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Dancing Dialogues: Mapping and Discussing Access to Dance in Portuguese Upper-Secondary Schools

Joana Mesquita *, Eunice Macedo and Helena C. Araújo

CIIE—Centre for Educational Research and Intervention, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, University of Porto, 4200-135 Porto, Portugal; eunice@fpce.up.pt (E.M.); hcostaraujo@gmail.com (H.C.A.)
* Correspondence: up201507957@edu.fpce.up.pt

Abstract

This article analyzes the role of dance and the arts in European and national educational policy agendas and maps the provision of dance in upper-secondary schools in the district of Porto, Portugal. To understand the role of dance in educational policies, we conducted a document analysis of regulations and decree-laws inspired by Stephen Ball's *policy cycle approach*. To explore how these policies materialize in educational contexts, a mapping approach was conducted in upper-secondary schools within the district of Porto, Portugal. Results show that, at the public education policy level, although there is no specific debate about dance, the arts are gradually being included in the educational agendas, but still in a scarce way and with a more instrumental approach. At the institutional level, access to dance in education is not sufficiently democratized, reinforcing social and territorial inequalities. Despite its local scope, the study contributes to the broader international debate on equity in access to education with the arts, mainly dance. It offers insights from Southern Europe—a region often underrepresented in global research—which can inform research and policy development aimed at more inclusive educational systems.

Keywords: dance; mapping; policy analysis; upper-secondary schools; access to dance in education

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1. Taking the First Beats: Introduction

This article discusses the place of dance and the arts in European and national educational policy agendas and maps the dance offering at upper-secondary schools in the district of Porto (Portugal). Despite its local scope, the debate can be useful for the international debate, allowing us to identify tensions between educational policy agendas and contexts of practice. The article raises the curtain on an educational reality where principles of equity and social justice in access to education with the arts—mainly dance—seem to be at stake, leaving clues for those involved in academic and political debates who are concerned with more equitable and egalitarian education systems.

We propose to bring dance and education into dialog, problematizing it as an ethical, esthetic and solidary educational experience (Macedo, 2021), reflecting on how dance can contribute to a more inclusive, humane, and humanistic approach to learning. Arguing the significant role of dance in improving body awareness, the construction of social, cultural, and political reality, and the development of non-verbal expression and communication (Duberg et al., 2016; Ramos & Medeiros, 2018), we move away from a crossover between dance and education that reduces its potential to the training of artists.

Educational research has revealed a hierarchical structure to knowledge within the curriculum, with the arts—mainly dance—occupying a relatively lower position (EURYDICE, 2009). This hierarchical organization of knowledge prioritizes technical and technological knowledge over the arts. As a result, more holistic and humane approaches to the teaching–learning process are marginalized, while competition and individualism are encouraged, perpetuating socio-educational inequalities. We are witnessing an 'instrumentalization' of education, whereby it is understood as merely a 'platform for the job market' (Nada et al., 2022). Education thus becomes a facilitator of a 'neoliberal model' that rewards self-centered success. The main goal is for young people to find employment and become self-sufficient (Jenson & Saint-Martin, 2006; Keddie, 2016).

We argued that a quality education that is both inclusive and equitable[1] cannot be conceived without recognizing the holistic potential of young people. As such, we argue in favor of an education that is not just about the mind but also includes the body (Leite, 2021; Stolz, 2022), which means an education that goes beyond the acquisition of technical and technological knowledge and acknowledges the capacity of the arts to influence and shape young minds, providing them essential foundations for life in society, both within and beyond the school environment.

With these issues in mind, this article considers education with the arts as a right, reflecting on the access to dance in upper-secondary education as a key focus. To go deeper into this argument, we asked whose values are validated in educational policies (Ball, 1990), reflecting on the place given to dance and the arts on European and national agendas. The main findings allow us to conclude that there is no particular focus on dance in educational policies, although the arts in general are gradually being included in educational agendas. However, we underline that their presence is still scarce and with a more instrumental approach. An education that is very much oriented to the labor market continues to prevail, with a significant devaluation of the human and artistic components.

This led us to ask how this political reality is translated into the contexts of practice (Bowe et al., 1992). By mapping the dance offerings in upper-secondary education in the district of Porto in Portugal, we realized that the offer is not sufficiently democratized and ends up reinforcing a series of socio-educational inequalities already deeply rooted in the education system.

Therefore, this article contributes to the literature by understanding dance's place in politics and formal educational contexts. We divided it into six sections, metaphorically organized as a dance performance. Following this introductory section, we get into the rhythm—the theoretical framework—reflecting on dance in and as education. Next, we start creating the choreography—the methodological approach—describing the selection and analysis of 14 regulations and decree-laws inspired by Stephen Ball's *policy cycle approach* (Bowe et al., 1992), identified through a set of criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Moreover, we outline a mapping approach of dance offerings at upper-secondary schools. Then, it is time to dance—the results of the study—and to feel the heartbeat rise—the discussion of the results—through a set of tensions that show how the simple unequal access to dance embodies a pattern of socio-educational inequalities that reinforces the gap between economically and territorially privileged and disadvantaged groups. Finally, the article concludes by reflecting on the steps that are yet to be danced to make education more humane and humanistic.

2. Getting into the Rhythm: Theoretical Framework on Dance in and as Education

Dance has an ancient footprint in human history (Lovatt, 2020), making itself present through festivities, celebrations, and other forms of sociability (Guarato, 2015). In a comple-

mentary way to the other arts, dance introduces strong body awareness (Figueiredo, 2014), allowing those who encounter it to enjoy a "totalizing" self-experience (Fernandes, 2021), being able to recognize the potential of their mind but also of their body.

Assuming a prominent place in countless studies over the years, it is possible to understand the influence of dance on dimensions as diverse as the development of critical and reflective thinking (e.g., Abrão & Pedrão, 2005), the construction of social, cultural, and political reality (e.g., Ramos & Medeiros, 2018), problem-solving (e.g., Connolly et al., 2011), and the ability to express oneself and communicate non-verbally (e.g., Kontos & Grigorovich, 2018), which is valuable not only in the educational context but also in the social field. This article attempts to move away from a more utilitarian and instrumental view of dance. We depart from an understanding of the arts as an ethical, esthetic, and solidary experience (Macedo, 2021), which encourages self-realization, the sensitive construction of relationships among people that provide new languages and strategies to make sense of the world, engage in cultural criticism, and carry out political actions (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2022). In essence, we argue that art—and, in this case, dance—should be considered a way of living and building relationships with oneself and others in the world.

Having dance spaces in schools may lead young people to develop inclusive, participatory, and empowering environments (Wise et al., 2019). However, exploring the potential of dance in and as education implies considering several aspects, such as (i) how knowledge is constructed, (ii) how the body is present in education, and (iii) how dance spaces in schools are structured. The following sections will focus on this framework of concerns.

