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**The challenges of providing a quality certificated dance education  
within secondary schools – findings from a comparative study  
exploring the experiences of eight English and Scottish dance teachers.**

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# **The challenges of providing a quality certificated dance education within secondary schools – findings from a comparative study exploring the experiences of eight English and Scottish dance teachers.**

Whilst the fight for the inclusion of dance in schools has been an ongoing struggle, current government directives and educational policies present an even greater threat to the future of quality dance education in schools and this needs to be addressed. This paper begins to explore the certificated dance education currently on offer in the United Kingdom (UK) through teachers' experiences of delivering the newly adapted GCSE (England) and National 5 (Scotland) dance curricula. Eight semi-structured interviews with dance teachers in England (n=4) and Scotland (n=4) were undertaken alongside documentary analysis in order to provide an initial understanding of the challenges and motivations for delivering these curricula. Smith-Autard's Midway Model (2002) is often considered to be the exemplar of quality dance education and therefore the content, structure, and assessment approaches used in these teachers' delivery of the curricula were compared with those advocated in this model. The findings suggest the challenges faced by teachers may differ between the two contexts and revolve around level of prescription. Regarding structure specifically, this research recommends that policy-makers might consider increasing course length for certificated dance courses and establish better dialogue with practitioners prior to introducing new course designs and during inception.

Keywords: Dance education, teachers, Curriculum for Excellence, National Curriculum

## **Introduction**

The inclusion of dance within the formal school curriculum, including the rationale for why and how this should be delivered is a much debated area (Koff 2015). However, this paper is concerned with dance as a certificated subject in its own right. It argues that a quality dance education should include consideration of curriculum content, structure, overall teaching approaches and assessment. As stipulated by Smith-Autard (2002) and Côté (2006), dance at this level should offer a strong rounded education in

the specialist area including performing, creating and appreciating dance whilst also developing other transferable skills such as self-confidence, communication skills and creativity.

Within education the current global focus on literacy and numeracy may be particularly problematic for ‘minority’ subjects such as dance within schools. Initiatives including the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD 2017) and the English Baccalaureate (EBACC) have increased the pressure on such subjects, leading to decreased support and funding (Adams 2013; Pring 2013). Whilst this increased focus on ‘academic’ subjects may have an impact on the inclusion and delivery of dance across all levels of the school system, it has been seen to particularly affect dance at certificated levels (Adams 2013). Using Smith-Autard’s Midway Model (2002) as a lens, the English GCSE Dance and the Scottish National 5 Dance courses were examined in this small-scale study. Documentary analysis and interviews designed to capture teachers’ experiences were used to consider the extent to which the two different curricula and the approaches of these teachers are reflective of the Midway Model’s (2002) vision of a ‘quality dance education’.

### **Dance Education: an International Perspective**

Whilst this small-scale study is concerned with certificated dance provided in secondary schools in the United Kingdom (UK), specifically England and Scotland, it is worthwhile to first consider dance education in schools globally. Similar issues arise worldwide, notably a lack of recognition of dance as a subject in itself, dance not being offered at certificated levels and a lack of sufficiently trained dance teachers within schools (Koff 2015; Savrami 2012). Other countries have debated where dance is best placed within the school curriculum, often questioning the limitations when it is placed within physical education (PE) as it is in Hong Kong and Singapore (Chua 2016;

Vertinsky, McManus and Sit 2007). Dance within the PE curriculum is also evident in Slovenia, Portugal, Jamaica, Finland and Estonia and Koff (2015) believes this has led to a focus on performance and end product rather than a balanced dance education. There is some disparity between reports of where dance is placed within the United States of America (US) school curriculum. Risner (2007) states that dance was recognised as its own subject and aligned within the arts curriculum in the US in 1994 (18). However, in a more recent article, Marquis and Metzler (2017) state that dance has been situated within PE since the 1930's (38). Both agree on the lack of consistency in the delivery of dance across the US with Marquis and Metzler (2017) attributing this to discrepancies in the amount and quality of dance provision offered on teacher training courses.

Australia recently developed a flexible curriculum model giving greater autonomy to teachers to plan content to suit their own learners and within this, the place of dance is clearly celebrated (ACARA 2011). Whilst the previous literature, detailed above, has provided a basic overview of dance education across the world, few studies have compared the dance education design of one country with another.

