



CRITICAL, CREATIVE, DIFFERENT AND FREE THINKING IN ARTS AND SCIENCE EDUCATION ABOUT ARTS

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Abstract

This article explores the intricate relationship between critical thinking, creativity, difference, and intellectual freedom within the context of art education and the philosophy of art. Through a philosophical-aesthetic approach grounded in critical reflection, this study discusses how questioning, opposing, and challenging norms can function as both methods of critical inquiry and expressions of creativity. It emphasizes that creativity is not confined to unconscious inspiration or childlike spontaneity, but emerges through disciplined thought, lived experiences, and reflective engagement with cultural traditions. The paper highlights the role of tacit knowledge in traditional dance, where creative acts are embedded in embodied practices and collective memory. Furthermore, it examines how dance serves as a metaphor for freedom, offering possibilities for artistic resistance and renewal beyond conventional boundaries. Art education, in this framework, is not merely the transfer of artistic skills, but a transformative space where critical consciousness and imaginative capacities are cultivated. With the integration of the principles of difference, plurality, and independence of mind, educators and learners are encouraged to transcend binary thought structures and hierarchical traditions. The findings of this research affirm that fostering critical and creative thinking is essential to producing innovative and socially meaningful artistic practices.

Keywords: art education, critical thinking, creativity, difference, independence

1. INTRODUCTION

In the philosophical discourse, human beings are often referred to as *homo quaerens* — beings who are innately curious and driven by the need to seek understanding (Passmore, 2010). This inherent curiosity, when directed with method and purpose, evolves into the capacity for critical thinking. Critical thinking itself is a cognitive skill that enables individuals to question assumptions, analyze arguments, and formulate reasoned conclusions. However, the cultivation of such thinking is frequently impeded by societal structures and cultural traditions embedded within formal education and upbringing. Children, for example, exhibit a natural tendency to ask questions and explore possibilities. Yet, as they grow older and are subjected to institutional frameworks, this propensity is often dulled through didactic teaching methods and hierarchical educational practices that discourage dissent or deviation from the norm (Sawyer, 2006).

This resistance to fostering critical thinking within educational institutions poses significant challenges, especially within the domain of arts education. Despite the incorporation of pedagogical strategies such as Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), the practical application of critical thinking often remains superficial. Educational policies may endorse the concept in theory, yet classroom realities tend to privilege rote learning, passive absorption of information, and conformity. Consequently, critical thinking is misunderstood, misapplied, or even feared, leading to expressions that are arbitrary or confrontational rather than reflective and constructive (Passmore, 2010).

Alongside critical thinking, creativity is a fundamental component of human intellectual and cultural development. Creativity has long been considered the pinnacle of human cognitive achievement, playing a crucial role in problem-solving, innovation, and artistic expression. According to Sawyer (2006), creativity can be categorized into three forms: natural creativity, group creativity, and societal creativity. Natural creativity aligns with Darwinian thought, where variation,

selection, and retention serve as mechanisms through which nature produces novel forms. Group creativity emphasizes collaboration among individuals to produce shared cultural artifacts, while societal creativity highlights the innovations generated by specific communities or cultures across historical periods.

In the context of the arts, creativity is both an individual and a collective endeavor. Dance, as a case in point, represents a unique convergence of tradition and invention. While choreography can involve memorized sequences, each performance embodies newness, shaped by the dancer's interpretative presence, bodily memory, and environmental responsiveness. Such manifestations align with the ontology of dance, where movement is never a mere repetition but a dynamic re-creation (Rubin & Sedana, 2007). This perspective challenges rigid definitions of creativity and reaffirms that repetition, far from being antithetical to innovation, can serve as a source of perpetual renewal.

However, creativity does not emerge in a vacuum; it is shaped and constrained by cultural norms, institutional practices, and historical legacies. In many cases, traditions are upheld as authoritative sources of knowledge and aesthetic standards, posing resistance to change. For artists and educators, negotiating with tradition becomes a delicate balance between preservation and transformation. Lyotard (1984) emphasizes the postmodern condition in which metanarratives lose their hold, allowing for pluralities of expression and the legitimization of alternative voices. Within this framework, resisting tradition is not an act of nihilism but a creative gesture that opens space for new interpretations and forms.

