



Integrating Social Emotional Learning in Dance Education to Foster Elaboration and Collaboration Skills

Gita Shervina

Institut Seni Budaya Indonesia Bandung

gitachun64@gmail.com

Abstract

This study explores the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into senior high school dance education to enhance elaboration and collaboration skills, competencies vital in the 21st century. Dance, as an expressive and social art form, aligns closely with SEL's core domains—self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—providing a strong foundation for creativity and teamwork.

Using a qualitative descriptive method and case study approach, data were gathered through literature review, classroom observation, and analysis of students' creative processes in dance composition. Results show that embedding SEL principles improved students' technical and creative performance while fostering idea elaboration, role negotiation, and constructive peer feedback. Collaborative choreography project proved especially effective in promoting respect, active listening, and shared responsibility.

The findings highlight dance education's potential as a holistic medium to cultivate artistic and social-emotional growth. Integrating SEL into the dance curriculum supports empathy, cooperation, and creative problem-solving, contributing to arts-based SEL practices and emphasizing the need for intentional instructional design that connects artistic expression with personal and interpersonal development.

Keywords : Social Emotional Learning (SEL); Dance Education; Elaboration skill; Collaboration skill.

INTRODUCTION

Developing students' capacity to elaborate ideas and collaborate effectively is central to preparing them for the twenty-first century. Global frameworks such as the OECD Learning Compass highlight creativity, collaboration, and social responsibility as essential competencies for future readiness (OECD, 2021). These competencies cannot be fostered solely through cognitive instruction but require pedagogies that integrate social and emotional dimensions of learning. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) provides such an integrative approach, encompassing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020).

Dance education is uniquely positioned to embody SEL principles in classroom practice. As an expressive and ensemble-based art form, dance requires trust, role negotiation, embodied communication, and shared responsibility, making it an ideal context for the development of both artistic and interpersonal competencies (Karkou et al., 2017). Research indicates that structured dance experiences not only enhance technical and creative abilities but also promote teamwork, cultural understanding, and empathy (Christensen et al., 2018). These findings suggest that dance can serve as a holistic platform for integrating SEL into education while fostering meaningful collaborative practices.

Creativity research further supports the connection between dance and SEL, particularly through the concept of elaboration. Elaboration, defined as the ability to refine, expand, and detail ideas, is recognized as a critical subskill of creativity alongside fluency, originality, and flexibility (Guilford, 1967; Torrance, 2008). Recent studies emphasize that elaboration plays a key role in transforming initial ideas into coherent and innovative outcomes (Lucas & Spencer, 2022). In dance composition, elaboration manifests in students' capacity to develop choreographic motifs, integrate feedback, and refine performances collaboratively.

Despite the growing interest in arts-based SEL, there remains a need for empirical studies that explicitly link SEL-informed instructional

design in dance to measurable growth in elaboration and collaboration. While prior work has highlighted the potential of dance for social inclusion and personal development (Karkou et al., 2017), fewer studies have examined how SEL integration shapes creative processes and group dynamics in secondary education. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the integration of SEL into senior high school dance education to explore its impact on students' elaboration and collaboration skills, thereby contributing to the discourse on creativity, social-emotional learning, and arts-based pedagogy.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a **qualitative descriptive design** with a case study approach to capture the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in dance education. A qualitative case study allows for an in-depth exploration of complex social and pedagogical processes within their natural classroom context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The focus on a single class of senior high school students enabled the researcher to examine the dynamics of elaboration and collaboration as they unfolded in project make a choreographic with team.

Participants and Context

The participants were students enrolled in a senior high school dance class. Purposeful sampling was used to select participants who were actively engaged in dance composition projects, as this provided opportunities to observe the manifestation of SEL competencies (Palinkas et al., 2015). The classroom setting emphasized collaborative choreography, role negotiation, and peer feedback, which are conducive to the integration of SEL principles.

Data Collection

Data were collected through multiple sources to ensure credibility and richness of information. These included:

1. **Classroom observations**, focusing on student interactions, choreographic processes, and collaborative behaviors.



2. **Document analysis** of students' choreographic outputs, reflective journals, and teacher lesson plans.

