Critical Awareness and Social Behavior of Students in Dance Extracurricular at SD 3 Kupang, Ambarawa

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Abstract

Dance education in elementary schools is often treated mainly as motor skill training, even though it has the potential to foster students' critical awareness and social behavior. This study examined how dance education is actualized in the dance extracurricular at SD Negeri 3 Kupang, Ambarawa, how students' critical awareness and social behavior develop, and how the activity contributes to students' social transformation. A qualitative descriptive case study was used, with the dance extracurricular as the unit of analysis. Data were collected during two rehearsal sessions (26 September and 3 October 2026) through participatory observation, semi-structured interviews with one dance coach and two student participants, and documentation. The data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña and validated through source and technique triangulation. The results show that dance education was actualized beyond movement technique, through group tasks, peer support, and explanations of cultural meaning. Students' critical awareness was emerging, shown by their growing willingness to voice opinions and to reflect on their learning difficulties, but it remained transitional between naive and critical. Social behavior appeared as cooperation across grades, mutual help, discipline, responsibility, growing confidence, and closer friendships. These patterns offer initial indications of social transformation, although the short observation period limits conclusions about lasting change. The findings can inform dance coaching that strengthens critical reasoning and social responsibility alongside movement technique.

Keyword: *Extracurricular Dance, Critical Awareness, Social Behavior, Elementary School students.*

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INTRODUCTION

Primary education is the main foundation for the formation of character, way of thinking, and social sensitivity of the younger generation. In the primary school age range, students are in a decisive period of socio-emotional development, which is the period when the values of cooperation, empathy, discipline and concern for the surrounding environment begin to form fundamentally. In this context, education should ideally not only be understood as a process of transferring cognitive knowledge from teachers to students, but also as a space for the growth of self-awareness and social awareness so that learners are able to read, understand, and in turn participate in changing the surrounding reality for the better.

One of the educational pathways that has great potential but has not been optimized to realize this goal is art education, especially dance. So far, learning the art of dance in elementary school, both in the subjects of Arts and culture and crafts as well as in the form of extracurricular activities, still tend to be positioned as a complementary curriculum oriented to the mastery of movement techniques and aesthetic achievement alone. In fact, dance activities carried out in groups store rich social and reflective processes, ranging from the need to harmonize movements with fellow dancers, holding back individual egos for the sake of Group integrity, to living the cultural values contained in a dance.

The urgency of this study is increasingly felt in the context of the implementation of The Independent curriculum, which explicitly places the strengthening of Pancasila student profiles, including the dimensions of cooperation, critical reasoning, and global diversity, as one of the main goals of education in Indonesia. Extracurricular activities in dance are actually in line with this spirit because it requires students to work together in groups, appreciate each other's motion abilities of different peers, and appreciate the richness of local and national cultures contained in each dance that is learned. Unfortunately, the harmony between the spirit of the curriculum and the practice of coaching in the field has not yet been fully realized, since Dance extracurricular coaching in many elementary schools still stops at the achievement of movement skills, without accompanied by a conscious attempt to reflect on the social experience of students during the process of practicing and performing together.

A number of previous studies have shown that learning the art of dance contributes significantly to strengthening students' social skills. Nugrohaji (2025) for example found that learning dance plays an important role in developing communication skills and social skills of school students, including the ability to cooperate, tolerate, and respect differences between individuals in groups. The findings confirm that dance rehearsal space is not just an arena for repeating movements, but also an authentic social interaction learning arena for elementary school-age students.

In line with this, Wahyuni, Mayar, and Desyandri (2023) revealed that learning traditional dance helps shape the character of high class students in elementary school, among others, through planting discipline in practice time, consistency of movement, regularity of rhythm, and adherence to the direction of teachers and coaches. The discipline that grows through dance practice does not stop at the technical aspect, but also forms students ' ability to manage emotions and stay focused when in performance situations that demand Group cooperation.