One illustrative case is the practice of graffiti art by Banksy, who famously declared that "the greatest crimes in the world are not committed by people breaking the rules but by people following the rules." His provocative stance exemplifies how art can serve as a medium of resistance and critique, challenging societal conventions and pushing the boundaries of aesthetic legitimacy. Creativity, in this context, is inseparable from critical engagement. It becomes an act of defiance that reveals latent contradictions within the cultural order (Freeland, 2001).

The convergence of critical and creative thinking is also reflected in educational theory. Passmore (2010) introduced the concept of "critico-creative" thinking, suggesting that critical thinking must go beyond objection and incorporate imaginative exploration. Education, in this sense, should not merely transmit knowledge but foster the capacity to question, interpret, and reimagine. Artistic education, particularly, is well positioned to develop these dual capacities. The process of creating art—whether composing a dance, designing a visual work, or engaging in performance—requires the interplay of analysis, intuition, and emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, the notion of tacit knowledge adds depth to our understanding of creativity. Polanyi (1958) defines tacit knowledge as knowledge that is difficult to articulate or codify, often embedded in experience and practice. In traditional dance, for instance, choreographic knowledge is transmitted through embodied interaction rather than textual instruction. This mode of knowing challenges Western epistemological paradigms that prioritize explicit, propositional knowledge. Recognizing the value of tacit knowledge is essential for a more inclusive and holistic approach to education, one that honors different ways of knowing and being.

Dance also exemplifies how art can function as a metaphor for freedom. Badiou (2005) views dance as a metaphor for thought that transcends the principle of gravity, representing lightness, freedom, and spontaneity. Similarly, Langer (1953) identifies dance as a form of virtual power that conveys emotion, narrative, and metaphysical insight. These conceptualizations affirm that the body



is not merely a medium of expression but a site of philosophical inquiry and transformation. The dance movement becomes a form of thought, a symbolic language that communicates beyond words.

However, the emancipatory potential of dance must also contend with issues of gender, power, and commodification. Historically, dance has been both celebrated and marginalized, particularly when associated with femininity and the body. In some cultural contexts, dance is deemed inappropriate or indecent, reflecting patriarchal anxieties about bodily expression and control. The critical lens of feminist theory urges us to interrogate such assumptions and to consider whose bodies are allowed to move, to be seen, and to signify meaning in public spaces (Trina, Kenyowati, & Widiyanti, 2020).

Art education must therefore incorporate principles that recognize diversity and empower learners. Hardy (2006) outlines three key principles for art education in the postmodern world: difference, plurality, and independence of mind. "Difference" acknowledges the multiplicity of perspectives, identities, and experiences. "Plurality" affirms the legitimacy of various methods and mediums. "Independence of mind" encourages students to develop their own voice and critical autonomy. These principles align with broader educational goals of fostering democratic citizenship, social awareness, and creative agency.

In sum, the intersection of critical thinking, creativity, and artistic practice constitutes a vital terrain for educational inquiry. By challenging dominant narratives, embracing alternative knowledges, and fostering imaginative capacities, art education can cultivate learners who are not only skilled but also thoughtful, reflective, and empowered. This vision of education requires courage, openness, and a commitment to transformation—qualities that are as essential in the classroom as they are on the stage.

2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The methodological approach employed in this article is philosophical reflection, with a primary emphasis on the critical examination of aesthetic, artistic, and art education texts. Philosophical reflection in this context involves a rigorous process of interpretive reading and analysis, grounded in hermeneutic principles that seek to understand the underlying meanings, assumptions, and implications of artistic and educational discourses. This research is qualitative in nature and employs critical hermeneutics as its guiding epistemological framework.

Central to this approach is the belief that knowledge in the arts and education is not static or merely empirical, but rather constructed, interpreted, and reinterpreted through dynamic processes of reflection and dialogue. The research draws extensively on primary philosophical sources as well as secondary interpretive texts within the fields of art philosophy, creativity studies, critical pedagogy, and dance theory. Key thinkers whose works inform this study include Sawyer (2006), Lyotard (1984), Passmore (2010), Badiou (2005), Langer (1953), and others whose contributions have shaped contemporary understandings of creativity, knowledge, and education.

This reflective method unfolds through a number of interrelated steps. First, it involves identifying key philosophical themes and conceptual frameworks within the selected texts. These include the constructs of natural, group, and societal creativity (Sawyer, 2006), the critique of metanarratives and the emphasis on plurality (Lyotard, 1984), and the fusion of imagination and critique in education (Passmore, 2010). Second, the research maps these constructs in relation to the domains of creativity, critical thinking, and pedagogical practice, paying particular attention to how they interact and inform one another.

