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Embodied pedagogical interaction in music and dance educators' expanding professionalism

Katja Sutela, Sanna Kivijärvi, and Eeva Anttila

Introduction

Professionalism in the fields of music and dance education is increasingly expanding towards new working environments, wider social purposes, and new kinds of participatory practices. The landscape of education in general is changing while aligning with and confronting wider complex societal changes, such as the increasing migration, inequality, and digitalisation. These contexts demand more than existing repertoires of music and dance education, both pedagogically and artistically. Teachers are also required to be able to respond in the moment to unfamiliar situations and interactions in a spontaneous and sensitive manner. In diverse communities where cultural and linguistic meanings are increasingly pluralistic, it seems timely to re-examine and expand the notion of pedagogical interaction. In this chapter, we argue that *embodied pedagogical interaction* is a key element in expanding professionalism in music and dance education.

We will approach this topic through theoretical discussion related to embodied pedagogical interaction and, within it, *embodied dialogue* and *ethical know-how*. These notions enable music and dance educators to develop pedagogical approaches that are relevant in changing educational institutions, as well as in entirely new contexts. We will present two illustrative case examples and explore how these notions may be applied within music and dance pedagogy, especially in diverse learning environments, where professionals have to be able to respond in the moment in a spontaneous manner.

Expanding professionalism in music and dance education

Professionalism in music and dance education can be understood as “shifting phenomena” (Whitty, 2008, p. 32) and “continuously reworked” (Burnard, 2013, p. 5). Music and dance teachers' professionalism most often involves an interplay between being educators and artists without situating these disciplines within a hierarchy or giving preference to the domain that was developed first (Koff & Mistry, 2012). Following Bowman's (2007) analysis of the music education field, the arts education professional is more than an artist with pedagogical training or an arts specialist who happens to teach. In our view, the competences that

constitute professional expertise in music and dance education need to become broader as the professionals increasingly work in new areas and align their professionalism with the social turn (e.g. Bishop, 2006). With this turn it has become widely accepted, and even demanded, that music and dance education have to be accessible to everyone—regardless of abilities, skills, and background (Lehikoinen, 2018). Thus, the professionalism of the educator cannot be tied strictly to any predetermined aims, repertoires, or practices. Instead, the music and dance educator must expand her professional skills and practices beyond the subject matter by becoming deeply aware of the needs and life worlds of students and the specific characteristics of the learning environment that may differ greatly from traditional educational institutions.

Expanding professionalism, thus, implies that educators must be capable of responsive and spontaneous pedagogical interaction in new situations and with diverse groups of learners. Making immediate decisions on how to include everyone and support their individual and collective learning requires that the educator engages in reciprocal interaction with the students under complex relational conditions. Questions of power and responsibility, and ethical dimensions of professional practices, including sensitivity to those students who have been marginalised in pedagogical interaction, have become more accentuated also within the academic field of arts pedagogy.

As embodiment and embodied cognition is a field of literature growing fast, and the main theoretical framework for embodied pedagogical interaction, a brief overview of these theories follows. In our view, these theories are significant in reconstructing professionalism and developing higher education in the field.

The embodied turn as a theoretical framework for expanding professionalism in music and dance education

The embodied turn stems from research fields such as embodied cognition, which understands the mind as inherently embodied and reasoning as shaped by the body (e.g. Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Shapiro, 2010) and phenomenology (e.g. Merleau-Ponty, 1962/2014), suggesting that individuals come to know the world, others, and themselves through their bodily sensations, movements, gestures, and embodied interactions.¹ Within music and dance education studies, the embodied turn has offered new insights for rethinking learning and knowing processes by questioning how learning takes place in music and dance classrooms, as well as how pedagogical practices may be developed so that diverse situations, groups, and needs are involved inclusively and holistically (Abril, 2011; Anttila, 2015b; Juntunen & Westerlund, 2001; Shapiro, 1999; Sutela et al., 2016; Sutela, 2020; Svendler Nielsen, 2015). These widening conceptions on learning and pedagogy inform pedagogical approaches even in familiar contexts and groups. Without a specific context in mind, dance education scholars have further utilised and developed the notion of embodied learning (Anttila, 2013, 2015a; Rouhiainen, 2011; Svendler Nielsen, 2015) that regards the human body and embodied activity as the foundation, locus, and medium for all learning. Embodied activity,

here, refers both to actual movement and to inner bodily perceptions, sensations, experiences, and physiological changes (Anttila, 2015b).