### **Smith-Autard's Midway Model (2002) as Quality Framework**

It is recognised that many models of dance education have been trialled in schools over the years, however, three models of dance education appear regularly within the literature. These include the professional model and Laban's Dance as Education model (1948), but it is the third, Smith-Autard's Midway Model (2002), that arguably best reflects the constructivist approaches to teaching and learning advocated in education today (Moore 2012). The Midway Model initially introduced by Smith-Autard in 1976, is not the first attempt at combining the professional and educational models and was likely influenced by the educational work of companies such as Rambert and London

Contemporary Dance Theatre in which professional dance artists undertook residencies in schools (Ashley 2009). The aim of these professional partnerships was to increase awareness and instil appreciation of dance as art in young people (Ashley 2009), however, issues with such partnership approaches often revolved around professional dance artists' lack of pedagogical expertise (Kipling-Brown 2014). Smith-Autard's Midway Model incorporated this focus of dance appreciation and balanced this with two other strands of creating and performing dance. The model advocates dancer teachers' use of professional dance works to combine knowledge in dance technique and choreography to help place learning in context. Smith-Autard (2002) claims this helps alleviate the practice/ theory divide often evident in active subjects like dance (10-11). The model promotes the use of both student-centred and teacher-directed pedagogy, alongside the teacher ensuring basic skills have been embedded before extending learning through creative tasks; hence reflecting constructivist theories (Dragon 2015). The importance of an end product or performance is highlighted as a means of learner evaluation but process learning is also ensured through the inclusion of creative tasks, professional evaluation and group work. A range of worldwide literature has praised the Midway Model as the optimal model for dance within schools (Côté 2006; Savrami 2012) and it is therefore argued that Smith-Autard's Midway Model provides a strong lens through which to consider quality dance education. Whilst initially designed as the basis for dance education in England (Smith-Autard 2002) there has been little research evaluating the extent to which this model still informs content/ structure, pedagogy and assessment in schools today.

### **Challenges to Delivering a Quality Certificated Dance Education**

Time pressures, teacher accountability and disparity between curriculum aims and teacher practice are previously reported challenges teachers face in delivering a quality

certificated dance education (Bloomer and Morgan 2003; Moore 2012; Sanders 2008). Chappell (2008) and Stenhouse (1975) argued that a strictly prescribed curriculum with detailed specification aimed at improving consistency in delivery across schools removes autonomy from teachers. Scotland however, are currently adopting a more flexible Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) where teachers are given increased responsibility to design their own curriculum content (Priestley and Sinnema 2014). Priestley and Minty (2013, 39) deemed teachers to be 'professional developers of the curriculum' with the freedom to build content to fit their own beliefs and individual needs of their students. However, Ball's (2003) previous research surrounding curriculum models that promote increased teacher autonomy, found freedom was constricted by teachers' lack of confidence in curriculum design and the pressures of meeting assessment expectations. Teachers are held accountable for their students' learning and whilst a more flexible curriculum allows for greater creativity, Ball (2003) argued that teachers lose confidence by having to evidence their impact. Accountability could therefore have the opposite effect and lead to teachers constricting the curriculum with all aims geared towards the final assessment rather than a balance of process and product (Thorburn 2007). Previous research has also considered teachers' perceptions of curriculum change and reported resistance, uncertainty and decreasing levels of teacher confidence (Mellegård and Dahlberg Pettersen 2016; O'Sullivan et al. 2008). In their study exploring how arts teachers react to and enact curriculum changes in Australia, Macdonald et al. (2016) reported that minority subjects such as the arts were often most affected during times of change. They recommended that arts teachers particularly be given more time to adapt to change and have greater support including more training courses.

Another challenge highlighted in previous research is the need for teachers delivering certificated dance to be specialists in their subject area (Blanche 2007; Connell 2009; Mason 2011; Marquis and Metzler 2017) with knowledge in subject content and pedagogy. However, Hattie's (2009) Visible Learning study appears to contest this need for teachers to have a high level of subject-specific knowledge. In the study, which aimed to measure the impact of various factors upon student learning in schools, 'teacher subject matter knowledge' was found to have a low impact on student achievement (269). Whilst this view must be acknowledged, questions may be asked regarding whether these findings can be applied across all subject areas, particularly in expressive art forms like dance. Hattie (2012) also argued that teacher feedback has a significant impact on effective student learning and therefore it may be argued that for such feedback to be provided, the teacher must have sufficient subject knowledge, especially in dance where technique and style is of utmost importance. Blanche (2007) reiterated this in her report on dance in Scotland. She stated that for the CfE to deliver the dance curriculum it proposed 'teachers qualified to teach all aspects of dance to an advanced level in secondary schools' (33) were needed. Arguably, these points together portray the need for specialist dance teacher training, or at the very least an increase in dance training offered to student teachers on primary education and secondary PE courses (Marquis and Metzler 2017; Mason 2011).

MacLean's (2016) study, which investigated how the introduction of the CfE had affected the prominence of dance within Scottish secondary schools reported that dance provision in general had increased since her previous study in 2007 and that PE teachers appeared to be more confident in teaching dance. Whilst this study concentrated on all dance in secondary schools, in relation to certificated dance, she stated that only PE teachers more experienced in dance taught at this level (8).