Third, the research proceeds by analyzing the implications of these theoretical frameworks within the realm of dance, which is treated as a paradigmatic art form. Dance is chosen not only for its embodied and performative qualities but also for its capacity to serve as a site of cultural negotiation and epistemological inquiry. As Rubin and Sedana (2007) argue in their study on Balinese performance, dance encapsulates a rich interplay between physical mastery, symbolic meaning, and ritual significance, making it an ideal field through which to investigate the convergence of aesthetic experience and educational values.

Furthermore, the methodology incorporates the interpretation of philosophical metaphors and symbols, particularly those that relate to artistic creation, bodily expression, and pedagogical freedom. The metaphor of dance as a form of thought that transcends gravity (Badiou, 2005), or as a virtual power that communicates emotion and meaning (Langer, 1953), provides insight into how the arts articulate modes of knowing that differ from but complement rational discourse. These metaphors are not merely decorative; they carry epistemic weight and pedagogical implications, inviting educators to rethink the boundaries of knowledge and the nature of learning in the arts.

Another important methodological element is the interrogation of tacit knowledge. Drawing on Polanyi (1958), this study emphasizes the importance of understanding knowledge that is embodied, unspoken, and transmitted through practice rather than through formal instruction. This is particularly relevant in the context of traditional dance, where movements, gestures, and sequences are often learned through apprenticeship and direct imitation rather than through verbal explanation. By acknowledging the validity of tacit knowledge, the research challenges dominant paradigms that privilege explicit, codifiable forms of knowing and argues for a more inclusive, multimodal conception of education.

The implementation of this method also involves dialoguing with contemporary pedagogical discourse, especially as it relates to postmodern educational values. Hardy (2006) outlines three fundamental principles—difference, plurality, and independence of mind—that frame much of the analysis in this article. These principles are not only theoretical ideals but serve as methodological guides for examining how educational systems can support or hinder the development of critical and creative capacities.

In practical terms, the reflective process employed here is dialogic and iterative. It involves ongoing engagement with texts, practices, and contexts. Each reading or observation is treated as provisional, open to revision and re-interpretation. This aligns with the hermeneutic tradition that views understanding as a process of moving between parts and wholes, between particular instances and overarching structures.

This methodology is particularly well-suited for the study of critical and creative thinking in arts education because it does not seek to impose fixed definitions or universal truths. Rather, it honors the complexity and contingency of meaning-making in the arts, acknowledging that artistic and educational practices are situated, contextual, and often contested. It also allows for the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences, making space for marginalized perspectives and alternative epistemologies.

Finally, the methodological approach recognizes that artistic practices such as dance do not merely illustrate philosophical ideas but generate them. By engaging with the lived experiences of dancers, educators, and students, the research draws on qualitative insights that enrich theoretical understanding. This synthesis of theory and practice, reflection and action, constitutes the core strength of the philosophical-reflective method used in this study.



In conclusion, the implementation method employed in this article enables a nuanced and layered exploration of how critical thinking and creativity intersect within artistic and educational contexts. By weaving together philosophical inquiry, textual analysis, and interpretive reflection, the research opens up new possibilities for understanding the transformative potential of art education in a pluralistic and dynamic world.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Interplay of Critical and Creative Thinking

Critical thinking is not confined to the logical refutation of arguments or the identification of fallacies; rather, it involves a broader intellectual capacity to question, imagine, and transform prevailing assumptions. As Passmore (2010) suggests, true critical thinking must integrate both critique and creativity—a concept he frames as “critico-creative thinking.” This dual capacity enables individuals not only to deconstruct flawed ideas but also to envision alternatives and articulate new forms of meaning. Such an approach is particularly vital in the arts, where imaginative exploration is inseparable from intellectual rigor.

In the context of dance and other performative arts, critical and creative thinking converge in the act of challenging conventional aesthetics and exploring novel expressions. The willingness to experiment with form, gesture, rhythm, and meaning reflects a dynamic engagement with tradition—one that does not passively inherit, but actively reconfigures. Here, creativity is not a spontaneous outburst of originality but a reflective practice grounded in knowledge, context, and purpose. The dancer, in this view, is not merely a performer but a thinker, an interpreter, and a critic.