2.1. The Gap Between Science and the Arts: What Space for 'Profane' Knowledge?

The scientific and political debates between art and education are not recent (e.g., Barbosa, 1975; Dewey, 1934; Read, 2001), with discussions spanning several decades. From a theoretical point of view, it has become almost banal to assume the importance of the arts (Monteiro, 2014). In more conventional educational contexts, there seems to be a prevailing 'arm wrestling' between science and art, reason and emotion. They are assumed to be dissociated forms of knowledge, attributing little validity and credibility to artistic experience and maintaining a view of 'science' as the primary source of reliable, cognitive, and useful knowledge (Bahia, 2002; Eisner, 2008).

This segmented view tends to emerge from and have an impact on the structure of the education system itself. The arts are relegated to a secondary position not only in society but also in schools (Monteiro, 2014), ending up on the educational agenda as an unsubstantiated subject among those considered 'most serious' or 'most important' for students' future lives (Júnior, 2001). There is a tendency to associate artistic experience only with entertainment and frivolous activities and to create space for its expression only if time and resources allow it (Efland, 2002). It appears as a parenthesis in everyday school life, a way of passing the time, which cannot jeopardize and steal time from the academic achievement of the subjects considered 'noble' (Monteiro, 2014).

At the same time, Eisner (2004) and Cosme (2011) point out that experiences with the arts can be decisive for people's personal and social development. It creates opportunities to build themselves as someone whose cognitive, ethical, emotional, and affective dimensions intertwine in a more holistic education perspective. Experimentation with the arts can be crucial to developing participation and (re)discovering and (re)constructing identities in contemporary societies (Guimarães & Neves, 2013).

As presented, there is still a gap between different ways of constructing knowledge. Scientific knowledge stands out for its credibility, rigor, and consistency, adopting an almost sacred personification, as if unquestionable. Given its subjectivity, artistic knowledge tends

to be confined to areas more related to entertainment and leisure, adopting an almost profane position and being disregarded. We argue that this dissociated perspective is not beneficial. However, it is within this gap and the intersection between scientific and artistic knowledge that it becomes authentically formed. It is in the tensions and complementarities between what each area has to offer that knowledge is embodied and acquires diverse meanings in individual lives.

2.2. The Body's Place in Education: Is It Possible to Learn by Leaving the Body Behind?

Historically, a disconnection between mind and body persists, assuming cognition as disembodied (Fernandes, 2021; Macrine & Fugate, 2022). It is believed that the body responds mechanically to the mind's command. In fact, the game of language as dominant has turned out to be a prison for the very ways of constructing knowledge (Emmerik, 2012). We have reincarnated verbocentric societies that believe the mind–body relationship is unidirectional rather than circular, forgetting that the act of thinking is embodied and that no person is just a mind (Fernandes, 2021). However, it is important to note that not all cultures share this perspective. Various Indigenous, Native American, and African traditions, for example, have long valued embodied and holistic ways of knowing (e.g., Cajete, 2000; Kayapó et al., 2023). These ways of knowing were often suppressed through the colonial imposition of Western epistemological frameworks (Smith, 1999). Scholars such as Bell Hooks (1994) have also emphasized that embodied knowledge and emotional intelligence, particularly within Black and feminist contexts, have been systematically marginalized within dominant educational and intellectual traditions. Recognizing these diverse epistemologies broadens our analytical scope and reinforces the importance of reclaiming the body as a source of knowledge.

The focus on corporeality allows us to think of an education centered on wholeness (Leite, 2021), where the mind and body are no longer dissociated. We argue that the body is in itself thoughtful and that the mind is in itself corporeal. Even the more instrumental views of art argue for the body's potential in the teaching–learning process. However, curricula are still generally structured to focus exclusively on the mind. Ignoring the body implies conditioning the development of physical reasoning, creativity, sensitivity, and body awareness, which would benefit children and young people's daily lives and school skills (Figueiredo, 2014).

The dominance of the primacy of the word and the processes of transmission and objectification undermine the relationship between mind and body in education. Instead of being mobilized as a vehicle for communication, expression, work, learning, and intra- and interpersonal relationships, body movement is restricted to physical education classes or moments of leisure and recreation (Strazzacappa, 2001), as if the body were disconnected from the mind in other spaces.

We argue that it is crucial to recognize the place of the body in the educational process. Despite the changes that have taken place in the education system and its most lively contexts—schools and teaching–learning processes—it is still sidelined. All too often, when children and young people enter the education system, they are taught to remain still, with their eyes fixed on the stage occupied by others. Movement is associated with indiscipline; those who can go the longest without moving are rewarded. Physical movement is seen as the enemy of the learning process (Batista et al., 2013), ignoring the fact that what is learned before compulsory schooling, and indeed throughout life, takes place through the body.

In this way, we raise the possibility that the normalization of "not moving" induces a culture of "non-action" and distancing from their surroundings in young people. If they are taught not to intervene, they may adopt this attitude towards situations that directly affect their lives inside and outside the school walls. Those who are considered good

students expect the teacher to tell them what to do and what meaning to give to their own lives, generating a relationship of not only "intellectual dependence" (Gatto, 2005) but also corporeal dependence, as we argue. Learning through and with the body implies not being satisfied with the first bodily response but consciously seeking to improve and expand physical possibilities (Marques, 2012). Thus, bringing the body into education seems to provoke young people to feel non-conformist and to reflect critically on their actions and how they are and live in the world.

Lastly, to discuss the place of dance and the body in education, it also seems important to raise Emmerik's (2012) concept of 'whitespace'. For the author, the whitespace that exists, for example, between the lines of a text, should not be understood as a void, but rather as a place of opportunity, freedom, autonomy, and creation, '(. . .) to leave matters undefined for some time, making room for what emerges' (idem, p. 85). As such, it seems possible to introduce a moment of 'pause' into everyday school life through dance and body movement. Not because it is a moment to stop but because it represents a space for slowing down, breathing, intra- and interpersonal communication, reflection, and creation. It allows young people to feel "I am here, now, as a whole", returning to themselves in a connection between mind and body that, experienced through dance, can be expanded to other moments in their lives. Moreover, the language of dance is a way of "(. . .) reading the world, solidarizing and committing oneself to that world" (Marques, 2012, p. 60). As Freire (1974, 1982) tells us, the construction of the word-world, which allows us to elaborate meanings and transform that world through our relationship with others, and that the same world that we read and interpret may change.

In short, one may say that it is possible to learn, leaving the body behind. However, learning that recognizes and stimulates young people holistically is only possible if we foster young people's capacities for communication, relationship, expression, and knowledge construction more integrally, in a rich match between their minds and bodies.

2.3. Dance in Education: Is It Enough to Have Dance in Schools?

Previously, we argued that it is at the intersection of art—as an expression of culture—and science that knowledge is built authentically and that it is essential to take the body into account to stimulate learning that recognizes the holistic potential of young people. This can be achieved by linking dance—as an art form that mobilizes the body—and education.