At the lower grade level, Yulianti, sya'idah, Desyandri, and Mayar (2022) show that the application of dance learning also contributes to the mental formation of early elementary school students, including strengthening self-confidence when performing in public and the courage to express themselves positively. This condition is important to be observed because self-confidence

and courage of expression are the basic capital for the growth of critical and participatory attitudes of students in their social lives later.

The potential of dance as a vehicle for character building is also seen in extracurricular activities. Meli (2022), although in the context of the secondary school level, shows that dance extracurricular activities are effective in instilling the character of love for the motherland in students through appreciation for the regional dances studied. These findings give a strong indication that similar patterns are likely to occur at the primary school level, considering that national character and sensitivity to cultural identity need to be instilled from an early age through direct experience, not just memorization.

The various findings above confirm that dance has a social dimension that goes far beyond aspects of motor skills. However, most studies still stop at discussing social skills and character in general, and not many have explored further how the process of practicing dance can foster students ' critical awareness, namely the ability to read, question, and respond to the surrounding social reality reflectively. In fact, critical awareness is an important prerequisite for the realization of broader social transformations, as emphasized in Paulo Freire's idea of liberation education.

In this study, the term actualization of dance art education refers to the process of realizing the value and potential of dance art in real life in the practice of learning, not just as a formal charge on paper. As for social transformation, it is understood as a change in the perspective and pattern of social relations of students, from what was originally passive and individualistic to more reflective, cooperative, and concerned with common interests. Meanwhile, social behavior in this study includes concrete forms of student interaction, such as the ability to work together, share roles, resolve conflicts peacefully, and show empathy for friends in dance groups. The three concepts are interrelated, where the actualization of dance art education that is carried out consciously and reflectively is believed to be a bridge for the growth of critical awareness, which in turn manifests itself in the daily social behavior of students.

According to Susanto (2008), Freire's thought divides human consciousness into three levels, namely naive consciousness that sees problems solely as a result of individual deficiencies, magical consciousness that is unable to associate one problem with a broader structure, and critical consciousness that is able to view social systems or structures as sources of problems. To achieve this critical awareness, an educational process based on the social reality of learners is needed, not an education that places students solely as passive recipients of knowledge.

Fauzi (2021) emphasized that education should be a means of awareness, where learners are encouraged to recognize the real conditions they face as well as invited to dialogue openly with educators who act as facilitators, not just a single source of knowledge. This process is what Freire refers to as conscientization, the process of critical awareness when a person begins to understand the historical and social forces that shape his life as well as his potential to change and create. Similar ideas are also corroborated by Fauzi and Usman (2024), who highlight the importance of Praxis, dialogue, and active participation of learners as the core of critical education oriented towards democratizing the relationship between teachers and students.

The relevance of Freire's critical awareness to formal education, including primary education, is also supported by empirical findings. Safitri and Mustikawan (2026) for example prove that Freire's liberation practices that are consistently carried out are able to increase the critical awareness of members of the learning community, through a process of dialogue, joint reflection, and active involvement of participants in activities that are meaningful to their lives. If the principles of dialogue, reflection, and active involvement are applied in the context of group dance practice in elementary school, then extracurricular dance has the opportunity to become a learning space that not only forms

movement skills, but also fosters students ' sensitivity to social relations, roles in groups, and shared responsibilities.

Reviewing previous studies, it appears that research on dance in elementary schools in Indonesia is still dominated by a focus on the development of creativity, disciplinary character, and motor skills of students, while studies that specifically link dance practice with Freire's critical awareness framework at the elementary school level are still very limited. Most of the studies on critical awareness and critical pedagogy, as seen from the studies of Fauzi (2021), Fauzi and Usman (2024), and Safitri and Mustikawan (2026), are mostly carried out in the context of adult education, religious education, or non-formal learning communities. This void is what this study seeks to fill, by placing extracurricular dance in elementary school as a new context to examine how critical awareness can be grown from an early age through meaningful artistic experiences, not through verbal learning alone.