Lyotard’s (1984) analysis of postmodernism provides a useful framework for understanding this dynamic. In a postmodern condition, grand narratives and fixed meanings are destabilized, creating space for plurality and dissent. Within this epistemological landscape, the arts serve as a fertile ground for negotiating difference and articulating alternative voices. Dance, for instance, becomes more than an aesthetic activity; it becomes a space of epistemic resistance and cultural critique. By moving against codified norms or introducing new vocabularies of movement, dancers engage in acts of philosophical inquiry, challenging the very categories that define what art is and what it ought to be.

Creativity, in this context, is a form of resistance—a resistance to conformity, homogenization, and intellectual passivity. Sawyer (2006) emphasizes that creativity is not a singular, isolated event but an emergent property of social, cultural, and cognitive interactions. He delineates three categories: natural creativity, which arises from biological and evolutionary processes; group creativity, which emerges from collaborative interaction; and societal creativity, which refers to the innovative capacity of communities and cultures. In each of these forms, creativity is a structured process involving both tradition and transformation.

The interplay between critical and creative thinking becomes particularly salient in educational settings, especially in art education. Traditional schooling often emphasizes the acquisition of fixed knowledge and the reproduction of established techniques. This can result in a stifling of the student’s critical and creative faculties. However, when students are encouraged to think reflectively and independently—when they are invited to question, reinterpret, and reimagine—they begin to engage in authentic learning. Education thus shifts from being a transmissive endeavor to a transformative one (Hardy, 2006).

Dance pedagogy exemplifies this shift. In traditional dance practices, such as those in Balinese or Javanese performance cultures, students typically begin by mastering established forms through

imitation. Yet, as they internalize the structure and symbolism of these forms, they are gradually encouraged to innovate—to infuse their own understanding, emotions, and stylistic preferences. This movement from repetition to reinvention mirrors the philosophical transition from dogma to dialectic, from obedience to autonomy (Rubin & Sedana, 2007).

Polanyi's (1958) notion of tacit knowledge further deepens this analysis. In dance, much of the learning is non-verbal and embodied. Dancers acquire knowledge not through didactic instruction but through embodied engagement, observation, and sensory attunement. This kind of knowledge is difficult to articulate but central to creative expression. By acknowledging the value of tacit knowledge, educators and scholars can expand the boundaries of what counts as legitimate knowledge in the arts.

Moreover, the intersection of critical and creative thinking is not merely a pedagogical concern but a cultural and political one. Artistic practices can function as sites of cultural memory, identity formation, and social transformation. For example, Banksy's subversive street art challenges political authority and social norms through visual provocation and satire (Freeland, 2001). His work exemplifies how critical thinking in art can manifest as visual metaphor and public dialogue. Similarly, choreographic works that confront themes of gender, colonization, or ecological crisis invite audiences to reflect, question, and act.

From a philosophical standpoint, Badiou (2005) argues that dance embodies a unique ontology—one that resists gravity, both literally and metaphorically. In dance, the body defies physical constraints and enacts freedom, lightness, and becoming. This metaphor extends to intellectual life: just as dancers leap, twist, and soar, so too must thinkers disrupt, reconfigure, and elevate thought. Dance thus becomes a philosophy in motion, a language of the body that communicates ideas as powerfully as words.

In sum, the interplay between critical and creative thinking is central to both the practice and pedagogy of the arts. It requires educators to cultivate environments that honor difference, encourage experimentation, and support intellectual risk-taking. It calls on students to not merely consume knowledge but to co-create it, drawing on their experiences, insights, and imaginations. Most importantly, it reaffirms the transformative potential of the arts—not just as aesthetic pursuits but as vehicles for reflection, resistance, and renewal.

3.2 Creativity and Its Myths

Creativity is often mythologized, particularly in cultural and educational discourse, as a mystical or spontaneous phenomenon. Sawyer (2006) identifies several pervasive myths surrounding creativity that obscure the realities of how creative processes actually occur. Among these myths are the beliefs that creativity arises from unconscious inspiration, that it is the domain of children and savants, or that it must necessarily be associated with originality and personal genius. Such romanticized conceptions persist in popular thought and even within educational systems, often to the detriment of developing a more grounded and inclusive understanding of creativity.

One of the most enduring myths is the notion that creativity is rooted in the unconscious—a sudden spark or divine inspiration that descends upon the artist without warning or reason. While psychoanalytic traditions, particularly those influenced by Freud, support this idea through concepts like sublimation and repression, contemporary cognitive science and educational philosophy suggest otherwise. Sawyer (2006) argues that creative achievements are more frequently the result of deliberate practice, iterative experimentation, and sustained intellectual engagement. Even when



creativity appears spontaneous, it is often undergirded by a deep reservoir of prior knowledge and experience.