3. **Semi-structured interviews** with students and the other teacher to gather perceptions about the role of SEL in creative and collaborative learning (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Using data triangulation enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of the findings (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using **thematic analysis**, which involved coding, categorizing, and identifying themes related to elaboration, collaboration, and SEL competencies (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Patterns across the data sources were compared to understand how SEL principles influenced students' creative elaboration and group collaboration. Member checking and peer debriefing were also applied to ensure the credibility of interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Analysis of classroom observations, students' choreographic projects, and interview data revealed three major findings:

1. Improved Elaboration in Choreographic Processes

Students demonstrated greater capacity to refine and expand their choreographic ideas after SEL principles were embedded into instruction. For example, reflective prompts tied to *self-awareness* encouraged students to evaluate their initial motifs critically and extend them with more detail. Peer feedback sessions, guided by *relationship skills* and *responsible decision-making*, enabled students to collaboratively enrich their choreographies.

2. Enhanced Collaboration and Role Negotiation

SEL integration also strengthened students' collaboration skills. Collaborative tasks required students to listen actively, assume rotating roles (leader, recorder, or performer), and negotiate creative differences respectfully. Classroom observations showed that students were more willing to take shared responsibility,

which fostered a sense of collective ownership of their dance works.

3. Positive Classroom Climate and Social-Emotional Growth

Students reported feeling more respected, supported, and motivated in the SEL-integrated dance classroom. The establishment of SEL norms—such as empathy, mindfulness, and constructive feedback—created a climate conducive to risk-taking, experimentation, and creative problem-solving.

Discussion

These findings align with research emphasizing the role of SEL in fostering holistic learning outcomes. Prior studies demonstrate that SEL promotes self-regulation, empathy, and prosocial behavior, which directly support collaborative learning environments (CASEL, 2020; Hattie & Donoghue, 2016). The observed increase in students' elaboration resonates with creativity frameworks that highlight elaboration as a critical subskill of creative thinking (Guilford, 1967; Torrance, 2008). When students iteratively refined and detailed their choreographic ideas, they enacted the very processes described in creativity research (Lucas & Spencer, 2022).

Moreover, the strengthened collaboration skills observed in this study echo findings from dance and arts education scholarship. Dance, as an inherently collective practice, can promote teamwork, respect, and shared decision-making when supported by intentional pedagogical design (Karkou et al., 2017). The integration of SEL principles appears to amplify these affordances, transforming group work into a structured context for practicing relationship skills and responsible decision-making. This is consistent with Christensen et al. (2018), who found that synchrony and shared movement experiences foster social bonding and emotional awareness.

Finally, the positive classroom climate observed underscores the broader potential of arts-based SEL approaches. By combining aesthetic, cognitive, and socio-emotional dimensions, dance education becomes a powerful medium for cultivating empathetic, cooperative, and creative problem-solvers. These outcomes align with the OECD's call for future-oriented learning that integrates

creativity and collaboration as central competencies (OECD, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study examined the integration of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) into senior high school dance education with the goal of enhancing students' elaboration and collaboration skills. The findings demonstrate that embedding SEL principles—such as self-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—significantly contributed to students' ability to refine choreographic ideas and work effectively in groups. Collaborative tasks, structured around SEL competencies, not only strengthened technical and creative outcomes but also fostered empathy, mutual respect, and collective ownership of learning. These results highlight the value of dance education as a holistic medium that nurtures both artistic creativity and social-emotional development, echoing previous research linking arts engagement with teamwork, empathy, and pro-social behavior (Karkou et al., 2017; Christensen et al., 2018).

Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical standpoint, this study reinforces the argument that SEL and creativity are mutually reinforcing constructs in education. By linking elaboration—a recognized subskill in creativity frameworks (Guilford, 1967; Torrance, 2008)—with SEL competencies, the research contributes to the growing discourse on arts-based SEL practices. It provides empirical evidence that intentional instructional design in dance can activate cycles of ideation, feedback, and refinement that mirror broader models of creative thinking (Lucas & Spencer, 2022).

Practical Implications

Practically, the study offers insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. First, integrating SEL into dance instruction can serve as a replicable model for other arts and performance-based subjects, demonstrating how collaboration and creativity can be cultivated simultaneously. Second, the results suggest that embedding SEL into curricula aligns with global calls—such as the OECD Learning Compass—for future-

ready education that combines cognitive, social, and emotional competencies (OECD, 2021). Finally, this approach underscores the importance of professional development for teachers, equipping them with strategies to intentionally embed SEL principles into artistic pedagogy.

Final Remark

Overall, the integration of SEL into dance education presents a dynamic pathway for fostering empathetic, cooperative, and creative learners. By bridging artistic expression with social-emotional growth, this approach positions dance not merely as an aesthetic subject but as a vital contributor to holistic education in the twenty-first century (CASEL, 2020; Hattie & Donoghue, 2016).

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