However, whilst MacLean's (2016) study reported an increase in dance provision and variation in the dance forms covered, it does not consider the quality of the dance education being offered by PE teachers. The use of external dance artists, particularly in teaching dance technique is suggested as a possible solution to supplement the deliverance of dance by PE specialists (Mason 2011) however this comes at an additional cost to schools that are already confronting budget cuts for expressive arts. This is also a much-contested area, with previous research highlighting possible issues with such partnerships in ensuring a positive learning experience (Chappell 2008; Kipling-Brown 2014).

### **Aim of the study**

Whilst England and Scotland have been reunited as one country since 1921, both have their own education systems (Croxford 2011). England follow a National Curriculum where teachers deliver set content to students at established ages and stages as predetermined by the government. Whereas, Scotland's CfE introduced in 2010 offers a flexible curriculum approach moving away from centralised control (ibid). Kelly (2016) asserted that comparison between curriculums in educational research can be marred by cultural differences and the irregularity of everyday life, but also argued that if such issues can be overcome such comparison can 'bring improved understanding of the broad relations between teachers, practices and pupil experiences' (353). For this reason the certificated courses of the English GCSE and Scottish National 5 Dance were selected as the focus of this study. Generally for both of these qualifications, final examinations are undertaken when students are aged around sixteen, with National 5 usually offered as a one/ two year course and GCSE being a two/ three year course. UCAS (2015) state that both qualifications are viewed as comparative levels and usually seen as necessary pathways to lead to A level dance in England or Higher dance

in Scotland. Smith-Autard's Midway Model (2002) was used to provide a quality dance education lens. The following research questions underpinned the study:

- (1) To what extent does the structure and content of the newly adapted GCSE and National 5 dance courses align with the Midway Model's depiction of a 'quality dance education'?
- (2) What do we know about the assessment approaches adopted within the GCSE and National 5 dance courses and to what extent do these align with those advocated within the Midway Model?
- (3) As they strive to deliver a quality dance education within their particular context/s what challenges do teachers in England and Scotland face and to what extent are their experiences comparable?

## **Methods**

### ***Approach***

The researcher holds an interpretivist view incorporating a relativist ontology where multiple truths exist, and reality is not objective but relative and thus, individually constructed (Scotland 2012). In an attempt to answer the above research questions, it was deemed appropriate to look for depth of information over breadth or generalisability and therefore a primarily qualitative approach was selected. This small-scale study aimed to compare and contrast the two certificated dance courses through a mixed-methods approach. This involved

documentary analysis and eight interviews with dance teachers who led these courses which were conducted in spring 2017.

### ***Documentary Analysis***

In the first phase of data collection each policy document (GCSE Dance Specification 8236 and National 5 Dance Specification C818 75) was read through multiple times to gain a deeper understanding of its format and content. A frequency word count was conducted to provide basic quantitative information (Krippendorff 2004) based on the three strands of 'creating', 'performing' and 'appreciating' as outlined within the Midway Model. This was followed by a more in-depth qualitative deductive content analysis (Schreier 2014) whereby the document was searched for any mention of the themes in the Midway Model. A comparative evaluation of these findings was then undertaken to consider any differences/ similarities between the two specification documents' alignments with the Midway Model regarding structure/ content of the courses and the assessment approaches endorsed in each.

### ***Primary Data Collection***

An initial pilot interview was conducted after which changes were made to the interview schedule to request more reported examples of the teacher's individual practice to further support any stated views and thus increase validity. The interview schedule was created based on the findings from the literature review and characteristics of the Midway Model (2002). Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with teachers delivering these certificated courses in England and Scotland using purposive, snowball sampling. . In England, four interviews were undertaken in four local authorities. In Scotland, four interviews were conducted with dance teachers in secondary schools in two local authorities. Eight interviews were deemed sufficient to

achieve saturation as no new key themes/ categories were identified in the final interviews (Schreier, 2014). The interviews, conducted in person, lasted around 45 minutes each. Interview transcripts were then sent back to each participant for member-checking prior to analysis and all were deemed a true reflection requiring no amendments. Interviews were anonymised during transcription, names that appear in the paper are pseudonyms. The aim was to encourage participants to reflect on their own practice and any perceived challenges they faced. Participants were asked to supply examples of practice to corroborate their claims which acted as an ‘internal check’ (Parlett 1981) and promoted rigour.

### ***Participants***

[Table 1 near here].

### ***Data Analysis***

The data were subject to interrogation by undertaking deductive and inductive thematic analysis. Each interview was read and reread to increase familiarity and inductive coding was carried out. Codes were checked and rechecked to ensure consistency (Schreier 2014). Inter-rater reliability was used, with a sample of interviews also coded by a second experienced researcher and following discussion, some codes/ categories adjusted accordingly (Huberman and Miles 2002; Krippendorff 2004). Whilst no research is ever ‘value free’ (Pring 2000, 250), this aimed to reduce any possible researcher bias and increase rigour. Commonly occurring codes were then collapsed into categories (see Table 2). The third and final stage of analysis involved exploration of any similarities or differences between the Scottish National 5 and the English GCSE dance courses in order to answer the three research questions and the findings were then considered within the context of wider literature. The British

Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011) guidelines were followed and ethical clearance gained from the University of Edinburgh.