Nevertheless, we emphasize that it is not enough to offer dance in schools (Monteiro, 2014). It is important to reflect on the underlying intentions of dance in schools around a set of tensions. Is the institutional aim to fulfill legal requirements or to enable and contribute to more democratic access to the arts? Was there a conscious decision to choose dance, or could it have been any other art form? Is it enough for the school to recognize dance spaces for their final product (a choreography) or to see them as spaces for full artistic enjoyment, building an ethical, esthetic, and supportive sense of education? Considering these and other questions means defining whether we want to have dance in schools just for the sake of dance or to explore dance as a language (Marques, 2012) and to nurture the potential of art to build relationships with oneself, others, and the world (Macedo, 2021).

Reflecting on the intentionality behind dance in schools also brings us back to discussing what we mean by the quality of this provision. To use a body metaphor, quality education implies connecting the head, torso, and limbs: planning, structure, and practice. In this way, it is important to think about the quality of the artistic offer (UNESCO, 2024), focusing on dance, to ensure that it is not limited to being part of the established curriculum. Dance must contribute to and stimulate a complete educational experience that engages the mind and body dialog.

From this point of view, incorporating dance in schools so that the teacher is limited to transmitting a choreography that the students absorb and reproduce develops what Tércio (2014) calls the 'archive body'—something we consider an absolute impossibility. From the author's perspective, the archive body receives information uncritically, absorbs it, and regurgitates it in a time and space determined by others. In line with the principles of banking education (Freire, 1997), transmitting and objectifying means reducing the student's potential to mere absorption of knowledge. It limits them to one of their most basic capacities, dehumanizing them.

The school should be responsible for providing spaces and opportunities for young people to experience, feel, question, and express themselves authentically. Dance can provide a rich educational experience at this level. However, this is only possible if the underlying principles are based on democratic and pluralistic educational ideals. We advocate for an artistic and pedagogical approach that aligns with the relational art model (Bourriaud, 2025). In other words, we support spaces where art—in this case, dance—enables environments that are transformed into social microcosms, stimulating a sense of community. Such spaces should facilitate intra- and inter-individual encounters, collaboration, and interaction, thereby providing a co-participatory dance experience, i.e., for example, departing from individuals' movements to creative and collective creation. Young people need to find in dance a space for self-knowledge, self-expression, relationships, and critical and creative development, both individually and collectively. Otherwise, there is a risk that dance remains a space that conditions and dehumanizes young people.

3. Creating the Choreography: The Methodological Approach

This research is part of a broader study, and in this paper, we aim to (i) understand the place of dance in educational policies and (ii) explore how these policies impact the educational contexts by mapping the dance offering. The focus on upper-secondary education stems from its relevance within the broader research project from which this study emerges, and from its significance as a critical stage in students' trajectories—where instrumental logics and labor market preparation intensify (Keddie, 2016; Matos, 2008), leaving small space for artistic and embodied experiences.

We adopted an approach based on Ball's (Bowe et al., 1992) *policy cycle approach*, with a particular focus on the context of text production and the context of practice. The *Policy Cycle Approach* (Bowe et al., 1992) is a methodological approach to analyze educational and social policies. In his view, policies are neither static nor linear but go through dynamic and interactive processes involving various actors and contexts. Ball's model is divided into three principal axes: the context of influence—in which different groups and interests (e.g., politicians, economists, academics) compete to influence the priorities and objectives of a policy; the context of text production—where ideas and influences are translated into official documents (e.g., laws, decrees, guidelines, programs); and the context of practice—the stage at which a given policy is implemented in practice (e.g., in schools, classrooms, or other public spaces). The analysis will be based on these last two axes in this article.

Firstly, we carried out a document analysis of educational and cultural policies and then a mapping of upper-secondary educational institutions offering dance in the district of Porto in Portugal.

3.1. Document Analysis

The current research is supported by document analysis, which, according to Bowen (2009), is a research method that involves skimming (superficial examination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation, applying elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. Document analysis is often combined with other research methods as a

way of triangulating data, aiming to provide "(. . .) a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Eisner, 2017, p. 109).

We began our search for legal documentation with a simple search for 'legislation on dance in Portugal'. The results were limited to specialized artistic training in dance or higher education in dance. As our focus went beyond dance as a professional training option (artistic education), we changed the search terms. However, the results were still not sufficiently enlightening. We therefore broadened the search, focusing on the arts in general, and selected 'legislation on art and education in Portugal'. We chose this route because, through a broader vision of the arts in education, we wanted to find out about the place of dance in educational policy. This led us to the General Directorate of School Establishments' digital portal, which contains a legislation cluster. The results were again limited to specialized artistic training. So, as a result of a basic reading of the documents, we opted to research how the arts, particularly dance, were taken into account in the different decree-laws and regulations that guide education in Portugal.

As shown in Figure 1, a set of criteria allowed us to include and exclude the documents we found. The criteria mainly focused on whether the texts dealt with dance or art, focused on upper-secondary education, or allowed for thinking about an upper-secondary educational agenda with the arts.

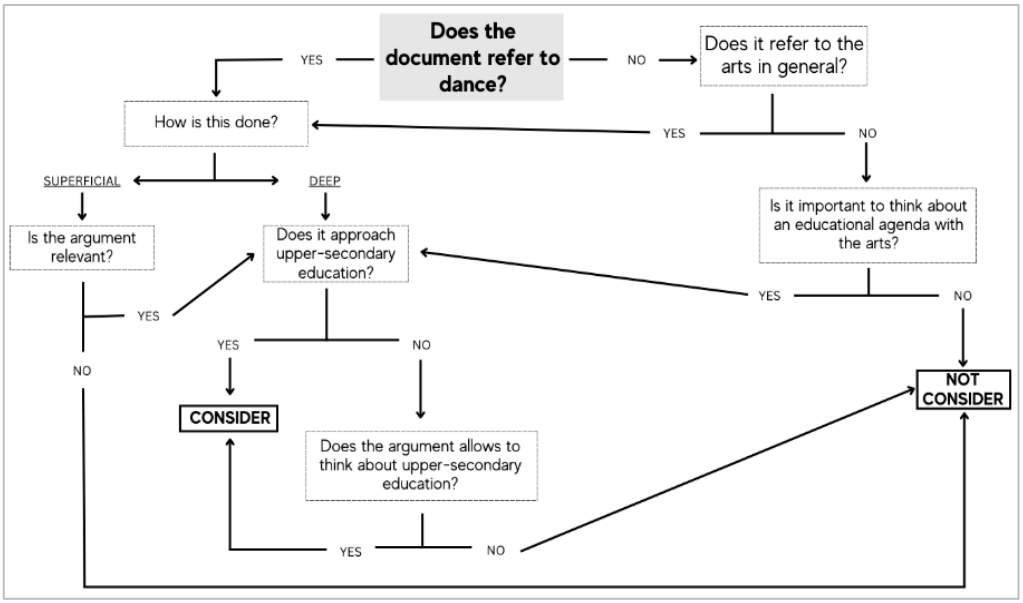


Figure 1. Criteria for inclusion/exclusion of political documents.