Another myth is that children are naturally more creative than adults. This perception, while not entirely without merit, ignores the role of environment, education, and cultural context in either nurturing or inhibiting creative development. Rousseau's idea that children are innately good and imaginative has influenced educational approaches that romanticize childhood creativity. However, as individuals grow, institutional constraints and rigid cognitive frameworks often suppress their capacity for divergent thinking (Passmore, 2010). Hence, the task of education is not simply to preserve childhood creativity, but to create conditions under which critical and creative capacities can flourish throughout life.

Closely linked to these ideas is the belief that creativity is always tied to originality or personal expression. This myth perpetuates a binary between art and craft, in which the former is seen as the realm of genius and innovation, while the latter is regarded as derivative or utilitarian. In reality, creativity often involves working within established forms, reinterpreting tradition, or synthesizing existing elements in new configurations. Lyotard (1984) emphasizes that postmodern creativity often operates through parody, pastiche, and intertextuality rather than through absolute originality. Thus, the fixation on novelty can be limiting and exclusionary, particularly in cultures with strong communal or oral traditions.

A further misconception is that creativity cannot be taught. This myth has profound implications for pedagogy, especially in the arts. If creativity is perceived as an innate gift rather than a skill or disposition that can be developed, educational systems may fail to provide students with the tools and environments necessary for creative growth. On the contrary, structured approaches to creative thinking, including design thinking, reflective practice, and interdisciplinary collaboration, have been shown to enhance creativity across disciplines (Hardy, 2006).

Tacit knowledge offers an important counterpoint to these myths. Polanyi (1958) introduced the concept of tacit knowledge to describe the kind of understanding that is implicit, embodied, and often resistant to verbal articulation. In traditional dance, for example, creativity is not merely expressed through choreographic innovation but also through subtle variations in timing, gesture, and affect. These forms of knowledge are transmitted through immersion, mentorship, and lived experience rather than through formal instruction. Recognizing tacit knowledge as a legitimate epistemic form allows for a more inclusive understanding of creativity—one that values the experiential, the non-verbal, and the communal.

Furthermore, the myth that creative individuals are social outliers or are not recognized until after death (as in the case of Van Gogh) perpetuates a narrative of suffering and alienation. While some artists do experience marginalization, many creative acts occur within collaborative contexts and are recognized within their own lifetimes. Group creativity, as described by Sawyer (2006), underscores that innovation is often a collective achievement. In fields such as dance, theater, and music, creativity is inherently social, arising from interactions among performers, audiences, and cultural settings.

Another myth that bears examination is the belief that creativity is necessarily therapeutic or cathartic. While artistic practice can indeed have psychological benefits, equating creativity solely with self-expression reduces its broader social, intellectual, and political dimensions. Creative works often serve as critiques of social injustice, reflections on cultural identity, or explorations of philosophical questions. The assumption that creativity is merely a means of personal healing overlooks its potential as a tool for inquiry and transformation.

Finally, the hierarchical distinction between art and craft—as if the former is imbued with creativity and the latter with repetition—has been challenged in contemporary scholarship and practice. In today's global and postmodern art worlds, many artists intentionally blur these boundaries. Craft-based practices such as textile work, ceramics, and culinary arts are increasingly recognized for their creative merit. This convergence not only expands the definition of what counts as art but also democratizes creativity by validating diverse forms of making and knowing (Freeland, 2001).

In confronting these myths, educators and practitioners can foster a more nuanced and equitable approach to creativity. By understanding creativity as a multifaceted process shaped by cultural, cognitive, and contextual factors, we can better support learners in developing their creative potential. This includes creating pedagogical spaces that value difference, encourage experimentation, and legitimize non-traditional forms of knowledge. In doing so, we not only challenge reductive myths but also affirm the capacity of all individuals to think, imagine, and create in meaningful ways.

3.3 Dance as Embodied Thought and Freedom

Dance, as an art form, transcends mere physical movement. It encapsulates philosophical, cultural, and emotional dimensions that render it a powerful metaphor for thought and freedom. Badiou (2005) articulates this by proposing that dance embodies a thought in motion—a form that resists the gravitational pull of normativity, both literally and figuratively. Similarly, Langer (1953) describes dance as the articulation of virtual power, a symbolic gesture that represents not only expression but also cognition. In this conceptualization, dance is not only a medium of aesthetic display but also a site of critical reflection and existential liberation.

