# IMPLEMENTATION OF AESTHETIC ASSESSMENT IN DANCE EDUCATION AT SCHOOL

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**Abstract**

Aesthetic assessment is an important component of dance education because dance learning involves not only technical and kinesthetic abilities but also students' capacity to express, interpret, appreciate, create, and communicate meaning through the body. In the context of a changing world, dance education needs to move beyond conventional approaches that primarily emphasize mastery and reproduction of movement. The concept of Embodied Futures: Transforming Dance Education in a Changing World offers a broader perspective by positioning the body, movement, lived experience, culture, and participation as important sources of knowledge in dance education. This study aims to examine the implementation of aesthetic assessment in senior high school dance education through an embodied futures perspective, with SMA Negeri 2 Semarang as the contextual focus. The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach through literature-based analysis of dance education, aesthetic assessment, performance assessment, embodied pedagogy, cultural sustainability, inclusion, and contemporary approaches to dance education. The analysis indicates that aesthetic assessment can be developed through several dimensions, including bodily and facial expression, movement quality, interpretation, musicality, creativity, cultural understanding, collaboration, reflection, and communication. An embodied futures perspective also encourages assessment practices that recognize students as active participants in constructing meaning through movement rather than merely as performers who reproduce predetermined choreography. Therefore, aesthetic assessment should be contextual, reflective, inclusive, and responsive to social and cultural changes. Such an approach can support the development of students' artistic abilities while preparing them to engage creatively with future challenges.

***Keywords:*** *aesthetic assessment, dance education, embodied futures, embodied pedagogy, dance assessment, cultural sustainability*

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## INTRODUCTION

Dance education is an important component of arts education because it provides students with opportunities to develop physical, intellectual, emotional, social, creative, cultural, and aesthetic capacities. Dance learning is not limited to memorizing and reproducing movement sequences. Students also need to understand movement, experience their bodies, interpret meaning, respond to music and space, communicate artistic ideas, and develop creative responses to their environment. Therefore, assessment in dance education needs to accommodate the multidimensional characteristics of dance learning.

Eisner (1972, 2002) explains that arts education contributes to aesthetic perception, artistic understanding, and complex forms of thinking. In dance education, these capabilities can be observed through students' ability to respond to movement, understand artistic qualities, interpret meaning, and communicate ideas through their bodies. Consequently, dance assessment should not be restricted to technical accuracy but should also consider students' aesthetic and interpretive development.

Assessment has an important position in the learning process because it provides information about students' progress and achievement of learning objectives. Formative assessment can provide feedback that enables students to identify specific aspects of their performance that require improvement (Andrade et al., 2015). In dance education, assessment therefore needs to function not only as a mechanism for assigning scores but also as part of the learning process.

This perspective becomes increasingly relevant when dance education is viewed through the concept of *Embodied Futures*. The theme "Embodied Futures: Transforming Dance Education in a Changing World," introduced by FBS UNNES through ICODE 2026, emphasizes the position of the body, movement, and lived experience as important elements in knowledge-making and educational practice. The theme also connects dance education with cultural sustainability, inclusion, diversity, social justice, and social transformation.

The concept of embodied learning emphasizes that knowledge is not obtained exclusively through cognitive processes. The body can also function as a medium through which learners experience, explore, communicate, and construct meaning. This is particularly relevant to dance because movement itself is a primary means of learning and communication. Therefore, students should not only be assessed based on whether they can perform a particular movement correctly but also on how they experience, interpret, transform, and communicate through movement.

The *Embodied Futures* perspective also encourages dance education to respond to changes in society. Dance learning can become a space where students explore cultural identity, local knowledge, diversity, creativity, technology, environmental awareness, and possible futures. The four major

areas identified by ICODE 2026—embodied pedagogy and innovative dance education; cultural sustainability and local knowledge; inclusive dance education and social justice; and social transformation—provide a useful framework for developing contemporary dance education.