The epistemological view that relies on mind–body connection expands the notion of interaction and sees it as a complex process within the embodied subject in which sensations, emotions, social interactions, and cultural meanings are intertwined (Shapiro, 1999). The notion of *embodied dialogue* entails also a connection to critical, dialogical, and feminist views on pedagogy based on the notion of situated, embodied knowledge (Anttila, 2015a; Shapiro, 1999).

Embodied dialogue and ethical know-how in embodied pedagogical interaction

When students and teachers dance and play music together, they engage with the social and physical environment by dancing, swinging, conducting, playing instruments, clapping hands, and creating other percussions with their bodies. However, music and dance education professionalism involves not only an array of capacities for bodily actions (instrumental, musical, and motor skills), interactions (such as adjusting one’s playing and movements to others’) and for deploying materials in a specific environment (instruments, classrooms, accompaniment, movement material, or imagery) but also, a heightened ability for bodily listening. This ability is not a motor or technical skill. Rather, it involves mind–body integration and bodily awareness, coupled with a deep interest in the good of the other, that is, ethical awareness (see also van Manen, 2015, p. 20). Through educators’ full commitment and presence this embodied pedagogical interaction may develop towards *embodied dialogue*, where participants may sense being in “a constant flow of interaction with the world, much of which is non-verbal” (Anttila, 2003, p. 111). Embodied dialogue refers to a state of full engagement with oneself, others, and the environment, characterised by a responsive, listening, and sensitive way of attending to the events as they unfold.

Through embodied dialogue individuals are able to sense others and be holistically aware of others’ actions, feelings, intentions, and thoughts while attending to their subjectivity and positionality. Such awareness surpasses the reflective level of consciousness towards the bodily, or pre-reflective level where sensations, feelings, and emotions become activated (e.g., Anttila, 2003; Gallagher, 2017; Gallagher & Zahavi, 2016). When engaging in embodied dialogue the educator may be able to engage in a shared awareness and space with the student. Furthermore, embodied dialogue supports music and dance educators in developing open-ended, spontaneous, and improvisational approaches in their teaching practice, negotiating the aims and contents of education, and thus, gives space for the unpredictable.

In embodied dialogue, bodily consciousness is not only directed towards the individual’s lived experience, in which human beings sense and regulate their ways of being and acting in a situation, but also towards including others. Here, a person’s *body schema*—that is, a pre-consciousness of how and where the body is—and personal space extend to include others with whom she is interacting

(Gallagher, 2017; Soliman & Glenberg, 2014). The educators' awareness of the habitual patterns that become manifest in their pedagogical interaction is an example of sensitivity that is related to *ethical know-how* (Varela, 1999). This awareness helps educators to adjust their actions according to the situation at hand.

Neurophenomenologist Francisco Varela (1999) emphasises the role of immediate coping and readiness for action concerning the situation at hand in ethical expertise. In pedagogical situations this means that educator's actions do not stem entirely from reasoning and judgement and are not merely habit or obedience to rules. This *ethical know-how*, then, consists of educators' immediate, spontaneous, and intelligent pedagogical behaviour in educational situations (Varela, 1999). Varela has introduced the notion of "knowledge as enaction" that he has developed within the field of embodied cognition.² Knowledge as enaction means that

perception does not consist in the recovery of a pre-given world, but rather in the perceptual guidance of action in a world that is inseparable from our sensorimotor capacities, and that "higher" cognitive structures also emerge from recurrent patterns of perceptually guided action.

(Varela, 1999, p. 17)

Varela's perspectives lead to the question of how embodied, ethical know-how—which he contrasts with know-what, or knowledge of or about something (Varela, 1999, p. 19)—can be applied within the expanding professionalism of a music and dance educator.