At the core of this philosophical discourse lies the notion that the body, through dance, becomes a space of resistance. The moving body can question, subvert, and reimagine prevailing discourses around identity, culture, and power. In many cultural traditions, dance has served as both a vehicle of continuity and a mechanism of change. For example, traditional Balinese or Javanese dance forms contain encoded social values and cosmologies, yet dancers often reinterpret these values through embodied innovation (Rubin & Sedana, 2007). The body becomes a site where past and present coalesce—where memory and imagination enact their dialogue.

Gender and cultural politics deeply intersect with dance. The female body, in particular, has long been a contested terrain in dance history, subjected to both idealization and marginalization. Feminist critiques have pointed to how traditional dance forms have often commodified women's bodies, reducing them to objects of visual pleasure within patriarchal structures (Freeland, 2001). Yet, within these constraints, dance also offers opportunities for reclamation. When dancers choreograph their own movements, when they perform with intentionality and self-awareness, they assert agency over their representation. Dance, therefore, becomes an act of embodied authorship.

This complexity is evident in debates surrounding commodification and authenticity in performance. For instance, in tourist-oriented performances, traditional dances are often recontextualized to appeal to global audiences, raising concerns about cultural dilution or exploitation. However, such performances can also be spaces of cultural negotiation and adaptation. As Trina, Kenyowati, and Widiyanti (2020) argue, dancers may use these platforms not merely to conform to expectations, but to subtly embed critiques, experiment with form, and introduce new narratives. In such contexts, dance functions simultaneously as a cultural product and as a mode of resistance.



Dance also exemplifies the paradox of embodiment—it is both deeply individual and profoundly collective. Every dancer brings their own bodily history, affective memory, and interpretive lens to the performance. Yet dance is often situated within broader traditions, choreographic vocabularies, and social rituals. This tension underscores the epistemic richness of dance: it is a practice that continuously negotiates between structure and freedom, repetition and improvisation, discipline and spontaneity.

Philosophically, Badiou (2005) considers dance a site of “inaesthetics,” where art escapes didactic function and instead reveals truths through its own immanent logic. Dance does not convey propositional knowledge but reveals truths through gesture, rhythm, and space. This ontological framing positions dance as a site of becoming, where the body is not fixed but perpetually constituted through motion. In resisting the weight of norms, dance opens space for new subjectivities, new ways of being in the world.

Dance’s capacity for transcendence is further echoed in Langer’s (1953) theory of virtuality. She argues that dance constructs a virtual world through symbolic motion, one that mirrors emotional and existential states. Unlike linguistic or narrative forms of art, dance communicates through what she terms “presentational symbols”—gestures that do not denote specific meanings but evoke a spectrum of feeling and thought. This abstraction allows dance to speak across linguistic and cultural boundaries, rendering it a uniquely universal form of expression.

Moreover, dance challenges Cartesian dualism by integrating mind and body into a unified mode of knowing. In movement, cognition is not abstracted from the physical; rather, the body itself thinks, remembers, and anticipates. This insight aligns with Polanyi’s (1958) concept of tacit knowledge. Through repetition, bodily awareness, and kinesthetic intelligence, dancers accumulate forms of knowledge that cannot be easily verbalized. These embodied understandings are central to creative exploration and pedagogical practice in dance education.

Dance also plays a critical role in the affirmation of identity. In diasporic and indigenous communities, dance serves as a medium for preserving heritage, asserting cultural pride, and resisting assimilation. Choreographed rituals, ceremonial dances, and festival performances all contribute to collective memory and solidarity. At the same time, contemporary choreographers increasingly use dance to address issues such as racial injustice, environmental degradation, and gender inequality. These works highlight the political potential of embodied performance, demonstrating that dance is not only an art form but also a mode of social commentary.

In educational settings, integrating dance as a critical and reflective practice can foster holistic development. It invites learners to engage not only cognitively but also emotionally, socially, and physically. Dance education rooted in difference, plurality, and independence of mind—as proposed by Hardy (2006)—allows students to explore their identities, challenge normative aesthetics, and cultivate empathy. Through improvisation, collaborative composition, and intercultural exploration, dance becomes a site of dialogic learning.

In conclusion, dance as embodied thought and freedom exemplifies the intricate relationship between movement, meaning, and transformation. As both metaphor and practice, dance reveals how the human body can question, disrupt, and reimagine the world. It affirms that thinking is not confined to the mind, but extends through the body in action. Whether in traditional ritual, contemporary performance, or pedagogical contexts, dance enacts freedom—not only from external constraints, but toward the possibility of becoming otherwise.

