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This special section focuses on new developments in curriculum, a topic of current interest in view of the introduction of the new New Zealand curriculum in 2007. The new curriculum calls for creative responses from teachers, teacher educators and others interested in the material and content of teaching. For the first time in New Zealand, pedagogy has been included in an account of the school curriculum, so the editors welcome any papers which reflect interaction between curriculum and pedagogy as well as subject-oriented or content-focused papers.

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REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: DANCE-MAKING AND IMAGE NARRATIVES

DEBBIE BRIGHT

School of Education, The University of Waikato

ABSTRACT In this paper I discuss the identification and representation of embodied knowing, focusing on how it is evidenced through reflective practice in dance-making. Grounded in a phenomenological hermeneutic approach, the research from which this discussion is drawn included the development of a model specific to reflective practice in dance-making and an exploration into alternative means of representing embodied knowing in dance-making. The outcome of this exploration is an image narrative which brings together dance-making, images and reflective journals.

KEYWORDS

Reflective practice, Dance-making, Image narrative, Embodied knowing, Adult education

INTRODUCTION

My focus in this paper is on exploring the specific questions: How can reflective practice encourage an understanding of embodied knowing and how can I represent embodied knowing in a research context? I discuss the theoretical basis, relevant literature and the methodology I used, including my development of a model for reflective practice in dance-making. Discussion of these aspects led me to the decision to represent research findings through an image narrative, an example of which I have included here. My interest in this particular area arises out of my years of dance-making and of tutoring in reflective practice and learning styles in the adult education context. Latterly, my engagement in the areas of reflective practice, learning styles and dance-making has led me to explore embodied ways of knowing as they are expressed through dance, and ways of representing embodied knowing.

THEORETICAL APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

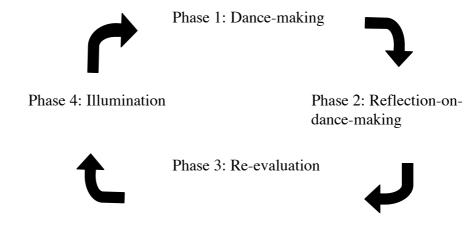
During the study of my own reflective practice in dance-making, I utilised a phenomenological hermeneutic approach, since phenomenological hermeneutics offers a "reflective approach to the description of everyday experiences" and also the opportunity to build an interpretation "via a blueprint" (McNamara, 1999, p. 164) designed by the researcher. The concepts of a reflective approach and a blueprint are congruent with a model for reflective practice specific to dance-making; my research concerned reflection and a model which could provide a blueprint for focusing reflective learning in dance-making. A phenomenological hermeneutic approach also "emphasises both the internal and external contexts of the phenomenon so that the interpreter is free to work with and negotiate both

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realms of the phenomenon" (McNamara, 1999, p. 172). Therefore, in my research there was flexibility to address the internal realms of reflection, individual learning style (Kolb, 1985) and embodied knowing, and the external realms of images, models for analysis and audience feedback.

In order to focus my research I created a model for reflective practice in dancemaking (Figure 1). This model drew on the literature of both reflective practice in learning and dance research. It incorporated key aspects of models for reflective or experiential learning or learning by doing (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Gibbs, 1988; Jarvis, Holford & Griffin, 1998; Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Smith, 1986; Schön, 1987a, 1987b, 1991). Kolb's (1984) model for experiential learning and Schön's work on reflection-in-action and reflection-on-reflection-in-action were particularly important in the creation of this model (1983, 1987a, 1987b, 1991, 1995). I then incorporated aspects identified as being important in dance, such as interpretation (Sheets, 1966) and thinking in movement (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999) or embodied knowing (Barbour, 2002, 2004). Embodied knowing includes individual characteristics which are "simultaneously and holistically cultural, biological, spiritual, artistic, intellectual and emotional, with recognition of difference in terms of race, gender, sexuality, ability, history, experience and environment" (Barbour, 2002, p. 30, footnote). Embodied knowing also includes the psychological (Bright, 2005b, 2005c). The embodied approach to thinking or knowing is non-verbal and its inclusion in any model for reflective practice allows for the possibility of nonverbal findings. In addition, a model for dance-making needs to take into account the non-verbal elements of the visual, such as images, since dance is a visual medium. It also needs to include auditory elements such as the voice, the breath, clapping, slapping or stamping, since these may be vital elements of the dance. Thus, my model included the possibilities of verbal, visual, auditory and/or embodied knowing during any phase.