However, a highly skilled professional is not necessarily capable to enhance embodied dialogue. Technical skills and motor actions may also be used mechanically, without sensitivity to one's own bodily sensations and to others' experiences on an embodied level. There is a difference in "using" one's body and in being embodied. In the latter, the ethical dimension comes with heightened sensitivity on an embodied, rather than rational, level. Increased emphasis on interactional presence and bodily awareness fosters embodied dialogue and ethical know-how. Embodied pedagogical interaction enables music and dance educators to work successfully in new contexts and in diverse learning environments.

Expanding professionalism and embodied pedagogical interaction in practice

We approach and reflect on our two cases³ from the theoretical frameworks and concepts presented above, unpacking embodied dialogue and ethical know-how in embodied pedagogical interaction. These cases represent pedagogical challenges related to verbal communication. The case contexts stem from the educational system changes in Finland. The first case context, the Resonaari Music Centre (Helsinki, Finland, www.resonaari.fi), is part of a music school network that follows the national core curriculum formulated by the National Board of Education. This government-coordinated and publicly funded educational system,

namely Basic Education in the Arts, has traditionally overlooked learners with disabilities, whereas Resonaari has widened the perspectives within the system by offering goal-oriented music education inclusively (Kivijärvi & Kaikkonen, 2015). The latter case example is situated in the context of a public school, more specifically, in a preparatory class where recently immigrated students study Finnish language before being placed in a regular instruction group. Such acculturation programmes within public schools have a short history in Finland until recent years due to increased immigration (Dervin et al., 2018).

Case 1: Embodied dialogue and ethical know-how in the context of music education

Aleksi, a seven-year-old boy, was in the middle of an assessment process at the Resonaari Music Centre, to determine whether music lessons or therapy would best suit his development. Since its establishment in 1995, Resonaari has provided opportunities for students with various types of disabilities to receive goal-oriented music education. As of 2020, 300 students of all ages are enrolled at Resonaari, where they attend music education in one-on-one and group lessons once or twice per week. Resonaari has chosen not to conduct entrance examinations, but some students undergo assessment periods to evaluate whether participation in music lessons or therapy is more suitable for their individual development.

According to the background information provided to Resonaari before the student's arrival, Aleksi had severe challenges with interaction, and his first lessons at Resonaari confirmed these difficulties. The teacher could not connect or interact with Aleksi, who wandered around the classroom and tested instruments independently. Aleksi reacted to neither instructions nor efforts to persuade him to try playing instruments with the teacher. During the first two lessons, the teacher tried to engage Aleksi with facial expressions, speech, other vocalisations, bodily gestures, and physical contact without any success. The teacher observed Aleksi's distraction and tried to determine whether there were any particular instruments that Aleksi seemed to find interesting. When Aleksi touched the instruments, the teacher asked, for example, "Would you like to play that?" and "Do you know what instrument that is?" and he tried to test the instruments with Aleksi. However, Aleksi stopped for only a few seconds in front of each instrument and then continued his restless and silent wandering around the classroom.

During the third lesson, the teacher directed Aleksi's attention to an activity as soon as he entered the classroom by placing a drumstick in front of him. Instinctively, Aleksi grabbed the drumstick with both hands, and immediately, the teacher started to sing. He improvised a song: "Up and down, up and down, up and down". At the end of the section, he sang: "and then we play". Aleksi and the teacher held the drumstick together and moved it up and down to the beat of the song. At the end of the section, the teacher offered Aleksi a djembe. Aleksi played his own solo after the second section ("and then we play"). The song was structured, and it always ended with Aleksi's solo. He understood when he should stop his solo and return to the first section of the song ("Up and down").

The up-and-down movement was challenging for him at first, but Aleksi quickly understood the idea of the song, and before long, he could play it by himself. The song guided Aleksi to the up-and-down movement, and the solo created a clear end to the activity. Aleksi had learned to perform his first song independently, and he remembered the song in later lessons. When Aleksi arrived at the next lesson, he took the drumstick and waited until the “up and down” song began. Aleksi understood music making and learning, and the song had created a new structure in his behaviour. Playing the song also helped the teacher and Aleksi interact, which opened possibilities for teaching and learning. After these initial lessons, Aleksi continued as a student at the Resonaari Music Centre.