Dance extracurricular activities at SD Negeri 3 Kupang, Ambarawa, became a relevant context to study the phenomenon. As is generally the extracurricular activities of dance in elementary school, dance training in this school involves students from various classes who practice regularly and perform at various school activities and community activities. The training process that takes place in groups allows for intense social interaction, from the distribution of roles in dance formations, the resolution of small conflicts between students during training, to the process of mutual correction and support between participants. However, so far the extracurricular development of dance in elementary schools in general, including those similar to the context of SD Negeri 3 Kupang, still tend to be oriented to technical achievement and performance readiness, while the potential for the growth of critical awareness and social behavior through the process has not been explored deliberately and systematically by the guidance teachers.

The gap between the great potential of dance as a vehicle for the formation of critical awareness and social behavior on the one hand, with extracurricular coaching practices that are still purely technically oriented on the other hand, is a fundamental problem behind this research. A study is needed that specifically examines how the dance extracurricular process, if observed in depth, actually contains social and reflective dynamics that can be developed into critical awareness and changes in social behavior of elementary school students in a more positive direction, such as the growth of cooperative attitudes, responsibility, empathy, and concern for others.

Based on the background above, this study is formulated into three research questions. First, how is dance education actualized through the dance extracurricular activity at SD Negeri 3 Kupang, Ambarawa? Second, how do students's critical awareness and social behavior develop through their participation in the dance extracurricular? Third, how does the dance extracurricular contribute to the students' social transformation?

In line with these questions, this study aims to (1) describe how dance education is implemented in the dance extracurricular at SD Negeri 3 Kupang, Ambarawa; (2) identify how students' critical awareness and social behavior develop during the activity; and (3) analyze the contribution of the dance extracurricular to students' social transformation.

This research is expected to provide benefits both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the results of this study are expected to enrich the study of art education, especially in linking the learning of dance with the framework of critical pedagogy and the concept of social transformation. In practical terms, the findings of this study are expected to be a consideration for extracurricular guidance teachers, principals, and elementary education policy makers in designing dance coaching

that is not only oriented to aesthetic achievement and movement techniques, but also deliberately fosters critical awareness and positive social behavior of elementary school students as a provision for them to become reflective citizens and care about their social environment.

METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study design, refers to Yin (2018) and Creswell and Poth (2018), to explore in depth how dance education is actualized in the dance extracurricular activity at SD Negeri 3 Kupang, Ambarawa Subdistrict, Semarang Regency. The unit of analysis was the dance extracurricular activity itself. The activity is held every Saturday at 11:00 WIB, right after regular school hours. Data were collected during two rehearsal sessions, on 26 September and 3 October 2026.

Participants were selected by purposive sampling, consisting of dance coaches and extracurricular students. One coach became a key informant, and two of the students from lower and upper classes were involved so that the experience was diverse. The researcher acts as a participant-observer who participates in the activities during the session without replacing the coach's teaching role.

Three data collection techniques were used: participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The observations focused on patterns of interaction, cooperation, role-sharing, discipline, and how students resolved conflicts during practice. The observation indicators for critical awareness were adapted from Freire's levels of consciousness (as cited in Susanto, 2008): students' ability to interpret the meaning of the dance, express opinions and give reasons for their choices of movement or floor patterns, consider peers' input, connect individual contributions to group achievement, reflect on the course of the practice, and relate the dance to cultural values. Indicators of social behavior, viewed through symbolic interactionism (Sutarto, 2020), included cooperation, role-sharing, responsibility, discipline, empathy, communication, tolerance, conflict resolution, and self-confidence. Interviews with the coach and the students explored their perspectives and experiences, while photos, videos, and activity schedules served as supporting documentation.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied the criteria of Lincoln and Guba (1985): triangulation of sources (coach and students) and techniques (observation, interviews, documentation) and peer debriefing for credibility; thick description for transferability; and systematic record-keeping with an audit trail for dependability and confirmability. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Because the participants were elementary school children, ethical principles were observed, including school permission, informed consent from parents/guardians, verbal assent from students, anonymization of identities, and the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. As data were collected in only two sessions, the findings are contextual and represent an initial portrayal rather than a long-term change.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Implementation of Dance Education in extracurricular

Dance extracurricular at SD Negeri 3 Kupang is held every Saturday at 11.00 WIB, right after class hours. Each session begins with a warm-up. Activities are not divided per class: 3rd to 6th graders practice together and learn the same dance material (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Students of grades 3-6 gather around the coach at the beginning of the training session



The coach said that the goal is not only for the students to be able to dance, but also for them to develop in terms of creativity, courage, discipline, responsibility, and cooperation.In addition, the coach also wants to help students develop a sense of love for the arts and culture of the region. The coach also explained that as much as possible the meaning and cultural value of dance, such as its origin, movements, music and costumes, are always explained so that students understand that dance is a part of culture that must be valued and preserved.