Figure 1. The Bright model for reflective practice in dance-making (2005b, 2005c)



Note. Any phase of this cycle may include verbal, visual, auditory and/or embodied knowing.

The Bright model provides the framework around which my methodology was constructed, an ordered approach to the study of my own reflective practice in dance-making, and the process embedded in the image narrative. Like the model, my methodology was also built around the concept of a four-phase process and my methods included dance-making, embodied knowing, reflective journals, images and structured approaches to analysis in dance (Figure 2). In all of the phases, I looked for and reflected on embodied knowing and ways in which this might be validly represented in the research context. The image narrative arose during phase 4, the illumination phase, of my study.

Figure 2. Methodology and methods based on the Bright model for reflective practice in dance-making



Phase 1: Dance-making experience

- 1. Analysis of own learning style (Kolb, 1985; Kolb & Smith, 1986)
- Dance-making: includes initial concepts, stories, interaction with music, development of choreographic techniques and motifs (Barbour, 2002; Blom & Chaplin, 1982; Rickett-Young, 1997; Smith-Autard, 2004)



- 4. Video and photographic images
- 5. Embodied knowing (look for evidence)



- 1. Findings and planning based on previous phases
- 2. Influence of learning style?
- 3. Embodied knowing (and its representation)

Phase 2: Reflection-on-dancemaking

- 1. Analysis of dance (Foster, 1986; Hayes, 1993)
- 2. Analysis of journal
- 3. Analysis of use of images
- 4. Influence of learning style?
- 5. Analysis of embodied knowing
- 6. Embodied knowing (is there any way this can be represented on paper?)



Phase 3: Re-evaluation

- 1. Evaluation of journal analysis
- 2. Evaluation of dance analysis and re-evaluation of dance
- 3. Re-evaluation of journal
- 4. Influence of learning style?
- 5. Re-evaluation of embodied knowing
- 6. Embodied knowing (and its representation)



My dance-making experience took place over a five-month period and centred around the development and performance of a dance work *Light Reflections: A grief embodied* (Bright, 2005a), which came about as a response to my mother's death. I performed the dance five times during the five-month period: in a church-based concert in Hamilton; for a graduation at The Waikato Institute of Technology; at an international Christian dance conference in Dallas, Texas; during a lunch-time dance concert at the University of Waikato; and during an evening dance performance at the University of Waikato. Photographs and videos were taken whenever possible; the photographs used in the image narrative were taken during my performance in Dallas, Texas. Following the dance-making phase, I reflected on the dance-making experience, using the methodological framework and methods illustrated in Figure 2. This original project consisted of a single cycle of reflective learning. Reflective practice may be achieved through the repeated application of such a model; in the image narrative two cycles of the model are represented.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES SURROUNDING THE REPRESENTATION OF EMBODIED KNOWING IN RESEARCH

Embodied knowing, as described above, is a challenging area to identify since it often appears to be in conflict with the Western philosophies of knowledge which accept mind-body dualism and the cognitive as the only means of knowing (Barbour, 2002, 2004). However, since dance-making is an embodied way of knowing and a lived experience (Barbour, 2002; Hanstein, 1999a, 1999b; Sheets-Johnstone, 1999), I included the possibility of embodied knowing as a means of input and learning in each phase of my model and also as a means of expression or an outcome. I used my journal to record examples of embodied knowing that could be verbalised. As non-verbal sources of feedback, I used photographs and videos and my remembered sense of embodied knowing. My aim was for these strategies to provide a means of achieving personal reflective learning and of identifying embodied knowing. My hope was that they would also provide the raw materials from which any representation of embodied knowing might emerge.