[Table 2 near here].

## **Discussion**

### ***Curriculum Structure/ Content***

It is interesting to note that both the GCSE and National 5 Dance courses have recently undergone adaptations and now both specifications appear to show a more equal split between the three strands of performing, creating and appreciating as promoted in the Midway Model. Both courses evidence this balance through the final assessment requirements, with teachers required to plan learning to effectively meet these. In GCSE, more detail is provided regarding how these three strands are to be approached by teachers with an anthology of six professional works provided as a foundation. As advocated in the Midway Model, Smith-Autard (2002) described this as ‘resource-based teaching’ explaining that, ‘like a classic novel in the study of English literature, it becomes a starting point for the student’s own creativity, a means of learning more about the discipline per se’ (39-40). Moore (2012) similarly stressed the importance of linking learning experiences to ensure an embedded understanding beyond the final exam.

Whilst this may also represent how learning is to occur in National 5, there is little explicit reference to this in the specification. Instead teachers are relied upon to select appropriate professional works to study and design links across learning themselves. Priestley and Sinnema (2014) highlighted this as an issue when considering the design of CfE documents in general, stating the discrepancies in wording between

different documents left teachers confused as to what to prioritise when planning for learning. Three of the four National 5 teachers in this study appeared to separate the three strands reporting clear compartmentalisation in their approaches and limiting study of professional works to 'appreciation' only in classroom-based lessons. Jordan stated,

For their double period [...]that's for their technical solo so will be jazz and contemporary. One of the single periods will be their choreography and then for the other period they will be in the classroom and we will cover all the theory aspect of it.

And Katherine,

[The extra-curricular dance teacher] would do all the practical sense and I would have them maybe, collectively for an hour a week, maybe split into 20 min slots here and there. Which actually possibly our registration periods and any other time in their timetable that they're free and I would have that as a contact time to cover the written element.

Whilst previous studies have reported discrepancies between what course documents intend and what teachers deliver in practice (Bloomer and Morgan 1993; Sanders 2008), the GCSE teachers all reported using the professional set works to base learning experiences around. Examples provided from their practice indicated authenticity in learning experiences, linking practical and theoretical knowledge of the professional works to ensure usage beyond the summative assessment. For example, Leanne stated,

We'd look at all the key facts of the set work, we would analyse movement from it, look at the staging, the lights, the design, key movement characteristics. Um then what we might do, we might learn a movement phrase from the set work or get the students to create some movement based around the stimulus or theme. And then

that's a way of understanding how the choreographer has chosen to do or create the piece in that way.

Veronica described her holistic approach to using the set professional works in relation to *A Linha Curva*, 'So I went upstairs and marked out on my floor, cubes and they were not allowed to come out of their cubes the whole lesson.' She then taught students a set motif from which they developed their own choreography based on recognised choreographic techniques to Brazilian Samba music to provide the students with an experiential introduction to the piece.

The AQA provided GCSE teachers with extensive help, support and guidance through professional training courses and opportunities for professional dialogue as stated by Leanne, 'there was an introduction to the new spec and I've recently been on one that covered the whole specification which was really good.' This could arguably have helped ensure teachers' understanding of how to bring the specification to life in such a way (Priestley and Minty 2013). Such support through courses and facilitated professional dialogue was noticeably absent in both the National 5 documents, and teachers instead noted that they had to turn to friends or colleagues for guidance, often in their own time. Aniela stated,

And I actually got one of the teachers who teaches at [name of school deleted], she came in and watched some of the dancers, watched the routines and I sent her some videos and things just to make sure I was on the right lines.

### ***Teachers' Experiences of Curriculum in Practice***

This clear separation of the three strands arguably makes it hard for constructivist approaches to learning and teaching to be successfully facilitated in National 5 students' learning and thus suggests a need to consider the effect this may have on pedagogy and assessment. The National 5 (2017) documents appeared to reflect the wider global trend

in education to move away from teacher-directed learning towards more student-centred models of teaching publicising the course as ‘learner-centred’ and ‘experiential’ (3). However, teachers in both contexts appeared to align more with the balance of both teacher-directed and student-centred pedagogy advocated in the Midway Model. National 5 teachers highlighted dance performance and technique as requiring more teacher-direction but appreciation and creating dance allowed for more student-centred approaches. Aniela, ‘I think for dance it has to be more direct than student-led. Just well, to get them at technique, to get them to that level’. Teachers in both contexts reported the difference in pedagogy required for beginners with little dance experience compared to higher ability dance students. All four teachers in England and two teachers in Scotland reflected the concept advocated in the Midway Model and endorsed by Dragon (2015) and Côté (2016) of using teacher-directed work to introduce new learning, moving to student-centred activities once this learning has been established. Emily stated,

So I would set kinda smaller choreographic tasks, doing kind of little motifs or a few movements or something like that or formation things. Then, as the year went on, it would become a lot more student centred, so, getting them to choreograph, and getting them to come up with ideas and themes and stimulus, so then less input from me and way more expectation from them.