As this case description shows, the teacher’s commitment to the embodied pedagogical interaction included both singing and body movements in response to music. The teacher’s ethical know-how was revealed as he immediately began singing in reaction to Aleksi grabbing the drumstick. The teacher was attuned to the situation through his movements and voice, and, therefore, understood Aleksi’s non-verbal communication. He was connected to Aleksi’s actions through their embodied dialogue where drumstick represented a concrete tool advancing their embodied pedagogical interaction. By using the drumstick, the teacher expressed and maintained respect and discreteness towards the student’s personal space. The teacher also used his singing voice and a melody in order to strengthen the connection between bodily movements and the lyrics of the song; thus the student was able to be more engaged to take part in musical activity. Singing, as a very sensitive embodied activity, seemed to have a potential for building interaction. While it is very difficult to interpret who actually was leading the music-making process, the situation can be described as embodied dialogue. Even though the teacher was verbalising the movements (“up and down”), the music making itself seems to have been collaborative. Through dialogical movements, the teacher’s body was attuned to the environment and capable of functioning in relation to it. The teacher and student appear to have reflected each other’s actions and directed the situation together (“and then we play”), and, as a result, the structure of the song was built through embodied dialogue.

A situation where a music educator is struggling to get a connection with a student, who is not interacting in conventional ways, challenges the educator in pedagogical, interactional, and ethical levels: how to reach the student in a way that respects his or her own space and time in adjusting and joining the music learning process. The teacher’s ethical know-how is needed before interaction in situations like this is even possible. Embodied dialogue, then, enables students’ learning and participation in and through musical activity.

Case 2: Language learning and dance—embodied dialogue and ethical know-how in a culturally diverse group

This case describes a preparatory class at a public school, where visiting dance teachers approached language learning through dance, with the aim of understanding how it can support not only learning a language but also

intersubjective understanding, social interaction, and communication. Preparatory classes are intended for children and young people who have arrived in Finland recently from another country and who are not yet proficient in the Finnish language. The purpose of these classes is to teach the students enough Finnish so they can continue their education as part of regular class instruction. Dance is not a subject in the national core curriculum in Finland, and there are only a few schools that employ dance teachers in the entire country. Thus, school contexts are rather new to dance educators, and teaching dance in a preparatory class, and connecting it to learning language, is a completely novel practice. Moreover, the dance teachers, or teaching artists in this case are affiliated with Zodiak Centre for New Dance (www.zodiak.fi), a contemporary dance production institution that has developed an extensive outreach programme. The work that Zodiak's teaching artists engage in at public schools requires new skills from these professionals, who have used to working with students who have chosen dance as a hobby, or who are aspiring dancers themselves. The creative dance workshops⁴ were based on a pedagogical approach entitled kinaesthetic language learning, an approach that can be described as the applied use of learning through movement, kinaesthetic learning, or embodied learning (Anttila, 2015b; Kuczala, 2015). In this particular context, added emphasis was placed on collaboration, working in pairs and small groups and fostering a safe learning environment. The focus was on everyday gestures and movements that were developed towards active contact, touching, encountering, seeing the other and being seen and, gradually, towards verbal interaction and sharing ideas through voice and verbal language. Issues in relation to, for example, physical contact touch were attended to carefully and sensitively in this culturally diverse setting. The following description is based on a participant observation supported by a video recording of a dance improvisation session led by Ira, a dance artist.

This final session of this school year took place in the school auditorium, which has a stage and rising seating. The first activity was based on the idea of entering the stage and thus becoming a performer. Ira patiently instructed how to walk up the stairs onto the stage, and then each student performed their own movement, saying their name at the same time. Then, in two groups, they performed the compositions that had been created during the previous session. This performance began with an introduction of each student's own movement and name, one at a time. Little by little, they became more courageous. Their movements became bigger and more dynamic, and they took contact to each other more readily.

The second part of the session consisted of a movement improvisation based on the elements from previous activities: different statues, walking, and running. Ira put on slow music.

At first, students more or less wandered around, but everybody was taking part. Then, a girl performed an "arabesque" right on the edge of the stage. A few other students followed her. Another girl touched her gently. The music was gentle and soft. Ira, moving and dancing with the students, performed a low statue, while Matt performed an "arabesque" very close to her. He continued with dives to the

floor, and then reached towards the audience area. This “reaching” movement theme continued. Then, Matt and Ira made a statue together.