Considering that national educational policies and practices are influenced by extranational forces (Ball, 2012; Dale, 2005), we decided to extend our research to the European level. We began by searching for documentation in the databases of recognized European education entities—OECD, UNESCO, and World Bank. Then, we looked at frequently cited documents, and we could select new documents using a 'snowball' scheme.

Following the criteria for inclusion and exclusion, a compilation was made of 14 key documents that guide European and national educational agendas. Although not all focus on dance and arts, they allow us to think about an educational agenda with arts at the upper-secondary school level. Given that some documents assume that the arts are an expression of culture, some cultural policies that address the importance of intertwining culture and the arts in education have been included. In this sense, although the initial focus was on education policies, some cultural policies have been included, given the interconnectedness of the two concepts.

Based on Bowen's (2009) document analysis approach, through skimming and thorough examination, an analysis of each document was carried out. The categorization process was initially conducted by one researcher (J.M.), who started with a superficial reading of the documents to clarify the focus of each one. Then the same researcher performed a deep reading of all the documents and highlighted how the arts were present/absent in the text. It allowed us to understand that some documents adopt a more instrumental/accessory perspective of the arts, as others underline their intrinsic value. After these phases, the researcher articulated diverse political guidelines and organized each one according to a line graphic. Then, the document analysis was presented and discussed with the other two authors (E.M. and H.C.A.), trying to resolve minor inconsistencies and validate the first analysis. Such summarizing allowed us to reflect on the potential of the arts in education and to understand how it has been outlined over the years in this field.

3.2. Mapping

While analyzing the policy documents, we carried out a mapping exercise to understand how the European and national guidelines were reflected in the contexts of practice (Bowe et al., 1992). This methodological articulation is complementary, as it reveals tensions between political discourse and actual educational practice. The mapping is a multi-sensory research strategy that can establish relationships between place, lived experience, and community (Powell, 2010). By connecting social and spatial practices, mapping is used to unveil the obvious (naturalized/familiar), bringing to the fore its complexities and making the researchers aware of data they would not reach in another way (Genz & Lucas-Drogan, 2018).

Mapping proved to be more than a methodological strategy that allowed us to list and identify the schools that offered dance at the upper-secondary level and those that did not. Mapping made it possible to uncover the diversity, disparity, and intentionality underlying dance provision in specific contexts of practice that were analyzed. Understanding how and to whom it is accessible led to developing a framework for reflection that puts in tension inequalities and rights in dance education. This became particularly relevant as mappings are typically used in literature reviews (e.g., Sampaio & Leite, 2018) or geographic or architectural studies (e.g., Genz & Lucas-Drogan, 2018) but seem to be absent in socio-educational research. Inspired by it, we wanted to bring it into this field.

The mapping stage took place between October 2022 and January 2023. As shown in Figure 2, it began with an exhaustive search of databases that could provide information on schools that offered dance.

In the lack of a database containing this information, we contacted the Directorate-General for Education and Science Statistics (DGEEC) and the School Network Team of the Institute for Financial Management of Education (IGeFE). Through this contact, it was possible to access the GesEdu digital portal[2], which gathers information on all the educational institutions in each municipality and district in the country.

Information on each educational institution was extracted on a municipality-by-municipality basis and compiled into a table of 183 public and private general, artistic, and vocational upper-secondary educational institutions in the Porto district. The documentary analysis was conducted online with support from the institutions' official websites and public social media pages. In cases where the available information was not sufficiently up-to-date or precise, an e-mail was sent to obtain the missing information. If no reply was received by e-mail, direct telephone contact was made with the institutions after several attempts.

In a very positive fashion, through this methodological strategy, 161 of the 183 educational institutions in the district of Porto responded, around 88%. It was not possible to

obtain information from the remaining 22 institutions because they could not be contacted or were unwilling to provide information.

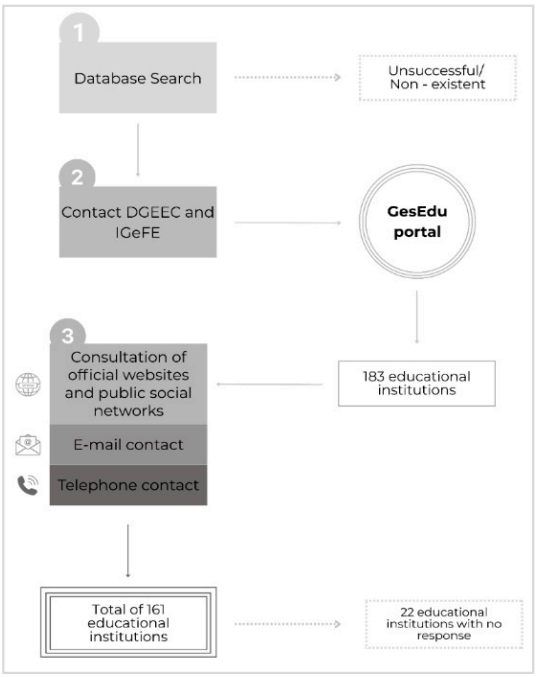


Figure 2. Mapping stages.

4. It Is Time to Dance! Presenting the Results of the Study

This section presents the results of the two stages described above. These made it possible to put into dialog, on the one hand, the context of text production (Bowe et al., 1992) about how the political guidelines bring people and education closer to dance and art and the reality of the contexts of practice (idem) on the other.

4.1. Dance in European and National Educational Agendas

The key documents at the European and national levels were grouped after document collection and analysis. These documents dialogue with the arts in several ways that deserve our attention because of their important role in developing educational agendas.

Figure 3 presented below summarizes the 14 key documents analyzed and organized into two groups: (i) laws and decree-laws and (ii) recommendations. We have chosen to separate the analysis into four levels, which we have defined according to whether there is more or less recognition of the arts.

The purpose of Figure 3 is to present how the documents analyzed show more or less recognition and valorization of arts at European and national levels over the years. The horizontal axis presents a chronology from 1986 (which curiously coincides with the adhesion of Portugal to the CEE, currently the European Union) up until 2022 (the most current document identified). On the vertical axis, we have information about the recognition and valorization of the arts. This vertical axis is divided into four levels, developed by us and based on (i) the existing literature on the different links between art and education and (ii) the different ways in which the arts were present in the documents.