The challenges and issues of embodied knowing are, likewise, evident in attempts to represent it in dance research. Since dance is a lived experience, an embodied way of knowing, there is no valid way of fully representing the embodied knowing of dance, except through actually dancing. Embodied knowing can only be analysed cognitively when it can be verbalised but this involves expressing in words a visual and kinaesthetic phenomenon (Barbour, 2002; Schön, 1987a). However, movement is itself a vehicle for expression (Barbour, 2002), a means of thinking and of wondering about the world (Sheets-Johnstone, 1999). Therefore, dance can express meaning in and of itself without words; this is a form of embodied knowing.

From my journal (cited in Bright, 2005b), I was able to identify the ways in which I attempted to verbalise my embodied knowing or imply a sense of embodied knowing through my words. One example is:

4 September 2003: Not ending in stretched arms and legs and pointed feet.

Bent legs? Relaxed feet? One leg higher than the other? One arm higher than the other? Can I balance like this? Softer arms? Vulnerable arms? A baby or young child – this would fit better with the sense of birthing that follows it. Feet scrunched up? – The tension of this would be very jarring to look at. Crossed legs? Crossed feet? ... feet crossed as in a foetal position right from the starting pose ...¹ (cited in Bright, 2005b, p. 143)

However, through writing a journal and analysing my journal entries, I became more aware of the fact that my examples expressed only a small number of instances in a dance which was an embodied and lived experience and that my writing represented only my verbalised thoughts during those instances. The majority of the analysis of my use of embodied knowing remained, perforce, as non-verbalised embodied knowing. Furthermore, in attempting to describe embodied knowing in words, I found that the meaning of my words was sometimes virtually incomprehensible:

17 June 2003: forward backward runs tuck right foot \rightarrow floor butt spin \rightarrow left finish legs front diagonal left. (cited in Bright, 2005b, p. 113)

At other times, my attempts to represent embodied knowing became a creative flow of images and poetry rather than a series of standard sentences:

13 June 2003: Yesterday my thoughts were about her (my mother) living and then a reminder that she has returned to the ground. My 'look' at the right front corner was about desire to reach out and touch her. The touch was momentary, a hand reaches and then withdraws. Today I see moonlight; the light catches my eye; I reach out so that it falls on my hand. Instead of withdrawing the touch I draw the light in and treasure it and I move my body, while my hand and arm trace one continuous figure of eight. Is this a passing through the grief cycle? Like denial and acceptance struggling with each other? Yesterday sadness, today peacefulness?

A new quality is emerging – an enjoyment of the movement for its own sake without need to refer to a narrative (of my mother).² (cited in Bright, 2005b, p. 123)

As illustrated here, my journal demonstrated that in order to verbalise a phenomenon that is essentially non-verbal, other creative means may need to be employed, such as poetry (Barbour, 2002; Fraleigh, 1999; Holly, 1984; Stinson, 1995). I considered video as a possibility for representation, since video documentation involved in dance-making (Barbour, 2002) is a valuable source of data and an important source of moving visual feedback for the choreographer or dancer (Brennan, 1999). However, key elements of embodied knowing are not represented in video because of its two-dimensional nature, distortion of movements and dynamics, and lack of live interaction with an audience (Brennan, 1999). After extensive reflection on my dance and my journal in order to identify the presence of embodied knowing, I concluded that embodied knowing can be

discerned more easily when the dance-maker brings together the three strategies of dance-making, images and reflective journals. The interweaving of the strategies of dance-making, images and reflective journals confirmed the presence of embodied knowing in my research, and thus provided insight into my first question concerning how reflective practice can encourage an understanding of embodied knowing. Dance-making and images, together with reflective journals, also led me to a way of addressing my second question concerning how I can represent embodied knowing in a research context: the creation of an image narrative.