In this context, aesthetic assessment needs to be reconsidered. Aesthetic assessment should not simply determine whether a dance performance is "beautiful" or "not beautiful." Instead, it should examine how students use their bodies to express ideas, interpret cultural meanings, make artistic decisions, collaborate with others, respond creatively to changes, and reflect on their learning.

Previous literature has emphasized the importance of performance-based assessment in dance. Schmid (2003) argues that authentic assessment in the arts can be conducted through systematic observation based on predetermined criteria. Harding (2012) also emphasizes the importance of criteria, exemplars, peer assessment, self-assessment, feedback, and reflection in dance education.

Therefore, this study discusses the implementation of aesthetic assessment in senior high school dance education through an Embodied Futures perspective. The discussion focuses on aesthetic assessment, embodied pedagogy, cultural sustainability, inclusion, creativity, reflection, and the transformation of dance education in response to a changing world.

## METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a literature-based research design. The approach is appropriate because the study aims to examine and synthesize concepts related to aesthetic assessment and contemporary developments in dance education rather than statistically measure the effectiveness of a particular assessment instrument.

The literature consists of academic books, journal articles, and relevant institutional publications concerning dance education, aesthetic education, performance assessment, embodied learning, cultural sustainability, inclusive education, and contemporary approaches to dance education.

The analysis was conducted through four stages. First, relevant literature was identified. Second, information concerning aesthetic assessment and contemporary dance education was extracted. Third, the information was grouped into dimensions including expression, movement quality, interpretation, creativity, cultural understanding, collaboration, reflection, inclusion, and communication. Fourth, these dimensions were interpreted through the *Embodied Futures perspective.*

The analysis does not claim to represent empirical assessment scores or direct classroom observations at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang. The school remains a contextual focus for discussing how the proposed framework could be implemented.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (12 pt, Garamond, bold)

### 1. Aesthetic Assessment in an Embodied Dance Education

Aesthetic assessment in dance education should be understood as an assessment of how students demonstrate artistic meaning through their bodies. Dance combines movement, expression, rhythm, space, cultural meaning, musicality, and interpretation. Therefore, assessment needs to recognize the body not simply as an instrument for executing movement but also as a source of knowledge and expression.

The Embodied Future perspective expands this understanding by positioning students as active participants in the creation of meaning. Instead of asking only whether students have successfully reproduced a choreography, teachers can also examine how students experience movement, interpret the meaning of a dance, make artistic decisions, respond to others, and develop new movement possibilities.

This is consistent with the broader concept of embodied futures, in which embodied practices can be used to explore alternative possibilities and encourage participants to actively imagine and engage with the future rather than simply predict it. ([Taylor & Francis Online][2])

Thus, aesthetic assessment can become an instrument for observing both **present artistic competence and students' capacity to develop future-oriented creative competencies.**

### 2. Dimensions of Aesthetic Assessment through the Embodied Futures Perspective

The existing assessment components in the report can be expanded as follows:

| Assessment Dimention | Observable Indicator | Embodied Futures Orientation |
|---|---|---|
| Facial Expression | Appropriateness and consistency of expression | Ability to communicate meaning through embodied expression |
| Bodily Expression | Emotional and character expression | Awareness of the body as a medium of communication |
| Movement Quality | Control, continuity, dinamics, precision | Ability to explore and adapt movement |
| Musicality | Rhythem, tempo, accnts, phrasing | Ability to respond dynamically to different stimuli |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Interpretation | Understanding of dance meaning | Ability to construct personal and cultural meaning |
| Creativity | Originality and artistic choices | Ability to imagine alternative movement possibilities |
| Cultural Understanding | Understanding of cultural context | Appreciation and sustainability of local cultural knowledge |
| Collaboration | Interaction with other dancers | Respect for diversity and collective learning |
| Reflection | Ability to evaluate one's own performance | Ability to learn form experience and imagine improvement |
| Communication | Communication of theme and ideas | Ability to communicate artistic and social messages |

Thus, aesthetic assessment evaluates not only the final outcome but also the process of bodily experience, exploration, reflection, and the students' ability to respond to change.