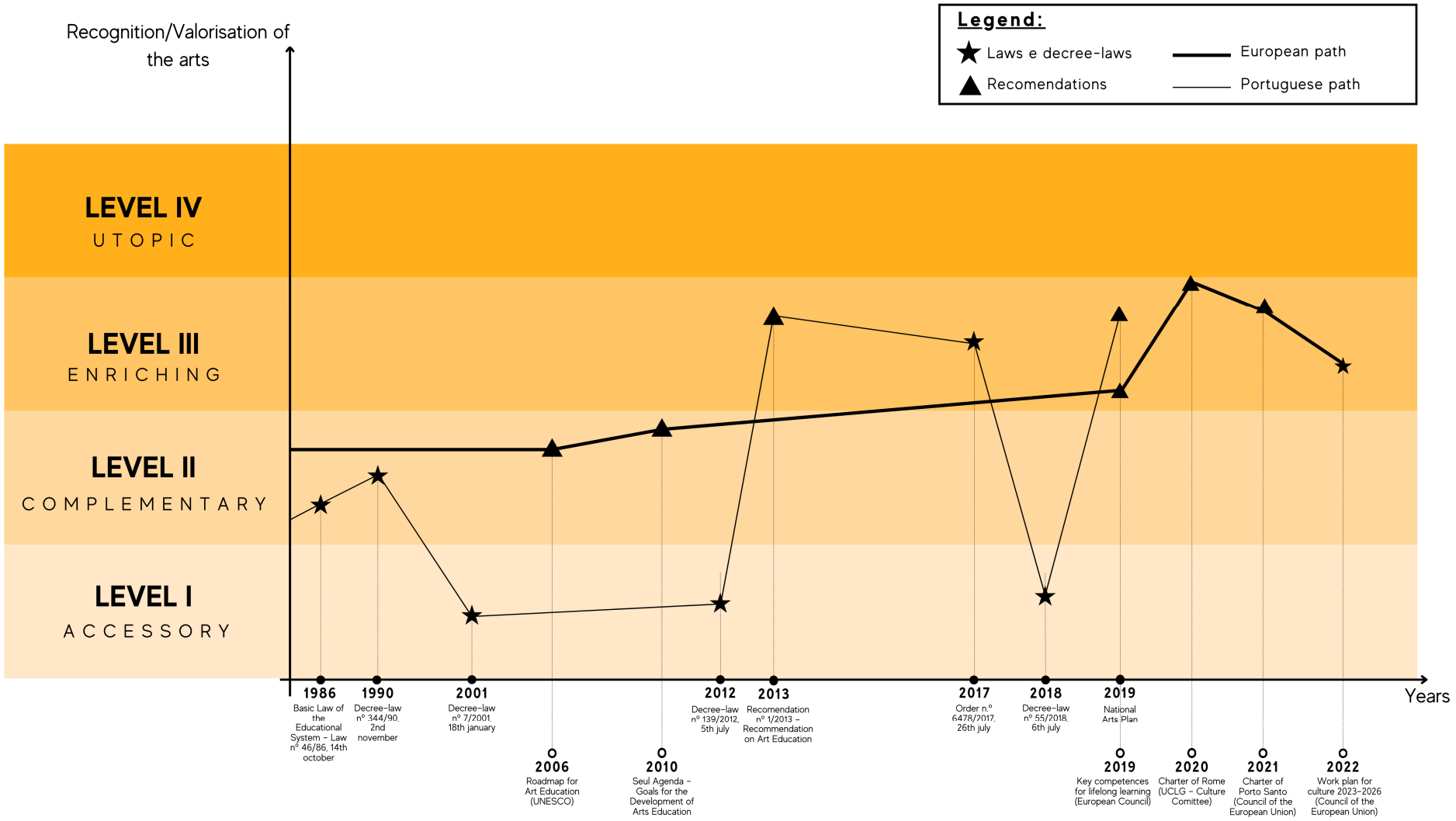


Figure 3. Recognition/valorization of the arts in education over the years.

Level I: Accessory refers to the fact that the arts are seen as something auxiliary to learning other subjects, as curricular accessories to other areas of knowledge. There is a tiny place for the arts in education and society. This level consists only of documents from the Portuguese trajectory, which, coincidentally, concern specific curriculum policies for upper-secondary education.

Level II: Complementary opens a little more room for the arts to be understood as instruments for developing different dimensions of the human being (e.g., creativity, critical thinking), being seen as complementary to education and society. This level marks the beginning of both trajectories. In the case of the European one, it marks the start of an upward path that ends at level III. In the case of the national trajectory, it marks the beginning of a path characterized by constant ups and downs between Levels I and III.

At the third level—Level III: Enriching—the arts are recognized as having intrinsic value. Their place in education is seen as aiming to enrich learning and be relevant to society. This is the highest level reached by both trajectories. The European trajectory shows a greater recognition of the arts, especially from 2019 onwards, reaching its peak in 2020, followed by a decline that raises some concern. The Portuguese trajectory also peaks at this level in 2013 and 2019, both preceded by documents that bring the trajectory down to level I.

The higher level—Level IV: Utopic—recognizes the intrinsic potential of the arts, understanding it as a way of life and building relationships with oneself and others in the world. There is room for their full expression in education and society as a whole. The research showed us that none of the pathways reached this level. This highlights a gap in recognizing the holistic potential of the arts in education, which we seek to argue in this article.

Figure 3 shows the ebb and flow of educational policies over the years regarding the recognition and valorization of the arts. Next, we present the political trajectories in more detail.

At first sight, the European and national trajectories show relatively similar upward trajectories, with some dips in between. The European trajectory lies between Level II: Complementary and Level III: Enriching, showing that the place of the arts in education and society has increased. The national trajectory highlights a path with some steep ups and downs between Level I: Accessory and Level III: Enriching.

Focusing on the European context, according to the 2006 Roadmap for Art Education (UNESCO, 2006), the articulation of arts and education "(. . .) stimulates cognitive development and can make what students learn and how they learn more relevant to the needs of the modern societies in which they live". A few years later, the publication of the "Goals for the Development of Arts Education", proposed by the Seoul Agenda (UNESCO, 2010), points to culture and the arts as key elements of a holistic education that leads to the full development of young people. Both documents emphasize the potential of the arts for young people's educational and social lives.

Moving up to Level III: Enriching, a few years later, the European Council (2019) presented a document entitled "Key Competencies for Lifelong Learning", which presents itself as a document to support the people in education and training departments. One of the several axes is "Cultural awareness and expression competence", which brings cultural identity and the arts to learn new ways of reading, seeing, and being in the world. In the following year, "The Rome Charter 2020" (UCLG, 2020) is presented as a guide for different cities to rethink the place of culture in their policies. It starts from Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to reflect on how access to culture should be guaranteed to all people, regardless of their basic conditions. Directly related to education, it states that cultural and artistic education should be at the center of educational courses for all ages.

Similarly, the "Charter of Porto Santo" (Council of the European Union, 2021) addresses the importance of culture in promoting democracy. Concerning education, it states that it is important for schools to enable their pupils to come into contact with art and culture and to integrate their cultural roots. It stresses the need to recognize the younger generations' artistic languages and guarantee their right to participate in culture. It recommends that culture, arts, and heritage be included in the compulsory curriculum as fundamental areas for exercising enlightened and participatory cultural citizenship.

Although these two documents seem to emphasize an understanding of the arts that comes close to Level IV: Utopic—a concept of the arts fully recognized in education and society—the Council of the European Union (2022) recently defined the "Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026", which emphasizes the crucial role of culture—including the arts—in the life of every person. However, its position on the graphic tends to slip slightly because it focuses mainly on culture, making little reference to the role of the arts. When they are mentioned, they tend to embody a more instrumental vision that somehow shows concrete usefulness in life in society, neglecting the ethical, esthetic, and solidarity potential that is intrinsic to them. As it points out, "participation in culture and cultural heritage, creativity and the arts has a positive impact on people of all ages and backgrounds; enhances people's quality of life and improves the health and general well-being of individuals and communities".

