

Teaching and Learning in Dance Practice: Exploring Attentional Focus and Its Impact on Artistic Processes, Performance, and the Psychosocial Environment

Directing attention toward a more global movement goal (external focus of attention), rather than a fragmented focus on individual body parts (internal focus of attention), may have an overlooked impact on dance artists' motor learning processes, artistic performance, and emotional response.

Extensive research on attentional focus in sport and music suggests that an external focus of attention, compared to an internal focus, enhances not only motor learning and performance but also important motivational factors. In dance, however, research remains limited and lacks ecological validity, context specificity, and depth of understanding. Can external focus strategies applied to cueing and giving feedback in dance practice impact the dance artist's learning environment on a broader scale than we currently recognize?

This talk presents a mixed-methods research project exploring the effects of external versus internal attentional focus in dance teaching contexts within higher education. By seeking a deeper, contextualized understanding of how attentional focus shapes artistic and emotional processes in dance practice, this research project addresses important 21st-century teaching demands in art education.

Keywords: Dance practice, attentional focus, motor learning, instruction and cueing language

Disciplinary Field: Dance, Dance Education. A 20-minute paper presentation

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CV: Katja Bjørneboe is Professor at Kristiania University of Applied Sciences in Oslo, Norway. She is a former professional ballet dancer and has performed with companies including Basel Ballet in Switzerland, Alberta Ballet in Canada, and Feld Ballets in New York, USA. She holds an undergraduate degree in Pedagogy – Educational Theory and Practice in Dance – from the University of Stavanger, Norway, and a Master of Advanced Studies (MAS) in Dance Science from the University of Bern, Switzerland. She currently teaches classical ballet, supplementary training, functional anatomy, and training physiology. Her research focuses on attentional focus, motor learning, dance training, and talent development.