## 3. Embodied Pedagogy and Inovative Dance Education

Embodied pedagogy is an important foundation of the Embodied Futures perspective because it emphasizes the relationship between bodily experience, movement, perception, and knowledge construction. In dance education, the body is not merely an instrument used to perform predetermined movements but also a medium through which students explore ideas, experience emotions, interpret meaning, and communicate with others. Learning therefore occurs not only through verbal explanations or visual demonstrations but also through direct physical experience and reflection. Kim (2018) and Stinson (2016) provide relevant perspectives for understanding dance as an embodied educational practice in which bodily experience contributes to the construction of knowledge and meaning.

In school dance education, embodied pedagogy can be implemented through exploratory activities that encourage students to investigate various movement qualities before learning a complete choreography. For example, teachers can ask students to explore contrasting movement characteristics, such as fast and slow, strong and gentle, contracted and expanded, or continuous and discontinuous. Students can then observe how changes in space, time, energy, and body dynamics influence the expressive qualities of movement. Through these activities, students develop body awareness, movement sensitivity, creativity, and the ability to make artistic decisions. Such learning experiences also allow students to understand that movement can communicate different meanings depending on how it is performed and interpreted.

Innovative dance education further encourages students to participate actively in the learning process. Rather than positioning the teacher as the sole source of knowledge, this approach positions the teacher as a facilitator who guides exploration, provides constructive feedback, and

encourages reflection. Students can work individually or collaboratively to develop movement compositions, interpret dance themes, and experiment with different forms of artistic expression. These activities support the development of independence, collaboration, critical thinking, and creative problem-solving. Innovation in dance education does not necessarily require sophisticated technology; it can also emerge through new teaching strategies, varied movement explorations, and meaningful interactions among students.

This pedagogical approach has important implications for aesthetic assessment. Assessment should consider not only the final performance but also students' engagement in the movement process, their ability to explore alternatives, their understanding of movement qualities, and their responses to feedback. Teachers can use formative assessment throughout the learning process by observing students' progress and providing specific suggestions for improvement. Andrade et al. (2015) highlight the relevance of formative assessment in dance education, particularly in supporting students' understanding of their performance and their next steps for improvement. Self-assessment and peer assessment can also help students recognize their strengths, identify areas for development, and become more responsible for their learning.

Within the Embodied Futures perspective, aesthetic assessment consequently becomes a continuous process that connects bodily experience, artistic exploration, performance, and reflection. Students are encouraged to understand why they select particular movements, how those movements communicate meaning, and how their artistic choices can be developed further. At SMA Negeri 2 Semarang, this approach could be implemented through structured movement exploration, collaborative choreography, formative feedback, and reflective discussion. However, these suggestions represent a proposed application of the framework rather than findings from direct classroom observation. Through this approach, dance education can support students in becoming not only technically capable performers but also reflective, creative, and adaptable learners.

## 4. Cultural Sustainability, Living Heritage, and Local Knowledge

Cultural sustainability is an important dimension of dance education because dance serves as a medium for transmitting cultural values, collective memories, local identities, and knowledge between generations. In Indonesia, traditional dance is closely connected to the social and cultural environments in which it develops. Its movements, music, costumes, performance conventions, and symbolic elements may reflect local beliefs, social relationships, historical experiences, and community values. Therefore, learning traditional dance should involve more than memorizing movement sequences. Students also need opportunities to understand the cultural contexts that give those movements meaning.