As we have seen, several guidelines have been drawn up over the years at the European level, which tend to assume the importance of education with the arts. However, these visions sometimes fall back on a more instrumental ideal of art, which we feel is too reductive for its holistic potential.

If we now focus on the Portuguese context and look at the graph, we can conclude that the path follows the tendency of the European one, including some moments where it even exceeds the European path. Nevertheless, it seems important to point out the cases where the line drops significantly to Level I: Accessory.

The Portuguese path departs from Level II: Complementary. When the basic law of the educational system was formulated (Law n.º46/86, 1986, October 14), the importance of the arts in the education of children and young people was recognized. However, four years later, Decree-Law n.º344/90 (1990, November 2) confirmed that artistic education was scarce and incompatible with the reality of the European context. With this in mind, it was decided that arts education, including dance education, should be a fundamental part of general education. This could take various forms, such as vocational education, special programs, or out-of-school provision. Including the arts in the curriculum throughout compulsory education should be guaranteed, whatever the format. However, if this were the case, we would not notice that the only reference to the artistic dimension in the analysis of Decree-Law n.º7/2001 (2001, January 18)—the curriculum matrix for upper-secondary education—is as a curricular enrichment activity, entirely optional, in parallel with sports activities, with a purely recreational profile, highlighting the first drop to Level I: Accessory.

As we can see through Figure 3, about eleven years later, the path remains the same. A new decree-law on the curriculum matrix for upper secondary education (Decree-Law n.º139/2012, 2012, July 5) has been approved. Despite two European guidelines—the Roadmap for Arts Education and the Seoul Agenda—this updated curriculum matrix only mentions the artistic dimension in upper-secondary education as a specialized course with direct links and preparation for the world of work. In other words, only young people who intend to pursue a professional career in the arts will have the opportunity to learn about and with them in upper-secondary school.

Surprisingly, just a few months later, the path increases to Level III: Enriching. The National Education Council approved a recommendation on art education (Recommenda-

tion n.º1/2013 of the National Education Council, 2013), not as a specialized course, but as a learning opportunity involving different artistic languages, pointing out that "without denying this instrumental value—the 'use for. . .'—it is now crucial to recognize its intrinsic value—the value it contains in itself and for itself. This value underlines the centrality of the subjects' interpretation, enjoyment, and expression in their relationship with the world". It reflects on the presence of the arts in education and concludes that their presence is increasingly scarce (especially in upper-secondary education) and that the quality of what is offered is also declining. It presents a series of recommendations for increasing and recognizing the presence of the arts in education, achieving more democratic access to the arts, and promoting a richer education. Paradoxically, when it comes to concrete measures in upper-secondary education, it insists on guaranteeing the continuity of artistic education, at least for those who intend to attend specialized courses. This means that those who do not intend to follow a specialized course still do not have access to artistic education. In our view, this tends to undermine the arguments put forward so far.

Just one year before the publication of the new curriculum matrix, the 'Profile of pupils leaving compulsory education' (Order n.º 6478/2017, 2017, July 26) was established, bringing a more humanistic approach to education that values esthetic and artistic sensitivity as one of the fundamental areas of competence. Despite this legal framework, Decreto-Lei n.º55/2018 (2018, July 6), which also claims to be based on the indications of the 'Profile of pupils leaving compulsory education', does not reflect this concern in the curricular matrix of upper-secondary education, except at the level of specialized artistic education, similar to previous versions, dropping the national trajectory once again to Level I: Accessory. It shows that the more the content of the documents is directly related to the contexts of practice, the lower the recognition and appreciation of the arts. Only one year later, the 'National Arts Plan' (Executive Committee of the National Arts Plan, 2019) was published, emphasizing the need to bring people closer to the arts by continuously providing a diversity of esthetic and artistic experiences in educational communities and civil society as a whole.

In short, the document analysis allowed us to draw three main conclusions summarized in Figure 3. Firstly, both trajectories (European and national) show an increasing recognition of the arts, starting from level II—where the arts are seen as complementary in education and society—and ending at level III—where the arts are recognized as having intrinsic value, contributing to the enrichment of education, and playing a relevant role in society. Secondly, despite the upward trend in the national trajectory, there are three moments of decline down to level I, where the arts are seen as curricular accessories to other areas of knowledge. Curiously, these moments are linked to specific upper-secondary school curriculum policies. Thirdly, none of the trajectories reaches level IV, where space is sought for the full expression and integration of the arts into education and society as a whole.

So, although we have European and national agendas that seem to be aimed at stimulating greater recognition of the arts in education and society, in no case are the arts fully recognized and valued; and when it comes to more specific educational policies, the arts seem to be mitigated. In this sense, we wonder how these educational agendas affect the contexts of practice, as we discuss in the following section.

4.2. Mapping Dance Spaces in Portuguese Upper-Secondary Schools

Once the data had been collected and analyzed, a series of graphs was drawn to summarize the information. Of the 161 general, artistic, and vocational upper secondary schools, both public and private, only 39—around 24.22%—offered dance (Figure 4).

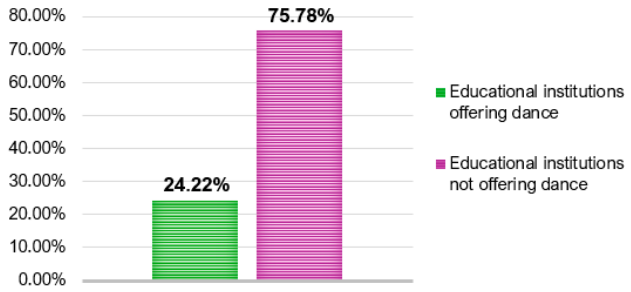


Figure 4. Educational institutions offering dance in the district of Porto.

Of the schools offering dance, around 58.97% are general education. Less significantly, around 17.96% of educational institutions represent arts education. General and artistic education accounted for 10.26% of the sample. Regarding vocational education, only two institutions—around 5.13%—were involved in this type of education. Finally, with a minimal presence—around 2.56% each—are educational institutions that provide both vocational and arts education; general and vocational education; and general, arts, and vocational education.

Regarding the location of these institutions, the majority—about 66.67%—is located in municipalities on the coast of the district (Figure 5), with the municipality of Porto being the most significant.