As argued by teachers in both contexts, whilst in other school subjects such as PE it is likely students will have a basic knowledge/ skill-set from younger years this is often not the case in dance. Scottish teachers worried the pressure of the new written exam may result in them resorting to rote learning. They did not support ‘teaching to the test’ but given the lack of information surrounding the exam and the removal of internal assessment units which had provided more structure to teachers’ ensuring relevant



content was covered, they were concerned about sufficiently preparing students. They also worried about being judged on their students' results. Katherine stated,

I think moving to an exam, you may well then see a lot of teaching moving to more rote learning...right I'm going to take it away and mark it, give it you back and right now you need to learn it.

And Jordan,

At the moment we don't have a past paper so I don't know what the questions look like so half of me is thinking well I can't teach without a past paper and the other half but why, you shouldn't be teaching to the exam anyway.

This provides some support for Thorburn's (2007) claim that teachers often resort to rote learning due to external pressures of ensuring students' readiness for summative assessments.

The Midway Model states that quality dance education must strike a balance between focus on end assessment and process learning. Regarding the process/ product balance the National 5 specification allocates nineteen of its twenty-eight pages to the final assessment. However, both the choreographic task and solo performance, whilst marked on the final product, emphasise the process involved to access that point. Within the 'choreography' section of the document for example, it states, 'they learn how to apply choreographic principles to enhance intention. They also apply problem-solving skills in order to create and deliver choreography' (4). Whilst such statements regarding process learning are made, no details are provided for teachers on how to approach this. Whilst the GCSE specification appears to give more guidance to teachers regarding the use of the 'dance anthology' to set creative tasks to nurture process learning, lack of time to successfully cover the six works could still arguably lead to teachers limiting this. Aindrea stated, 'that's a bit scary um the amount they have to do as well, yeah so

rather than doing 2 pieces, they need to know 6, it is a lot to cover.’ Sanders (2008) found that time limitations often affected teacher delivery resulting in a focus on the product to ensure readiness for the final exam.

A major theme that emerged from analysis of the teacher interview data regarding emphasis on process learning was the significance of course length. Teachers in both contexts saw the need for a certificated course in dance to be at least two years to achieve the required outcomes. Scottish teachers reported selective acceptance of students onto National 5 dance due to lack of time available to bring those with no prior experience in dance up to the requisite standard. Even by adjusting the course length to two years, or using the National Progression Award as a stepping-stone, they felt that prior learning, particularly in dance technique, was essential. Aniela, ‘in the first year [we delivered National 5] they had to have been dancing outside of school or have some experience because I think in a year you can’t teach someone technique.’ And Katherine stated,

We also do get some kids who have never picked dance before ... Obviously then their success rates and their level of technique is very much limiting. I’ve had a couple come through but who haven’t actually been presented in the end.

Whilst all the English teachers reported that no prior dance experience was necessary to study GCSE dance, some schools had moved to a three-year delivery. Leanne, ‘yeah so we offer it over years nine, ten and eleven and I think with the new spec as well where it is more challenging that extra year will benefit them so much.’

Whilst the focus of the Midway Model (2002) revolves around three strands of performing, creating and appreciating, all teachers in Scotland and England reported extensive transferable skills gained during the courses. In both National 5 and GCSE,

teachers highlighted the creating/ choreography strand as significant in facilitating this.

Katherine stated,

Such an onus on this is my piece, I've got to create it and I like the fact that they then are also in somebody else's piece so they understand from a choreographer's point of view that they need to be structured, organised, content, you know all their backed up things they need.

And Emily a GCSE teacher stated; 'I think it addresses so many different personal skills and kind of social skills that you will need to succeed in any field. I think obviously choreographing as a group together; negotiation, compromise, communication, listening to each other'.

### ***Challenges***

The challenges of time constraints and accountability faced by teachers in striving to deliver quality dance education have already been highlighted. Regarding accountability, as concurrent with previous research concerning the CfE (Priestley and Minty 2013; Priestley and Sinnema 2014), the Scottish teachers reported they would prefer an increased level of guideline and prescription. Ceirwen, 'So I think a bit of guidance in maybe giving a list of here are a set number of pieces, you can pick from this list I think it would be quite useful'. They reported pressure in having to choreograph performance solos, select appropriate professional works to study and ultimately being held accountable for student exam results, a challenge previously argued by Ball (2003). Ceirwen stated,

[...]at the end of the day we are, we get kinda analysed on our grades and we need to do a review for the head teacher obviously cause they need to do that for council level and so on as to these are the results you got, why did you get them and why did they not get that.