These findings show that dance education is not only about learning the movements, but also reflects the value of dance in the way of teaching and learning, not just simply the material written in the book. The social and cultural goals of the coach are similar to previous discoveries that show that traditional and regional dance help build a sense of discipline (Wahyuni, Mayar, & Desyandri, 2023) as well as love for the homeland (Meli, 2022). However, the meaning of the dance is explained only by the coach. The student's understanding is not clearly visible from the interview, so it is still unclear how deeply the grade has entered the student's mind. The format of the classes combined with the same material also makes the difference in ability a natural part of the activity, thus influencing the dynamics in subsequent themes.

2. Group Work as a Space for Dialogue and Emerging Critical Awareness

To realize cooperation, the trainer provides dance material and then forms a group in charge of studying the movement together, making an explanation of the movement, or making a simple floor pattern. When given the opportunity to express their opinion, the response of the students was different: some immediately dared to convey, others still felt embarrassed. Therefore, the coach gives the opportunity to all students and tries to create a comfortable atmosphere so that they do not feel afraid to make a mistake. Slowly, the students began to dare to express their opinions or suggestions to their friends.

Student named Malika gave an explanation of the learning process. He explained that sometimes he did not know the movements because the coach modeled them quickly, making it difficult to follow the rhythm, then he joined in learning about the music. He not only blames himself, but also understands the cause (such as movement speed) and finds a strategy (by paying attention to music).

Viewed from the level of consciousness according to Freire (Susanto, 2008), the results of this study show a shift from simple awareness, where problems are only seen as one's shortcomings, to deeper awareness and thinking again. Group tasks such as writing motion descriptions and creating

floor patterns force students to reason, respond to friends, and make decisions together. This is similar to talking, thinking, and active participation related to critical awareness according to Safitri and Mustikawan (2026) and Fauzi and Usman (2024). However, the data did not show any students questioning the larger structure. The consciousness that is found to be most appropriate is called the consciousness that is beginning to develop and is somewhere between naive and critical, not the perfect critical consciousness. Student B's expression regarding the speed of the movement example also indicates that the student was able to convey his experience, although the interview did not clarify whether the coach then adjusted his speed.

3. Social Behavior Of Students

Interviews show that these extracurricular activities become a means for students to learn to work together and help each other in everyday life. Coaches noticed that students who used to be lazy to exercise on their own became more diligent after being divided into groups, and they worked together regardless of age or class. The larger students hug and teach the smaller students, as well as the coach constantly reminds not to mock or denigrate friends. Both students confirmed this pattern. Student A said he explained slowly and helped his friend until he understood, and he didn't laugh at his friend.Student B says his group teaches struggling members until they can. Because the trainer and both students showed similar patterns, these results are supported by more than one source.

In addition to working together, coaches form a sense of discipline and responsibility by teaching consistent habits. Students are reminded to arrive on time, practice neatly, and follow the coach's orders, and the coach will give a warning if there are students who are not disciplined. Each student is given a task to memorize and play a role in the group, so his personal responsibility is related to the success of the group. Self-confidence begins to grow slowly in the same way. The coach said that a person's self-confidence will be clear when he has memorized and understood the subject matter, and a student named Malika admitted that she was more courageous to appear in school activities such as competitions and farewell events for older siblings. Since Malika has difficulty memorizing the movements shown quickly, this suggests that self-confidence arises from a good understanding of the material, rather than automatically appearing on its own. Taking part in this activity also made the friendship warmer, because Ayu, a student, said that she got closer to her friend through extracurriculars and now they often talk together during breaks.