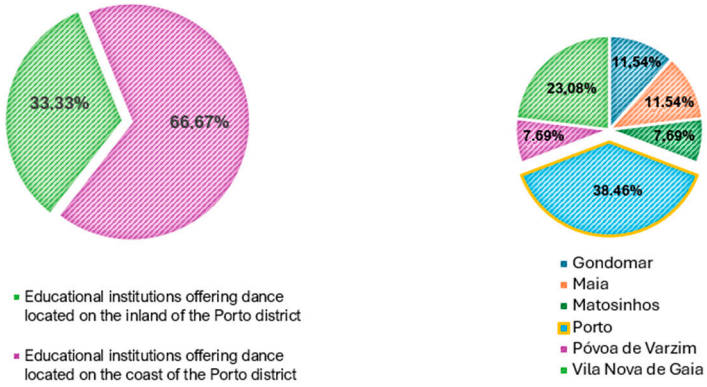


Figure 5. Geographical distribution of educational institutions offering dance.

In terms of nature, only 38.46% of the institutions are public. As can be seen in Figure 6, the majority is private—around 61.54%.

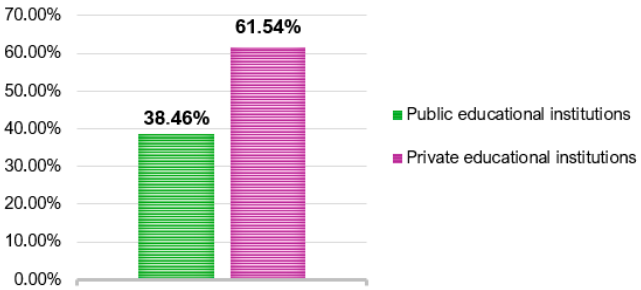


Figure 6. Nature of educational institutions offering dance.

Concerning the type of provision, four different formats have been identified. Dance is available to the young secondary school population as an extracurricular activitya non-teaching, optional component that fills the timetable; specific and/or professional training—training that invests in the preparation of dancers for the professional world;

school sport—an activity that complements the curriculum, under a regime of freedom of participation, integrated into the activity plan of each school, where dance is described as a "rhythmic and expressive activity"; and dance clubs—a space within the institution, usually the result of a student initiative, that brings together young people of different ages to enjoy dance.

The expression of each of these formats varies depending on whether we focus on private or public educational institutions. For the former, dance as an extracurricular activity was the most important format, accounting for around 50%. Dance also has a significant presence as specific and/or vocational training—around 45.83%. To a lesser extent, dance appears in these institutions as a school sport—about 4.17%—as seen in the following Figure 7.

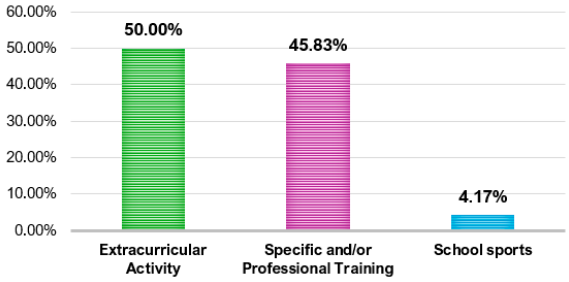


Figure 7. Formats of dance provision in private educational institutions.

In public educational institutions—as shown in Figure 8—the scenario is almost reversed, with school sport being the most predominant format on offer—around 68.75%. This is followed by dance clubs and specific and professional training, each with 12.50%. Finally, dance as an extracurricular activity was the least representative—around 6.25%.

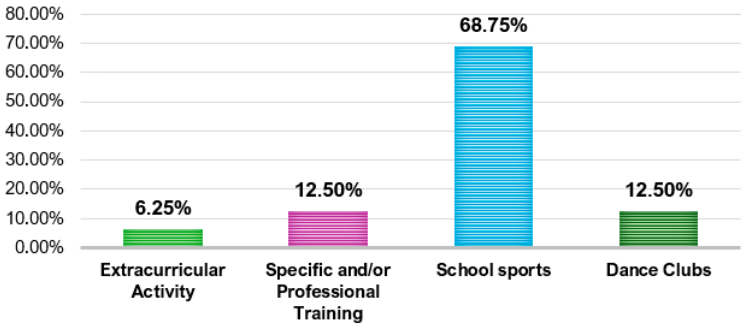


Figure 8. Formats of dance provision in public educational institutions.

Regarding the style of dance practiced in different contexts, we found that the information provided was not clear enough to analyze the different styles. However, it was possible to obtain information from 14 private educational institutions—about 58.33%. It was found that the styles taught were mainly contemporary and classical dance, with some institutions teaching urban dance. As for public educational institutions, it was only possible to obtain information from four institutions—about 26.67%. The style taught was mainly urban dance, with one institution teaching classical and ballroom dance.

5. Feeling the Heartbeat Rise: Discussing the Results Through Tensions

Dance education at the upper-secondary level in the district of Porto is limited to a tiny number of institutions—only 24.22%. This is even more limited if we move inland—only 33.33% of the 24.22%—or if we stick to public institutions—only 38.46% of the 24.22%. In the more urban municipalities and private educational institutions, the opportunity for young

upper-secondary school students to engage in dance becomes more significant—66.67% and 61.54%, respectively.

In the context of human rights, as stated in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits" (s/p). Similarly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) (which includes young people) states in Article 31 that "States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the organization for his or her benefit, on an equal basis, of appropriate forms of leisure and recreational, artistic and cultural activities" (p. 9). In both widely recognized documents, free access to the arts and culture is lauded as a right—something that seems to fall short of what is expected and desirable.

The policies that define national and European educational agendas tend to neglect the potential of the arts in the education of young people, subordinating education to the concerns outlined in economic policies and valuing mainly the technical and technological dimensions. Although some European entities point out that education must go beyond preparing young people for the labor market and should insist on skills that can proliferate active, responsible, and engaged citizens (OECD, 2018), in Portugal, as seen in Decreto-Lei n.º55/2018 (2018, July 6), the human, expressive, and artistic dimensions are being neglected as we progress in the educational system.

The 'Guidelines for Curricular Revision' (Decree-Law n.º7/2001, 2001, January 18) show a blurring of what should be the 'identity of upper-secondary education', stating that 'in the context of the Portuguese education system, secondary education has taken on the role of a 'passageway' between basic education and higher education', thus devaluing its central role in the education of young people (Matos, 2008).

As Macedo (2018) points out, the curricular pillars of the Portuguese education system aim to respond to the National Qualifications Framework (2009), which in turn seeks to adapt to the European Qualifications Framework (2008). In other words, guidelines that, under the pretext of seeking to harmonize systems, reaffirm and emphasize competitive, economic, and mercantilist principles, stressing a set of measures that induce the 'clientelisation' of the school relationship (Matos, 2008), stimulating what Ball (2012) calls edu-business, leaving minimal space for the exercise of citizenship of body and mind. In fact, even the mapping results show that the school has a low offering of education with dance, reducing the opportunity to stimulate an education that includes the body. Indeed, it shows limitations in its approach to constructing an education centered on wholeness, with a holistic approach to young people. Conversely, and as Keddie (2016) emphasizes, the upper-secondary level enables a greater focus on a 'mercantilist model' of education, prioritizing technical and technicist teaching aimed at producing a specific outcome, disregarding the relevance of the process in training, which tends to limit the development of the self as a dancing being.