Participants cited increased workload, lack of planning time and reliance on collegial support over SQA guidance as adding to this challenge, factors synonymous with previous literature on teachers' perceptions of curriculum changes (McDonald et al. 2016; Mellegård and Dahlberg Pettersen 2016; O'Sullivan et al. 2008). Interestingly, whilst the English GCSE course has become increasingly prescribed, and may now be seen to limit teacher autonomy over content, the English teachers stated that they supported this move overall. Leanne, 'yeah it's just very very clear what is expected of you as a teacher and what is expected of the student. And if you follow the specification, you can't, you can't go wrong really so yeah I support the new spec'. This contrasts with previous research (Chappell 2008) which found teachers felt restricted by increased prescription in educational policy. The GCSE teachers in this study liked the security offered by standardisation, knowing all teachers were delivering the same content across England. The only aspect of increased prescription that two teachers felt might restrict them was in regards to the group performance piece. They recognised stricter teacher guidelines in creative content would be helpful to newly qualifying teachers, but for those with more experience, they felt this made individualising learning more challenging, Aindrea stated; '[...] we had full creative control, not quite so much now. So there's, for us personally, I feel that it's a little bit more, it doesn't really suit us, the performance stuff because we are not as free'.

A challenge unique to the Scottish context was the perceived increased need for dance-specialist teachers to teach certificated dance in schools. In England, all four of the teachers had both undergraduate degrees and PGCEs specifically in dance, and identified as dance teachers. Whilst dance-specific teacher training PGCEs have been in existence in England for over ten years, and a number of secondary schools employ dance teachers with Qualified Teacher's Status (QTS), this is not the case in Scotland

where dance is taught primarily by PE teachers. Two of the four Scottish teachers felt the changes in the new specification increased the need for schools to employ dance-specialist teachers, Katherine; ‘but it actually puts more pressure on having subject specific dance teachers and across the city certainly, [...] no one is a trained dance teacher, we are PE teachers who have dance experience of our own personal experience’. Or to at least increase the dance training included on initial PE teacher training courses, Jordan; ‘I would like to see it being an option onto some of the PE courses or onto the drama courses’. Blanche (2007) and Mason (2011) previously highlighted the need for an increase in dance-specialist teachers in their reports concerning dance education in Scottish schools and the possible impact of the CfE. They suggested that Scotland needed to start offering dance-specific initial teacher training PGDEs or else introduce a skills level test to ensure PE teachers had the required amount of dance experience and training (11), as Risner (2007) reported was already in place in the US. The need for specialist teachers has been much debated in previous literature (Hattie 2012; Maclean 2016; Sanderson 1996). However, with the CfE being a flexible curriculum leaving teachers to plan for content, choreograph exam performance solos and select appropriate professional works to study, there appears to be a high expectation of teacher knowledge in the subject area.

Two of the four National 5 teachers reported using external dance artists to help deliver the course, particularly dance technique. Whilst the backgrounds and qualifications of these outside dance artists are unknown, previous literature has highlighted the issues raised by such partnerships (Chappell 2008; Kipling-Brown 2014).

One challenge unique to the English GCSE teachers was the introduction of the EBACC, a school performance measure which gives increased weighting to studying

‘academic’ subjects at GCSE (for example, English, maths, science) and sees arts-based subjects, such as dance, not worthy of inclusion in school ratings (Pring 2013). English participants reported that whilst it did not affect their teaching directly, it did affect job security, Aindrea stated,

My head teacher doesn’t believe in the EBACC, if the children want to take 2 performing arts GCSEs they can do ...I do worry that if my head teacher was ever to leave or retire, I don’t know how secure my job would be.

And similarly Veronica, ‘If they are a dance specialist delivering GCSE or A level they are having to do more and more PE, English or drama to fill up their time because dance GCSE and A level is being cut and cut’. This had also affected student uptake at certificated level and participants reported that it was leading to decreasing levels of dance in some secondary schools.

## **Conclusions**

In answer to research question 1, the Midway model advocates that content within a quality dance education should comprise an equal balance of the three strands of creating, performing and appreciating dance. As evidenced through documentary analysis, the weighting of the three strands in both the newly adapted GCSE and National 5 dance courses appears to reflect this. Both newly adapted courses have decreased the assessment weighting allocated to ‘performing’ and increased the weighting on ‘appreciating’. Whilst the courses differ in what they include in the final assessment, they both separate the assessment components between ‘creating’, ‘performing’ and ‘appreciating’. However, both courses leave much of the planning for course content leading up to the final assessment for individual teachers to determine. The Midway Model does not advise that the three strands be covered separately but

promotes the use of professional dance works to help plan learning activities, thus facilitating links across learning. The GCSE dance course aligns well with this approach. The specification prescribes a dance anthology of six professional works which teachers are intended to plan for learning in performing, creating and appreciating tasks. This structure for delivering the course was also evidenced within the teachers' reported examples of their practice. The linking of learning across the three strands as advocated in the Midway Model was not as evident in the National 5 teachers' reports. As the new specification had recently been announced at the time of interviews, teachers' reported examples of compartmentalising learning between the three strands might change over time. The clearer balance and cross-linkage of the three strands may have been more evident in GCSE teachers' reported practice, given that delivery of the first year content of the new GCSE specification had already begun. However, National 5 teachers were not being allocated time to adequately familiarise themselves with the requirements of the new flexible curriculum design or to plan initial content, a factor previously discussed by McDonald et al. (2016).