The concept of living heritage provides a useful perspective for understanding traditional dance as a cultural practice that continues to develop through the participation of communities. Cultural heritage is not simply a collection of artistic products preserved from the past; it also involves the knowledge, practices, interpretations, and experiences through which cultural traditions remain meaningful in the present. In dance education, this perspective encourages teachers to introduce traditional dance through its relationship with the communities that sustain it. Students can learn about the origins of a dance, its social functions, the meanings of particular movements,

the role of accompanying music, and the circumstances in which the dance is performed. Learning activities may also involve discussions with dance practitioners, observations of local performances, and documentation of cultural knowledge when such opportunities are available.

The Embodied Futures perspective connects cultural sustainability with the creative possibilities of future-oriented education. Students can be encouraged to investigate how traditional dance can remain relevant to younger generations while maintaining respect for its cultural significance. For example, they can identify the values communicated through a traditional dance and discuss how these values relate to contemporary social experiences. Students may also explore how movement, music, staging, or presentation can be interpreted creatively within an educational setting. However, creative exploration should be accompanied by an understanding of the boundaries between artistic experimentation and the cultural conventions that practitioners or communities consider essential.

This distinction is important because cultural preservation should not be reduced to reproducing traditional movements without understanding their significance. At the same time, innovation should not be interpreted as unrestricted modification of every cultural element. Teachers need to help students distinguish between aspects that require careful preservation and aspects that may be explored through creative interpretation. Consultation with cultural practitioners and attention to local perspectives can support responsible learning and help prevent cultural practices from being separated from their original contexts. Such an approach allows students to appreciate cultural traditions while recognizing that their meanings and transmission depend on the people who maintain them.

Cultural sustainability also has direct implications for aesthetic assessment. Students should be assessed not only on the accuracy of their movement execution but also on their understanding of the cultural meanings associated with the dance. Observable assessment indicators may include the ability to explain the cultural context of a dance, demonstrate respect for its conventions, interpret movement meanings appropriately, and connect artistic expression with local knowledge. Students can demonstrate these competencies through performance, oral explanations, written reflections, or group discussions. These forms of assessment provide a broader understanding of students' cultural learning and reduce the risk of evaluating traditional dance solely according to technical appearance.

In the context of SMA Negeri 2 Semarang, the cultural sustainability perspective could be incorporated by connecting dance learning with the cultural resources of Semarang and Central Java. Students could investigate local dance traditions, identify their distinctive movement characteristics, and examine the cultural values communicated through their performances. They could then reflect on how these traditions might be introduced to contemporary audiences without disregarding their cultural contexts. This proposed application positions dance education as a means of strengthening cultural awareness, supporting intergenerational knowledge transmission, and encouraging students to participate responsibly in the preservation and development of living cultural heritage.

## 5. Inclusive Dance Education, Diversity, and Social Justice

Inclusive dance education recognizes that students enter the classroom with different physical abilities, cultural backgrounds, prior experiences, learning needs, confidence levels, and ways of expressing themselves. These differences influence how students participate in movement activities, interpret artistic experiences, and demonstrate their learning. Consequently, dance education should provide meaningful opportunities for all students to participate, develop their artistic capacities, and experience a sense of belonging. Within the Embodied Futures perspective, inclusion is not merely a matter of allowing students to join a dance activity but also of recognizing their different experiences and ensuring that these differences do not become unnecessary barriers to learning.

An inclusive approach requires teachers to reconsider assumptions about the ideal dancer and the characteristics of an aesthetically successful performance. Students should not be evaluated according to a single physical appearance, body type, gender stereotype, or predetermined standard of movement ability. Instead, assessment should focus on clearly defined learning objectives, artistic communication, movement development, interpretation, creativity, and students' engagement with the learning process. For example, when assessing bodily and facial expression, teachers should consider whether students communicate the intended character, emotion, or meaning through movement rather than whether their appearance conforms to a particular physical ideal. Similarly, technical expectations should be adapted when necessary to ensure that assessment measures the intended learning outcomes rather than unrelated physical advantages.