3.4 Art Education in a Postmodern Context

Art education in the postmodern era requires a fundamental shift from rigid, hierarchical, and standardized modes of teaching toward a paradigm that embraces complexity, subjectivity, and multiplicity. Hardy (2006) proposes that the foundational principles for such a transformation are difference, plurality, and independence of mind. These principles challenge the traditional educational emphasis on uniformity and conformity, and instead promote an educational environment that values diversity of thought, method, and expression. In a world increasingly characterized by cultural hybridity, technological disruption, and epistemological plurality, these principles offer an inclusive and dynamic framework for art education.

The principle of difference in art education encourages the recognition and celebration of diverse identities, perspectives, and experiences. It rejects the assumption that there is a single “correct” way to interpret or create art. This aligns with the postmodern rejection of grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984), which historically sought to universalize particular aesthetic or cultural values. In educational settings, honoring difference means validating students’ varied cultural backgrounds, artistic preferences, and interpretive strategies. For instance, students from indigenous or diasporic communities may draw upon their lived experiences to produce artworks that challenge dominant canons. Educators who embrace difference provide a safe space for students to explore their identities and articulate their visions without fear of marginalization.

Plurality extends this notion by emphasizing the coexistence of multiple methods, mediums, and modes of learning. In contrast to modernist pedagogies that prioritize mastery of specific techniques or adherence to prescribed curricula, postmodern art education values experimentation, interdisciplinarity, and hybridity. Students might be encouraged to blend painting with digital media, to incorporate performance into sculpture, or to explore the intersections of sound, movement, and text. This pluralistic approach not only enhances creative innovation but also mirrors the complexity of contemporary art practice, which increasingly resists categorical boundaries.

Independence of mind, the third principle, cultivates students’ intellectual autonomy and critical agency. It emphasizes the importance of self-reflection, critical thinking, and the courage to question prevailing assumptions. According to Passmore (2010), the capacity to think critically is integral to both education and democracy. In the context of art education, independence of mind empowers students to develop their own aesthetic judgments, articulate their creative intentions, and evaluate artworks beyond surface appeal. It also encourages them to see art as a form of inquiry—a way of engaging with social, political, and philosophical issues.

The implementation of these principles requires a reconfiguration of pedagogical relationships. Traditional teacher-student hierarchies give way to more dialogic and collaborative models. The teacher becomes a facilitator or co-learner who supports students in constructing their own meanings and exploring their creative processes. This pedagogical stance is informed by constructivist theories of learning, which posit that knowledge is actively constructed rather than passively received. In the art classroom, this might involve project-based learning, open-ended assignments, and opportunities for peer critique and collective reflection.

Furthermore, postmodern art education encourages a critical examination of the socio-cultural context in which art is produced and received. Students are not only taught how to create art but also how to analyze its historical, political, and ideological dimensions. For instance, they might explore how representations of race, gender, or sexuality have evolved in visual culture, or how art has been used as a tool of resistance and activism. This critical engagement fosters a deeper understanding of



the power dynamics embedded in artistic practice and prepares students to participate thoughtfully in public discourse.

Technology also plays a significant role in shaping postmodern art education. Digital tools and platforms expand the possibilities for artistic creation, collaboration, and dissemination. Students can experiment with virtual reality, create interactive installations, or share their work with global audiences online. At the same time, they must navigate issues such as digital ethics, intellectual property, and media literacy. A postmodern curriculum integrates these concerns, preparing students to be not only skilled artists but also informed digital citizens.

Importantly, postmodern art education does not abandon technical skill or aesthetic rigor. Rather, it recontextualizes them within a broader framework of meaning-making and inquiry. Students are encouraged to develop craftsmanship alongside conceptual depth, to hone their abilities while questioning the values and assumptions that underlie their work. This dual emphasis on technique and thought fosters well-rounded artists who are both proficient and reflective.

The transformative potential of art education rooted in difference, plurality, and independence of mind is profound. It enables students to become not merely producers of art but critical thinkers, cultural analysts, and ethical agents. It prepares them to navigate a complex world with creativity, empathy, and a commitment to justice. As Freeland (2001) argues, art has the capacity to both comfort and provoke—to affirm shared humanity and challenge entrenched systems. An education that foregrounds these capacities equips learners to engage meaningfully with the world around them.