In relation to research question 2, due to the small-scale of this study, this question is harder to answer in view of teachers' contrasting accounts in each context. Regarding assessment approach, the Midway Model promotes a combination of both process learning and end-product focus. This was hard to compare because of the different lengths of delivery in the courses, which even differed between schools in the same curriculum context. Arguably, when the GCSE course is delivered over a greater length of time with a linear course structure, there is more time for process-based learning than in the National 5 where the summative assessment happens sooner. However, this small-scale qualitative study does not allow for generalisation and therefore further research is recommended. Both the GCSE and National 5 teachers

reported process-based learning through the transferable skills developed during dance education, particularly in tasks involving taking the role of both a choreographer, and of a dancer in a peer's choreography. Transferable skills which were considered useful beyond the final assessment were also reported, including organisation, problem-solving, critical-thinking, negotiation, responsibility and self-expression. GCSE teachers also discussed nurturing these skills through carefully planned tasks utilising the set studies as evident in Veronica's A Linha Curva teaching activity. Given that the study focused on the views of only eight teachers, further research on a wider scale and with the use of field observations may help to provide a clearer picture of the process/product divide and how individual teachers approach this in each context particularly at a time when preoccupation with assessment appears rife.

In response to research question 3, challenges faced by GCSE and National 5 teachers differed considerably. Time constraints were the only challenge reported in both contexts but were experienced differently in the two. The English teachers worried about the increase in professional works to cover and the Scottish teachers were concerned about the advocated one-year delivery period. Aside from time constraints, GCSE teachers' challenges centred on the introduction of the EBACC. They reported an increased focus on 'more academic' subjects, particularly from parents, and the effect this was having on uptake of GCSE dance now and in future. The EBACC, being an English initiative, was not reported as a challenge by National 5 teachers. Instead, a main theme was the effect the newly adapted National 5 course would have on them as teachers. They worried that the lack of prescription in the National 5 dance course was leading to increased pressure on having subject-specific dance teachers. Overall, they reported the need for increased initial teacher training in dance, improved ongoing SQA guidance and training, and more prescription in the course.



The findings in this study appear to support previous literature which highlights that current policy changes appear to have led to a fixation on assessment and teachers being held responsible for their students' achievements.

## **Implications**

Despite this being a small-scale introductory study with limited participants, it pointed to a number of interesting differences in the two contexts, Scotland and England, which could lead to implications for future policy and practice.

In regards to policy, policy-makers are encouraged to gather the views of the teachers who are to deliver the dance curriculum, whether that be dance teachers or PE teachers, before designing new curriculum and to continue this dialogue once delivery has begun. Whilst the AQA states this was carried out prior to introduction of the new GCSE, it is not clear if this was the case in National 5 and ongoing feedback/ dialogue does not appear to be apparent in either context. It is clear that the GCSE teachers were happy with the newly adapted course and the support available to them in delivering this. Whilst generally supportive of the increased level of prescription, they were unsure of the extent of this on the group performance piece and therefore continued dialogue with the AQA policy-makers could help relieve this issue over time. The National 5 teachers reported that changes to the dance course for them had been challenging and they would prefer more SQA guidance, training opportunities and prescription in the form of set solos and professional works to help them in their delivery. More research is recommended to see if having this two-way dialogue could arguably help alleviate tensions between policy and practice. A second important policy implication of the study would be the consideration of increasing course length. Dance is arguably different from other school subjects in that learners may not have gotten the chance to experience it in earlier years of schooling. Therefore, a certificated course of less than

two years could be seen to lower the chance of process-based learning and increase emphasis on the requirements of the summative assessment only.

Regarding practice, this study has argued that constructivist approaches in learning and teaching dance is vital in ensuring embedded transferable learning beyond simply remembering facts. Linking learning across the three strands of creating, performing and appreciating as advocated in the Midway Model is important to ensure reproducibility of knowledge across theory and practice and beyond the final exam. In this study, this was more evident in the GCSE delivery than in the National 5 and therefore further research needs to be conducted to explore if this is down to lack of dance-specific experience in the National 5 teachers. Therefore, as recommended by Blanche (2007) and Mason (2011), Scotland needs to consider offering extra initial teacher training for teachers expected to deliver certificated dance courses. Whilst it may be argued that there is not enough demand for the introduction of a dance-specific PGDE, suggestions by PE teachers in this study of a dance option within the PE initial teacher training should be considered.