Visual ethnography can provide some insights into the issues of representation of embodied knowing in dance research and confirmation of my own conclusions. Pink (2004) maintains that researchers in other areas of the social sciences have begun to "draw on existing literatures in visual anthropology and sociology to develop and inform their own fields" (p. 2). According to Pink, one of the uses of visuals is as "a 'way of knowing/seeing' and representation" (2004, p. 2). This concept of a way of knowing or seeing resonates with my search for representation of embodied ways of knowing in dance. Film, video and photographs are viewed as research methods as well as means of representation (Canal, 2004; Flick, 2006; Denzin, 2004; Harper, 2003, 2004; Pink, 2004); again this resonates with my use of images both as a method and as part of a representation. The combination of images and words is considered a valid means of representation by ethnographers, while the presence of non-verbal knowledge is implicit in the use of images as a representation of lived experience (Canal, 2004; Flick, 2006; Harper, 2003, 2004; Pink, 2004). Once again, my own experience concurs with these approaches of combining images and words or using images alone as representations of lived experience. Canal (2004) maintains that "photographs reinforce spoken or written narratives", but that they also "lend words a new dimension; that is, photographs inspire new narrations" (p. 35). This concept of new narrations suggests that a new narrative could be created from the images of my dance-making. In fact, in visual ethnography, photography can express a narrative form (Canal, 2004), also known as a visual narrative (Harper, 2003, 2004). However, this form depends on the presentation of photographs in time and space, implying that the chronology of the real life events is maintained as accurately as possible either through the order of photographs or through their relationship to one another spatially (Harper, 2003, 2004). As described below, the chronology of my photographs as sequential records of my dance became less important than the new narrative that they could communicate. Finally, words accompanying photographs in visual ethnography are generally in the form of captions, commentaries or explanations (Canal, 2004; Harper, 2003; Pink, 2004). While some of the words in my image narrative could be thus described, all are presented as my own thoughts, rather than descriptions of what is occurring in the photograph and, by their poetic nature and the movement of words achieved in PowerPoint, photographs and words are woven together in the overall meaning of the work.

Given the examples of visual ethnography and the freedom of a phenomenological hermeneutic approach to research, I was able to explore the possibilities for the presentation of research and the representation of embodied knowing, in particular. I was able to situate myself clearly in my research by using

the first person singular and to use my journal entries as part of my presentation (Barbour, 2002; Barbour & Thorburn, 2001; Markula & Denison, 2000). I was also able to vary my style of presentation according to the subject matter (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Markula & Denison, 2000), making use of poetry, personal narrative, photographs (Barbour, 2002; Barbour & Thorburn, 2001; Canal, 2004; Harper, 2003; Markula & Denison, 2000) and a drawing (Churng, 2000) to illustrate my discussion points. The examples of other researchers and my strategies of dance-making, images and reflective journals led to the development of the image narrative as a means of representing embodied knowing in research.

THE CREATION OF MY IMAGE NARRATIVE

The creation of my image narrative arose out of an email discussion with a Media Arts tutor at The Waikato Institute of Technology concerning art presented in emails. As I reflected on my videos, photographs and journal entries, I began to see the possibilities of pairing excerpts from my journal with photographs.³ As I engaged in this process, I found myself beginning to view the set of photographs not as a chronological record of my performance but as a series of individual works of art. Having experienced this shift in perception, I became less concerned about matching a journal comment with a photograph of the movement to which the comment referred. I began instead to look for additional meaning, a new narrative drawn from the photographs of individual moments in the dance and from the journal excerpts. I began to see the emergence of a new work, a visual representation of my embodied reflective journey, rather than simply a series of photographs recording moments in a particular dance. Thus, I arrived at an image narrative called Reflective practice in dance-making based on photographs of my dance Light reflections: A grief embodied and journal excerpts (Bright, 2005b). My search of literature revealed no similar expressions of embodied knowing or of reflective practice in or through dance-making. Nevertheless, I saw the image narrative as one way to express my process of reflective practice in dance-making. The set of photographs had initially recorded moments of my dance. However, in changing my attitude from viewing them as objective records of a dance to viewing them as glimpses into a lived experience (Barbour, 2002, 2004; Canal, 2004; Flick, 2006; Harper, 2003, 2004; Pink, 2004), I discovered a potential means of representing embodied knowing through photographs and the poetic imagery of my journal. As a further development of the image narrative, in the PowerPoint I have added the music used in the original dance work.

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[Please click on Photo 1 below to play powerpoint of image narrative. Stop and start at any time by clicking on the Play / Pause button.]



I could go on creating movement intuitively by improvisation – noting use of levels and floor space.