The coach said that cooperation, responsibility, mutual respect, discipline and attention to friends were the most visible social values in the activity. From the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Sutarto, 2020), these behaviors arise from meanings that are made together through interaction: learning from friends and forbidding mocking form a common understanding regarding the meaning of mutual help and respect. This result is in accordance with research that states that learning to dance with a group increases cooperation, tolerance, and appreciation for differences in abilities (Nugrohaji, 2025) and increases self-confidence when performing (Yulianti, sya'idah, Desyandri, & Mayar, 2022). The interview does not discuss how students resolve differences of opinion among themselves, so the topic of conflict resolution is not discussed in the interview.

4. The role of the coach as well as supporting and inhibiting factors

The coach has several tasks: to give examples of movements (Figure 2), to form groups, to give tasks, to give warnings and guidance, and to create a comfortable atmosphere so that students can speak freely. This role incorporates elements that provide direction such as motion examples, reprimands, and rote assignments, as well as supportive elements such as providing opportunities for all students to speak and delegate help between friends. The facilitative side is close to educators as described by Fauzi (2021), as well as a more democratic teacher-student relationship as emphasized by Fauzi and Usman (2024), although the directive side is still strong.

Figure 2. The coach exemplifies the movement while the students fol Factors that strengthen



it are the formation of groups, help from more experienced and more numerous students, guidance from coaches, as well as a pleasant atmosphere. Both students called this activity exciting. Student B said that after attending school all day, he felt dizzy, and taking extracurriculars made him happy. This suggests that students come in tired after lessons and activities, and it helps improve their mood.

Factors that hinder the learning process according to the coach is the difference in ability and personality of students, such as some are active and easy to interact, while some are shy or lack of confidence.In addition, the difference in speed in understanding movement also makes some students feel left behind. The coach dealt with him with help and asked students who already understood his movements to help his friend. Student B's comment on the speed of the motion example suggests the existence of other possible influencing factors. In addition, one coach who taught about 22 students from four classes could make attention to each student difficult to meet, although the coach did not mention it as an obstacle.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that dance learning in extracurricular activities in SD Negeri 3 Kupang, Ambarawa, is done in a way that is more than just introducing dance movements. The activity is held every Saturday at 11.00 WIB, after finishing school hours, starting with a warm-up, and combining 3rd grade to 6th grade students who learn the same dance material. The coach not only wants to teach how to dance, but also wants to train creativity, courage, discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and love for the arts and culture of the region.To achieve it, the coach uses group assignments, help from friends, and explanations of the meaning of the dance.

The critical consciousness of the students began to appear developed, but not yet perfect. Group tasks such as observing movement, describing movement, and creating simple floor patterns provide opportunities for students to reason, respond to friends, and make decisions together, and students slowly become bolder in expressing their opinions. A student reflects on his difficulty memorizing gestures, showing a change from considering the problem as a lack of oneself, towards understanding its causes and looking for ways of solving. There is no evidence that students ask about larger structures, so their awareness is more correctly said to be somewhere between naive and critical. The social behavior of the students is evident from the cooperation between the classes, in which the larger students help the smaller ones, there is no mockery, as well as the attitude of discipline and responsibility accustomed and shared in their respective roles.Their self-confidence increases along with the understanding of the material, and their friendships become more intimate. These patterns show early signs of social change: students begin to change from not practicing alone to being active in groups, from being separated by age to cooperating between classes, as well as from being shy to slowly being bolder in expressing opinions. Because the data came from two sessions and three informants and there is no initial data as a reference, the results of this study are contextual and have not been able to show long-term changes or applications in the wider social environment. The next study could use a longer observation period, with a larger number of informants, including teachers and classes of students, as well as pay attention to how students resolve disagreements and understand the cultural meaning of the dance. For practice, coaches can use group assignments and open discussions intentionally to make students more aware of criticism and how to interact socially, as well as adjust the speed of movement examples so that students who have

different abilities can still participate without being left behind.

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