It is recommended that future qualitative studies concerning dance education of this kind gather student views in addition to teacher views to give a wider perspective of dance education, in particular the quality of such provision and experiences from the learner standpoint. Whilst generalisable conclusions cannot be drawn from such a small qualitative study, it is recommended that findings from this study be used as the basis for a large-scale survey-based study. Such a study could be used to help inform future certificated dance curriculums and teacher training courses to allow the quality of dance education to be of a more uniform standard across the country.

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### Tables

Table 1. Overview of participants' qualifications and experience in dance

GCSE Teacher-pseudonym	Qualifications	Other Relevant Dance Experience	School Course delivery (years)
Aindrea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undergraduate degree in dance, sport&amp;exercise</li> <li>PGCE Secondary Dance</li> </ul>	-Taught GCSE dance in English schools for past 4.5 years	2
Veronica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undergraduate degree in dance</li> <li>PGCE Secondary Dance</li> </ul>	-Still continues teaching in the private dance context in the evenings -Taught GCSE dance in English schools for past 9 years	3
Emily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undergraduate degree in dance</li> <li>Assessment only route to gain QTS</li> </ul>	-Taught GCSE dance in English schools for past 7 years	2
Leanne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undergraduate degree in dance</li> <li>PGCE Secondary Dance</li> </ul>	-Taught GCSE dance in English schools for past 3 years	3
<b>National 5 Teacher - pseudonym</b>			
Katherine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B(Ed.) Physical Education</li> </ul>	-Taught certificated dance in Scottish schools for past 5 years	1-2
Aniela	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undergraduate degree in sports science</li> <li>PGDE Physical Education</li> </ul>	-Runs her own dance school with a friend in the evenings teaching jazz and hip hop -Taught certificated dance in Scottish schools for past 2 years	1



Jordan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• B(Ed.) Physical Education</li> </ul>	-Taught certificated dance in Scottish schools for past 5 years	1-2
Ceirwen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• B(Ed.) Physical Education</li> </ul>	-Taught certificated dance in Scottish schools for past 3 years	1-2

Table 2. Comparison of English and Scottish teacher interview categories and sub-categories

<b>English Categories</b>	<b>English Sub-categories</b>	<b>Scottish Categories</b>	<b>Scottish Sub-categories</b>
Scaffolding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance progression in place</li> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Peer learning</li> <li>• Holistic Approach</li> <li>• Use of GCSE dance anthology</li> <li>• Increased learner autonomy over time</li> </ul>	Scaffolding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differentiation</li> <li>• Role of extra-curricular dance</li> <li>• Discovery learning</li> <li>• Students preferred to have previous dance experience before entry</li> <li>• Classes split by technique/theory/choreography</li> </ul>
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student emphasis on final assessment</li> <li>• Linear course structure helps process/ product balance</li> </ul>	Teacher beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance needs to be more teacher-directed</li> <li>• Focus on end product</li> <li>• Increased opportunity for student-centred work in non-certificated dance</li> <li>• New specification could lead to increased rote learning</li> </ul>
Transferable Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Relationship-building</li> <li>• Self-confidence</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Outlet for expression</li> <li>• Ability to self-reflect</li> <li>• Ability to give and receive constructive criticism</li> </ul>	Transferable skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational skills</li> <li>• Nurturing of 2-way responsibility</li> <li>• Relationship-building skills</li> <li>• Outlet for expression</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> <li>• Musicality</li> <li>• Confidence</li> <li>• Problem-solving skills</li> </ul>
Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affected by course delivery being 2/3years</li> <li>• Worried about covering 6 set works</li> </ul>	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limitations of one year course delivery</li> <li>• Increased teacher work load</li> <li>• Timetabling issues</li> </ul>
Effects of EBACC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased focus on 'academic' subjects</li> <li>• Reliant on school management support</li> <li>• Dance teachers having to teach subjects such as drama/ PE or English</li> <li>• Uptake</li> </ul>	Teacher accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern regarding 'doing it right'</li> <li>• Rated on results</li> <li>• Lack of consistency across schools</li> </ul>
Increased prescription of new specification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preference for increased teacher input in creating performance pieces</li> <li>• Recognition of need for standardisation</li> </ul>	Lack of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of SQA training/ courses</li> <li>• Reliant on support from other teachers/ friends</li> <li>• Lack of National 5 appropriate resources</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training/support from AQA in delivery</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of funding to partake in outside organisation training</li> </ul>
		<p>Increased pressure for dance-specialist teachers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifies as PE teacher</li> <li>• Struggles with technique progression to Higher</li> <li>• Equal need for dance knowledge and pedagogical knowledge</li> </ul>