Temple University:
In 2004, Temple University became the first center formed as an outcome of the RDE project. Twenty thousand dollars was given to the Dance Department to staff a Director of the Center, set up a designated office space, and establish computer access to the RDE database. A graduate doctoral student was hired to serve as Director. She was selected for her fundraising abilities so that the center could be assured continuity and longevity.

The focus of the Temple University Center became the exploration of effective research methodologies for research in dance education. In 2005, Dr. Thomas Hagood, Chair of Unpublished Literature in the RDE Project and Professor at Florida International University, and Dr. Luke Kahlich, Chair of Dance at Temple University, organized a symposium to which approximately 20 prominent leaders of dance education research were invited to discuss issues, concerns, and definitions relating to research methodologies in dance education. An extensive reporting of the symposium was its outcome, available through NDEO.

New York University:
The faculty at New York University enthusiastically embraced the focus of the continuance, growth, and extensive use of the database throughout the NYU community and the greater community of New York City. Pamela Bloom, Director of Bobst Library, provided RDEdb access to all NYU students, faculty, and administrators, and attached it to the database information provided throughout the library system. Barbara Bashaw, in
the Department of Dance Education in the Steinhardt School of Education, organized a student director for RDE from work scholarship funds available to Dance Education, and mentored her students about the project with the assistance of Dr. Anne Dunkin from NDEO. Bashaw has extensive connections for dance education in New York City in higher education, private studios, and the public school system, and organized RDEdb workshops to involve a wide range of constituents. The NYU Center, now under the purveyance of Dr. Susan Koff, continues to be active with its assistance and involvement.

The Future of Research in Dance Education

The Research Priorities for Dance Education: A Report to the Nation clearly outlines the directions needed in research for the field of dance education to move forward. However, although almost all the RPDE books that were published have been disseminated, and the information is freely available online, it is unclear to NDEO and the field how many the recommendations in the final chapter are being heeded.

Dance Education is partial to descriptive anecdotal and experiential research. It is clear that, in the fields of education, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and other “ologies,” experimental research is a strong bias. At present, there is a discrepancy between the qualitative or anecdotal approaches preferred in dance research and quantitative analysis required for dance to be accepted in other fields in order for dance to be acknowledged as a vital educational force. The future success of the impact of dance education research depends on how well dance education can communicate its importance to broader communities.

A Call to Action

The final statement in the RPDE is a call to action.

Research Priorities for Dance Education: A Report to the Nation is a call to action for dance, arts, research, and educational communities. The National Dance Education Organization urges the nation to heed this call for the good of future generations involved in all aspects of teaching and learning. Further, it is urged that both public and private funds support research in these domains for the good of the nation, and for our children. (p. 102)

Acknowledgements:
Gratitude and recognition is due to Dr. Jane Bonbright for her great vision, wisdom, and fortitude in both the conception and execution of the RDE Project and its outcomes. Appreciation is also given to the 7 key-personnel who led the effort, to the 53 field researchers who served as
worker bees, and to Anne Dunkin for her continued service. A special thanks to all of you who have written about and added to the knowledge base of dance education.

Notes


2 The mission of NDEO is “to advance dance education centered in the arts.”

References


Biographical Information:

Rima Faber, Ph.D., American University (Ph.D.-1997, M.A.-1994), Bennington College (B.A.-1965); director/choreographer/performer of Consolidated Energy dance company (1971-77); founder/director of the Primary Movers Dance School and Company (1979-2000); performed with Liz Lerman (1978-1980); soloist for Pola Nirenska (1980-1992); founding President/Executive Director of Ndeo, Program Director for 12 years; chaired development of Standards for Dance in Early Childhood and Standards for Learning and Teaching Dance in the Arts; Research Director in NDEO’s Research in Dance Education initiative, co-editor of Research Priorities for Dance Education; NDEO Visionary Award (2002); Metro DC’s Dance Education Award (2006); founder/current President of Capital Region Educators of Dance Organization.