Inclusive teaching strategies can include providing alternative ways to explore movement, adjusting the complexity of particular tasks, offering different forms of instructional support, and allowing students to demonstrate their understanding through more than one mode of expression. Teachers may use verbal explanations, visual demonstrations, movement examples, guided practice, or peer collaboration according to students' learning needs. Group activities can also be structured to ensure that every student has a meaningful role in the creative process. These strategies do not eliminate artistic standards; rather, they make the learning process more accessible while maintaining clear expectations for artistic development.

Diversity also enriches dance education by introducing students to different cultural experiences, movement traditions, and interpretations of artistic meaning. Students can learn to recognize that dance does not have a single universal form and that aesthetic judgments are often influenced by cultural and social contexts. Classroom discussions about different dance traditions can encourage curiosity, respect, and critical reflection. Students can examine how cultural identities are represented through movement and consider the importance of avoiding stereotypes or inappropriate generalizations when interpreting dances from communities other than their own. In this way, dance education can become a space for developing intercultural understanding and appreciation of difference.

The principle of social justice further emphasizes the importance of fairness in classroom participation, assessment, and recognition. Assessment criteria should be transparent and communicated before students perform, allowing them to understand how their learning will be evaluated. Descriptive rubrics can help teachers reduce excessive subjectivity by identifying observable indicators of movement quality, expression, interpretation, creativity, collaboration, and

reflection. Students should also receive constructive feedback that identifies both their achievements and possible areas for improvement. Self-assessment and peer assessment can support this process when they are guided by respectful communication and shared criteria.

Stewart (2024), through a discussion of anti-oppressive pedagogy in dance and movement therapy education, provides a relevant reference for considering how educational practices can acknowledge students' diverse experiences and examine unequal assumptions within learning environments. Applied to school dance education, this perspective encourages teachers to reflect on whether teaching methods, performance expectations, and assessment practices unintentionally privilege certain students while limiting others. Such reflection is particularly important when judgments of artistic quality are influenced by personal preferences rather than clearly established educational criteria.

For aesthetic assessment at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang, inclusive practice could be developed by combining transparent assessment rubrics, flexible learning strategies, constructive feedback, and opportunities for student reflection. Teachers could assess how effectively students communicate meaning, develop movement skills, contribute to group work, and demonstrate progress in relation to the learning objectives. Students could also be invited to reflect on their own artistic development and explain how their individual experiences influence their interpretations of dance. As the present study is literature-based, these practices should be understood as recommendations for implementation rather than evidence of existing classroom conditions.

Ultimately, inclusive dance education broadens the meaning of aesthetic achievement by recognizing that students may demonstrate artistic understanding in different ways. By integrating diversity, accessibility, fairness, and respect into teaching and assessment, dance education can support both artistic development and social learning. This approach is consistent with the Embodied Futures perspective because it positions students as active participants whose bodies, experiences, cultural backgrounds, and creative contributions are meaningful parts of the educational process.

## 6. Creativity and Future-Oriented Dance Learning

The word "futures" in Embodied Futures does not necessarily mean predicting exactly what dance will look like in the future. Instead, it can be understood as creating opportunities for students to imagine possibilities and develop responses to change.

In dance learning, this can be implemented through:

1. movement improvisation;
2. collaborative choreography;
3. exploration of local cultural materials;
4. integration of digital or multimedia media when pedagogically relevant;
5. experimentation with space, rhythm, and movement;
6. reflection on social and cultural issues through dance.

In this way, creativity becomes an important part of aesthetic assessment. Students are not only evaluated according to their ability to reproduce existing movements but also according to their ability to make meaningful artistic choices

## 7. Performance Assessment and Reflection

Performance assessment remains important because dance competencies need to be observed through actual movement. Schmid (2003) explains that authentic assessment in arts education can be conducted through systematic observation based on predetermined criteria.

However, an *Embodied Futures* approach suggests that performance should be accompanied by reflection. Students can be asked to explain:

* What did I experience during the movement process?
* What meaning did I attempt to communicate?
* What difficulties did I experience?
* How did feedback influence my movement?
* What would I change in a future performance?