The music became faster. The girls made statues on the edge of the stage, making contact with an imaginary audience. Matt reached towards Ira, who was in a low statue, and he balanced his arabesque statue by holding onto her head. Meanwhile, others seemed engaged in their own movement ideas. Leaps, slides, formations, shapes, they were reacting to the others’ statues and movements. Then, Matt and Ira danced a contact-improvisation duet, where Matt was very active, initiating the changes in weight. A teacher and a student—a woman and a boy—interacted as equal artistic partners. After a while, Ira began to end this improvisation event, inviting everyone nearby. New contacts happened, a cluster, close to the floor. Everyone was still doing their own thing, somehow being connected to each other.

During this session, the dance teacher fostered embodied interaction within the group by becoming fully engaged in dance improvisation, still being aware of her position and responsibility towards everyone. While moving among and with the students, she kept her focus open and attended to the process and facilitated the situation through gestures and facial expressions. However, she did not demonstrate any movements; rather, she observed students’ movement themes and based her own movements on them. The students seemed able to trust her and the situation and to become engaged in the activity. Familiar, simple movement themes, the teacher’s active participation and encouragement without judgement seemed to have created possibilities for embodied dialogue in this group and made it possible for the students to explore their embodied actions. This kind of pedagogical interaction epitomises embodied dialogue and may support intersubjective understanding where spoken language is not needed. Such spaces may be significant in especially culturally diverse groups, where the members do not have a shared spoken language, and where cultural meanings and habit are not unified.

Key reflections

Through the two cases, we have examined how embodied pedagogical interaction in music and dance education may support teacher’s sensitivity to the needs of diverse learners. The teachers and students in these cases interact nonverbally by interpreting each other’s intentions, thoughts, and actions and act spontaneously with students while constructing their teaching practice. As the first case shows, the student’s bodily exploration through gestures and movements *before* engaging in embodied dialogue with the teacher helped the educator to be attuned to the student’s non-verbal communication, and to recognise when he was ready for taking a more active, collaborative role. It appears that music and dance educators’ ethical know-how can be enhanced through developing sensitivity towards each student, learning environment, and immediate situation. In these examples, the teachers recognised rhythms and patterns in the students’ movements and started to move their own bodies accordingly. Spoken language was not used, but the interactions between each teacher and student were dialogical, flexible, and

spontaneous as the teachers encountered the students in a reciprocal manner. In both cases, movements and gestures, as well as touch and eye contact, were the primary modes of communication between the teachers and students, who were mutually exploring possible outcomes and responses in the embodied dialogue.

Indeed, there are pedagogical situations in which interaction and collaboration are difficult due to verbal deficits or lack of a common spoken language. These situations are highly demanding for all educators. However, professionalism includes, as these cases indicate, genuine respect for the student. This can be described as imperative for the educators' professionalism (see also Freire's concept of ethical imperative, 2001, p. 59), whatever conditions are confronted. Embodied dialogue presents a possibility to reach beyond verbal communication in music and dance pedagogy. As described above, body–environment connections are constantly shifting; therefore, teaching music and dance constitutes an unending process of refinement. This kind of processing alludes to the establishment of new body–environment connections that might change pedagogical interactions. Through corporeal and pre-discursive engagement in changing learning situations, teachers can enable students' embodied expressivity to become visible and, thus, advance their learning and development.

In these cases, ethical know-how was reflected in an educator's ability to give space and time for students' independent, creative exploration, refraining from constant verbal cues during the learning process, when and if it was needed. It is noteworthy that ethical know-how here refers to actualising an ethical practice, both in situational and relational aspects of expanding professionalism. The ability to take ethical and appropriate action is how we embody a stream of transitions in challenging educational situations (Varela, 1999), sometimes failing and sometimes succeeding. Even the most experienced educators do not always know what is most fitting in pedagogical interactions with students. They may be captured in their pedagogical conventions and thus, unable to neither acknowledge their limitations nor reach beyond their own realities. Despite cultural sensitivity and best intentions, teachers might misinterpret students' non-verbal communication and misunderstand their feelings and needs. Cultural differences regarding bodily habits are subtle and may be difficult to discern. These realities cover a wide range of issues within resourcing, curriculum design, practices, everyday interactions, and everything between that may influence the pedagogical interaction. Accordingly, recognition of professional incompleteness may contribute to educators' sense of responsibility and urge to develop their ethical know-how.