In conclusion, postmodern art education calls for pedagogical practices that honor diversity, embrace multiplicity, and nurture intellectual freedom. By moving beyond reductive models of instruction, it fosters a richer, more inclusive, and more critical engagement with the arts. Such an approach not only enhances students' artistic development but also contributes to the cultivation of democratic values, cultural literacy, and transformative learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that the integration of critical and creative thinking constitutes the foundation of meaningful artistic expression and robust art education. Throughout the analysis, it has been demonstrated that these intellectual faculties are not mutually exclusive but deeply intertwined. Critical thinking offers the capacity for questioning, analyzing, and dismantling dominant paradigms, while creative thinking provides the imaginative potential to propose alternatives, reframe meanings, and generate novel forms of expression. When cultivated together, they produce a fertile ground for artistic and educational transformation.

In particular, the application of these faculties within dance and performance arts illustrates the unique role of the body as a site of knowing, becoming, and resistance. Dance emerges not only as an aesthetic practice but also as a philosophical act—an embodied form of thought that challenges the limitations imposed by tradition, societal expectation, and even the weight of physical gravity itself (Badiou, 2005). In this regard, dance exemplifies how art can function as a space of freedom, offering new ways of being and perceiving, as well as new possibilities for self and collective expression.

Moreover, the critical engagement with creativity itself—especially through the demystification of its myths as proposed by Sawyer (2006)—reveals that creative production is not the domain of a privileged few but a capacity that can be developed, nurtured, and shared. Creativity is neither spontaneous nor arbitrary; it is situated, deliberate, and often rigorous. It is also embedded in tacit knowledge, embodied practices, and communal traditions, as evidenced in the example of

traditional dance (Polanyi, 1958). By recognizing these alternative knowledge systems, art education expands its epistemic boundaries and moves toward a more inclusive, equitable framework.

This inclusivity is essential in a postmodern educational context. As highlighted in Hardy's (2006) manifesto for art education, the principles of difference, plurality, and independence of mind provide the ethical and pedagogical foundation for nurturing artists who are not only technically skilled but also intellectually autonomous and socially conscious. These principles push against homogenization and cultural hegemony, inviting students and educators alike to critically examine whose voices are heard, whose traditions are honored, and whose knowledge is legitimized.

The postmodern classroom, as envisioned in this study, is a dialogical and democratic space. It welcomes the coexistence of various artistic languages and recognizes the legitimacy of diverse interpretive frameworks. Here, students are not merely passive recipients of established aesthetic norms but active participants in the co-creation of knowledge and meaning. They are invited to interrogate power structures, experiment across disciplines, and explore the intersections of art, identity, and society.

Importantly, this study also underscores that the transformation of art education requires systemic change. Teachers must be prepared not only as transmitters of technique but as facilitators of inquiry. Institutions must move beyond assessment models that prioritize standardization over innovation. Policies must protect and promote curricular flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and cultural responsiveness. These changes are not simply administrative; they are philosophical and ethical imperatives that align education with human development and cultural sustainability.

As a philosophical reflection, this article has demonstrated that art education must be approached as an ongoing process—one that is reflective, responsive, and open-ended. Just as the arts continue to evolve, so too must the theories and methods that support their teaching and learning. The ability to navigate uncertainty, to imagine alternatives, and to engage critically with the world are not peripheral skills but central to the purpose of education itself.

In conclusion, the convergence of critical and creative thinking within art education cultivates not only artistic excellence but also the civic, ethical, and intellectual capacities needed in contemporary life. Dance, as a metaphor and method, illustrates how embodiment, freedom, and resistance coalesce in aesthetic practice. Creativity, once freed from its mythical constraints, becomes a democratic force accessible to all. And postmodern pedagogy, grounded in the values of difference, plurality, and independence of mind, charts a path toward a more just, dynamic, and transformative educational landscape.

Future research and practice should continue to explore how these principles can be implemented across varied educational settings and cultural contexts. This includes further investigation into the role of embodied knowledge, the integration of digital technologies in art-making, and the reimagining of assessment in creative disciplines. Above all, educators must remain committed to fostering environments where the arts can flourish—not only as products of individual talent but as shared human practices that inspire critical thought, creative freedom, and collective meaning-making. The conclusion explains what is expected in the Introduction section, as well as conclusions from the Results and Discussion section. Conclusions can also be added to the development plan for the implementation of future service.

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