Reflection makes assessment more than a process of assigning scores. It allows students to understand their own learning and develop awareness of their bodies, artistic decisions, and learning processes.

## 8. Rubic Development

The rubric in the original report can be expanded to accommodate the Embodied Futures perspective.

Example of an Embodied Aesthetic Assessment Rubric

| **Criterion** | **Beginnning** | **Developing** | **Competent** | **Highly Developed** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Movement quality | Movement is frequently uncontrolled | Movement shows developing control | Movement is controlles and clear | Movement demonstrates strong control, dynamics, and intentionality |
| Expression | Expression rarely supports meaning | Expression sometimes supports meaning | Expression generally supports meaning | Expression strongly communicates character and meaning |
| Interpretation | Limited understanding of dance meaning | Understands some aspects of meaning | Demonstrates appropriate interpretation | Provides convincing and thoughtful interpretation |
| Creativity | Limited exploration | Explorses some movement possibilities | Makes aappropriate creative choices | Develops original and meaningful movement ideas |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cultural Understanding | Limited understanding of context | Understands basic cultural elements | Demonstrates appropriate cultural understanding | Connects movement meaning with cultural context thoughtfully |
| Collaboration | Limited participation | Participates inconsistenly | Collaborates appropriately | Supports collective creativity and respects contributions |
| Refelction | Gives limited reflection | Identifies some strengths/difficulties | Provides relevant refelction | Provides critical and constructive reflection for future |

Rubrics such as this can make aesthetic assessment more transparent while maintaining the artistic and contextual nature of dance assessment.

## 9. Implementation at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang

For the context of SMA Negeri 2 Semarang, the Embodied Futures approach can be integrated into four stages.

Stage 1 : Exploration

The teacher introduces the dance material and its cultural and aesthetic context. Students observe, discuss, and experience the movement rather than immediately focusing on memorization.

Stage 2 : Embodied Practice

Students practice movement while exploring expression, rhythm, space, dynamics, and interaction. Teachers provide formative feedback throughout the process.

Stage 3 : Creative and Performance Process

Students perform or develop movement compositions individually or collaboratively. Assessment considers technical, aesthetic, cultural, creative, and collaborative dimensions.

Stage 4 : Reflection and Future Application

Students reflect on their learning and identify how their movement knowledge can be developed further. This stage connects present learning with future possibilities.

This four-stage model expands the original report's pre-performance, process, performance, and reflection stages (see figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Dance teaching and learning activities at SMA Negeri 2 Semarang

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of aesthetic assessment in dance education needs to respond to the multidimensional nature of dance and the changing context of contemporary education. Dance learning is not merely a process of mastering predetermined movement patterns but also a process through which students experience, interpret, communicate, create, and reflect through their bodies.

The Embodied Futures: Transforming Dance Education in a Changing World perspective provides an opportunity to broaden aesthetic assessment by positioning the body, movement, lived experience, culture, creativity, inclusion, and reflection as important components of dance education. The theme of ICODE 2026 explicitly connects contemporary dance education with embodied pedagogy, cultural sustainability and local knowledge, inclusion and diversity, and social transformation.

Therefore, aesthetic assessment can include movement quality, expression, musicality, interpretation, creativity, cultural understanding, collaboration, communication, and reflection. Assessment should be supported by transparent and descriptive rubrics to reduce excessive subjectivity.

In the context of senior high school dance education, including SMA Negeri 2 Semarang, the integration of an Embodied Futures perspective can encourage learning that is more experiential, reflective, creative, culturally responsive, and inclusive. Such assessment does not eliminate technical standards but places technical competence within a broader educational process that recognizes students as active participants in creating meaning through movement.

Future research should empirically examine how embodied pedagogy and future-oriented assessment can be implemented in dance classrooms and how these approaches influence students' creativity, cultural awareness, reflection, collaboration, and artistic development.

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