Conclusions

In our view, expanding professionalism in music and dance education consists of the educator's critical and ethical reflection of teaching practices in changing environments, moving beyond the generally accepted and recognised ideas of learning, teaching, and professionalism towards unexplored ways of action. In doing so, the future music and dance educator may react at a micro-political level to institutional and macro-political changes and contribute to enhancing

equality in the changing society at large. The shift towards this kind of professional practice goes hand in hand with a need for a more sensitive and ethical approach in arts education. In this, educators need to be able to create and implement visions that challenge conventional forms of professionalism in arts education.

In our call for expanding professionalism in music and dance education, we suggest that higher education, especially teacher education, should be further developed through increased attention to mind–body integration, both in theory and practice, as well as to embodied pedagogical interaction. We propose that these dimensions generate expanding professionalism and are central elements in developing ethical, sensitive, adaptive, and future-oriented music and dance pedagogy. Intriguing examples can already be found in the music-and-movement courses in some music teacher education programmes within Finnish universities, which have a particular focus on embodied pedagogical interaction as a catalyst for professional growth. For example, developing body awareness and reinforcing mind–body unity through various somatic practices that focus on the felt, bodily sensations and experiences underlies this kind of pedagogical approach. Further, courses that combine music, movement and dance can create shared spaces where the teacher and student teachers are equally engaged in developing their musical competencies and pursuing holistic professional growth.

In developing higher music and dance education, it is worth considering how these areas of education might be mutually beneficial. Music education programmes might benefit from an increased emphasis on practical and conceptual dance studies. For example, courses on bodily, somatic practices may deepen students' mind–body integration and bodily awareness. Likewise, creative movement and dance, as well as music-and-movement courses, could offer perspectives for approaching connections between music, movement, and creative approaches in dance education. Moreover, it is worth considering which theories of embodiment the programmes build on. In order to develop one's mind–body integration in a holistic way, in-depth approaches towards developing of body awareness are needed.

In conclusion, we propose that it is possible to develop student teachers' bodily awareness and strengthen mind–body unity through embodied practices and reflections on the experiences that these practices generate. When reflecting on those experiences, student teachers come to know their bodies as a tool for learning not just about themselves but also about others and connecting inner and outer self. It might be expected that the improvisatory nature of embodied practices and activities keeps them attentive and ready to respond to changing situations. It could be interpreted that embodied dialogue supports an understanding of the other as it connects an educator and students in a non-verbal, or pre-reflective level where words are not needed for interaction. This, in turn, enables teachers to practice ethical know-how also in complex educational settings. Embodied music and dance education, therefore, may be a way of developing pedagogical interaction and a significant way to expand professionalism in music and dance education.

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Notes

- 1 This engagement in intentional interactions is close to the notion of embodied agency (Campbell et al., 2009) through which the mind–body is intertwined with the world.
- 2 Within embodied cognition, Varela has introduced the notion of “knowledge as enaction”. By this he “underscores two interrelated points: (1) that perception consists of perceptually guided action; and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided” (Varela, 1999, p. 12).
- 3 The two case examples are based on video-recordings that are in the authors' possession. Informed consent has been obtained regarding both cases. Pseudonyms are used to provide anonymity. The authors examine the case descriptions from different perspectives. Regarding the first case description, Sanna Kivijärvi has closely collaborated with the Resonaari Music Centre but has no relationship with the student in question. Katja Sutela and Eeva Anttila had no bonds with the Resonaari Centre before this research process began.
Regarding the second case description, Eeva Anttila has worked both as visiting dance teacher and researcher in this school and with this preparatory class. This case, however, is based on her observing and videotaping another teacher's (Ira's) workshop in the same school and with the same group. Kivijärvi and Sutela are looking at the case from outsider perspectives.
- 4 This ongoing project is a collaboration in which researchers affiliated with the ArtsEqual research initiative (artsequal.fi/en) worked with teaching artists affiliated with the Zodiak Centre for New Dance and the TALK-project (see zodiak.fi/talk).

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