Photo 1. Image narrative: Reflective practice in dance-making

The original photographs were taken during the performance of my dance Light reflections: A grief embodied, at an International Christian Dance Fellowship conference in Dallas, Texas, in July 2003. The music was Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 (1801), known as "Moonlight Sonata", which is heard in the PowerPoint. The PowerPoint slides are timed to allow the viewer's eye to absorb the image, then the words and then to reflect on the musical and visual whole. The aim of this reflective approach to viewing and listening is to place emphasis on the image as integral to the narrative, rather than on the words as 'explanations' of the images. The image narrative follows the pathway of two complete cycles of the Bright model. Thus, the first seven images of the image narrative depict phase 1, the first experience of the dance-making phase, as described in Figure 2, while the following 5 slides depict the remainder of Cycle 1. Cycle 2 is indicated by the emergence of a new sense of direction and quality of movement. This cycle includes what I have learnt about myself and my dance-making processes. The final three slides represent my feelings about the dance and its performance and reflections which could build into another cycle of the model.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, my focus has been on exploring the specific questions: How can reflective practice encourage an understanding of embodied knowing and how can I represent embodied knowing in a research context? In addressing the first question, I concluded that the strategies of dance-making and images, linked with reflective journals, provide more successful access to my own embodied knowing in dance-making, thus encouraging my understanding of embodied knowing. In addition, of the verbalisation recorded on my journal, the poetic form conveyed more accurately

the essence of this embodied knowing. My second question, concerning how I can represent embodied knowing in a research context, was addressed by finding a way to bring together the three strategies of dance-making, images and reflective journals. The interweaving of these three strategies led to the development of a representation of embodied knowing in the form of an image narrative. This new form of representation could contribute to the comprehension of the intuitively, subjectively grasped essence of dance (McNamara, 1999) and the ongoing literature of dance (Sheets, 1966).

However, the image narrative could also be utilised as a means of representing lived experience or embodied knowing in other areas of the arts and in teaching and learning situations. As a tutor in adult education specialising in the area of reflective practice, I discovered that the generally accepted approach to the marking of reflective journals is to acknowledge verbalised reflection alone. Yet, in my experience as a reflective teacher and dance-maker, and in my interactions with students of diverse learning styles and cultures, and teaching in diverse disciplines, I became increasingly aware of the need to acknowledge *evidence* of reflection. Evidence of reflection usually occurred through verbal means but it was also depicted through non-verbal means such as photographs, drawings, diagrams, models, symbols or visual narratives of personal history or whakapapa (genealogy).

The expectation is that critical reflection is expressed verbally (Lavender, 1996; Zepke, 2003). Nevertheless, the basis of reflection might still be in visual or other non-verbal forms. For example, in my own work (Bright, 2005b) there are pairs of photographs which depict earlier and later versions of the same moment in the dance (Figure 3, Photos 2 & 3). In my thesis, I describe these differences in words and include the excerpt from my journal of 4 September 2003, presented above. However, the photographs alone provide evidence of reflection, since reflection and experimentation have to have taken place in order to develop the dance work from the earlier version to the later. In a similar manner, a visual artist may express her/himself non-verbally through journals (Ratana, 2006).

In conclusion, the non-verbal, in the form of photographic or video images or in live action, may be considered as reflections, representations of embodied knowing and, therefore, as valid expressions of reflective practice. This understanding of embodiment, representation and reflective practice presents the possibility of new narratives of the learning journey of a student through an image narrative such as the one I have presented in this paper. While dance is a natural discipline in which to explore embodied knowing and to attempt to represent it, a similar approach could be taken towards many other areas in teaching and learning. Hence, through a phenomenological approach, I have developed a model for focusing reflective practice and exploring embodied knowing in dance-making, and an image narrative that is one alternative means of representing embodied knowing in dance-making; both developments could, potentially, be applied to areas other than dance.

Figure 3. Comparison between early and later version of the same moment in the dance





Photo 1. Seated pike

Photo 2. New softer seated pike

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¹In this journal entry I am working to deconstruct my opening movement of a seated pike. (See Figure 3, Photo 2 & 3 towards the end of this paper). Some of the phrases in this entry are also included in the image narrative.

² A number of phrases in this entry are used in the image narrative.

³ I chose photographs rather than annotated video clips because the work is a danced journey of grief and any video clip will reflect this. I saw that photographs could lead to another narrative without compromising the integrity of the original dance work.