As noted in the policy analysis above, if, in some cases, the arts are not even included in the regulations, when they are, the arts appear to be allied to an instrumental vision and/or are listed as complementary rather than as part of the other fields of knowledge. The data we report fully illustrate this reality. In trying to understand the presence of dance in educational institutions, we found that the formats offered were mainly complementary to the core education of young people—extra-curricular activities, school sport and dance clubs—and only occasionally appeared in artistic education institutions, where the offer was in the form of specific/professional training. However, our debate is not based on a reflection on arts education that focuses on training artists and/or arts professionals.

Instead, it is based on the assumptions of education with the arts, specifically with dance, which incorporates ethical and esthetic principles of solidarity (Macedo, 2021).

Nevertheless, it is not surprising that concerns about the relationship between arts, culture, and education are most evident at the level of arts education policy. In the European context, both the 'Roadmap for Arts Education' (UNESCO, 2006) and the Seoul Agenda on 'Goals for the Development of Arts Education' (UNESCO, 2010) emphasize culture and the arts as key elements of a holistic education leading to the full development of young people. More recently, the Framework for Culture and Arts Education endorsed by UNESCO (2024) reinforces the need for culture and arts education to be more accessible as a common good of humanity that promotes individual and collective well-being. Its place in policies, education systems, and societies in general should also be strengthened. If we focus on the national context, the 'Recommendation on Arts Education' (Recommendation n.º1/2013 of the National Education Council, 2013) points out that schools cannot avoid providing artistic learning that can ensure equal opportunities in this field, recognizing that there is still a long way to go to meet the reality of several European countries. More recently, the drafting of the National Arts Plan 2024–2029 emphasizes the need to bring people closer to the arts by continuously providing a diversity of esthetic and artistic experiences in educational communities and civil society as a whole—a mandate that, if we look at the contexts of practice, seems to have been left unfulfilled. In essence, the value of the arts to human experience should be a sufficient condition for their inclusion in education (Winner et al., 2013); however, as the findings show, this is not the case.

While public policies may undervalue the arts in educational discourse, economically privileged families tend to enroll their children and adolescents in schools with artistic provision, recognizing the potential of education through the arts (Eça, 2010). Furthermore, practicing a range of extracurricular activities allows them to affirm and reinforce their social status (Macedo, 2009; Macedo & Araújo, 2020). This assertion is supported by data that show that dance provision is significantly higher in private educational institutions—around 61.54%.

Recent proposals for conceptualizing quality education (UNESCO, 2020) attempt to incorporate equity considerations in access to inclusive and equitable education. However, we argue that quality education is inherently incompatible with the assumption of formal equality of opportunity when there are significant differences in students' starting conditions; i.e., they do not have the same educational opportunities for all, namely, about dance provision. Stoer and Araújo (2000) argue that the main shortcoming of mass schooling is its inability to contribute to resolving social and cultural inequalities. Parallel to this, Garcia et al. (2018) reveal that Portugal has low levels of cultural practices compared to the European context due to the high levels of social inequality in access to culture—which includes dance. The present study supports this notion, underlining that mass schooling, established as official, free, compulsory, and secular, seems to support a mere formal allegiance and identification with the principle of equal opportunities. Considering access to dance, it is clear that the education system does not provide universal access, leaving behind the opportunity for young people to learn how to express, listen, and communicate with their bodies. There is inequality of access and practice, which, rather than promoting dance as an inclusive, collaborative, and stimulating strategy, reinforces the image of the dance experience in an educational context as exclusive to a particular social group (McNamara & Risner, 2022), namely those who are most privileged in economic and territorial terms.

There is still a long way to go to achieve quality education with equal opportunities for all students. Especially if the socio-economically privileged groups recognize and invest in more enriching educational experiences that minority groups can only access if public education provides them. This becomes even more difficult if we are still trapped

in an educational approach that sees young people as simple future workers, machines to improve the economic power of a country, focusing only on economic, competitive, and mercantile principles of education. It is essential to go further and recognize young people's cognitive, emotional, and bodily capacities.

6. (In)Conclusions: What Steps Remain to Be Danced?

The results presented allow us to conclude at two levels. At the public education policies level, we observed no specific debate on dance. However, if we expand the search, we can conclude that the arts are gradually being included in political debates, although this inclusion tends to be based on a more instrumental approach. While it is possible to see that the European trajectory shows an increasing focus on the arts in political agendas, this is not reflected in the national trajectory. The latter shows that there is still a long way to go, particularly regarding educational policies that directly affect the contexts of practice, such as curriculum policies. At the institutional level—focusing on the context of practice—the data showed that access to this type of educational experience with dance is not sufficiently democratized, being limited to a specific group of society.

Given the prevailing tensions, a school that claims to be democratic and to promote equality for all seems incompatible with these concerns. The data collected shows that dance is not offered at the upper-secondary level in most educational institutions in the district of Porto.

There is a presence, albeit insignificant, in private educational institutions, reinforcing the gaps and socio-educational inequalities between the public and private educational sectors (Macedo, 2018). Despite the potential of dance in the education of young people, as mentioned above, its reach is limited to a particular section of society that is already privileged in itself. The failure to democratize access to education with the arts tends to restrict such an important right—the right to be with dance.

One can admit that although scientific discourses show the potential of dance education, most political discourses are still too skeptical to include it in the educational agenda, giving primacy to 'cerebralist', individualistic and mercantilist education. The context of practice highlights this reality, focusing on developing skills for young people entering the labor market with a view to competitiveness. Thus, to find space not only for the promotion of equal opportunities (Stoer & Araújo, 2000) but, above all, for the authentic expression of equality of conditions in education (Lynch & Baker, 2005), it is necessary to break with this approach that promotes solitary educational principles rather than solidarity ones (Freire, 1997; Lynch et al., 2007). It is necessary to allow a more equal distribution of access to the arts, and to dance in particular, adopting it as a political position intrinsically linked to principles of social justice and citizenship, aiming at educational quality in terms of equity and excellence for all people (Marín, 2013).

Considering that dance, as an art form with strong body awareness, offers unique ways of knowing and being in the world, the absence of this practice, mainly in public education, reveals not only a cultural and policy gap but also a missed opportunity to foster holistic, embodied learning. This can be expressed through a more balanced dance offering in different educational contexts and within a framework of valuing dance as a human and humanized expression and relationship. That means that the mainly competitive culture that has increasingly guided education may and should give room to a culture of sensitivity, affection, and solidarity among participants in educational construction.

In light of the mapping and policy analysis presented, which reveal a lack of educational offerings in dance, and considering that the literature highlights its potential in education, it remains to explore the young people's perception of the influences of dance on their educational experiences. So, future studies should explore dance activities in upper-

secondary schools, using qualitative methodologies that make it possible to understand young people's experiences in these spaces (for example, in what concerns body–mind connections in education).

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Notes

[1] Concept defined by SDG4—'Inclusive and equitable quality education'—in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
[2] Information available at: https://www.gesedu.pt/PesquisaRede (accessed on 2 November 2022).

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