**Jamie Mackay**

Could you introduce yourself and see a little bit that your context you work.

**Gemma Lockhart**

Yeah. So I'm Gemma Lockhart, and I am a Royal Academy of Dance and Rambert grades dance teacher, so I teach in the private sector, and I have my own school, it's not a huge school, but it's a good enough school, I trained at Dance For All in Edinburgh as a professional dancer that was, you know what my HND ended up being. In Scotland at that time, that was all you could do. It was an HND, there was no degree.There was no option for that. You'd have had to go down to London, which was just wasn't feasible for me. I couldn't afford that. My family couldn't afford that. And so I did that, knowing that I could do my professional dance teaching qualifications and then went on and had a career as a professional dance teacher. And I kind of have made it to the top of that now, you know, there's few things that I could still do, but there's not much more I can do to know. I know my way around the RAD, I know my way around Rambert, I could walk into class and teach it without thinking. So. yeah, always looking for something else. But yeah, private sector, and a sector where academic study didn't seem to be necessary to start with.

**Jamie Mackay**

Can you say a little about why you applied for the MEd program?

**Gemma Lockhart**

Yeah. So my training was in dance and I kind of faced a few barriers and a few limitations that were starting to have a real effect on my professional development, constantly having to justify that I was qualified, that I was experienced, that I knew what I was doing, that I had had all this life experience and academic experience within dance, but it didn't look like the way people expected to look to know. So I was just faced with too many barriers and trying to find a sort of way out of that. Originally the plan was that I had hoped that I would be able to then go and teach dance in high schools and secondary skills, but that pathway just wasn't open for many, many reasons. But I decided to continue on and do the MEd and see where it took me. And yeah, it took me somewhere different from what I'd expected, but yeah, that was the original push was really just to put something academic behind what I already knew I knew.

**Jamie Mackay**

Could you describe your journey through the MEd?

**Gemma Lockhart**

Yeah I've been thinking about this recently, actually about my journey through the image, because I think I'm in a position where I've had very little academic, you know. experience, you know, I had never done any written academic papers. Everything I'd done was really, really practical since leaving school, so I think, I started it, the way I would look at it is I started it really naive, you know, thinking well, this is going to be great, I absolutely can manage this, you know, I’m not stupid, you know. I know my stuff, I know my, I know my field, and I've had lots of experience. And then I kind of got into second year, and yeah, the pandemic hit so, that's make a bit more challenging, but I think I realized what had taken on, and I found it really challenging. And if I'm really honest, there was quite a few points that I didn't think I was going to make it to the end. Do you know, and realistically, I did think, you know, I just don't think I have the ability for this, you know, and it wasn't a… I didn't feel sorry for myself, I just realistically thought I just don't know if I have the ability for it. Took a break, came back, and with the support of all of the team, came back and repeated second year, felt it was better, and then, I think, when I went into 3rd year it was realistic. I went in with a realistic idea of what was expected. So, it was a real journey of, you know, starting from this, big dreams of, yeah, I'm gonna manage this, this is going to be great to the realization of how hard that is to at the end, thinking you know what, actually, it's fine. You know, I've learned so much in the last couple of years that I can make it to the end. It didn’t make it easier, it just made that more manageable.

**Jamie Mackay**

And could you say a little bit about what you focused on for your final project?

**Gemma Lockhart**

Yeah. So again, I wanted to go back to my original reason for starting on the MEd, because throughout the years I had kind of deviated from that a little bit and focused just purely on what my practice was. I wanted to return to that original idea, and it took me a long time to get to, you know, to where I needed to be with my final project. And actually it was, my ideas were too big, and it was trying to make it small. So, I decided to look at you know, why, really, what was the core of why I had made onto the MEd, and it was, where had my training began. You know, where had my training… where were the limitations, what were the limitations within the training that I had that all dancers get the answers get, you know it's very similar. And why was that? Where did I feel that that was holding me back? And also where was it not? You know I wanted to look at the positives of it, too. And so, yeah, my final project ended up being a dissertation, an autoethnographic dissertation which I'd never done before, never knew anything about, had to learn about autoethnography. And it really was about asking the question, is professional dance training, limiting dancers for a career after professional dancer or even professional dance teacher, you know, it was easy for me to go into that that side of dance, but actually taking myself out of the field just a little bit, you know, not even very far, you know, still within dance, but not within that small, small community of dance and the barriers that I had faced through no fault of my own, because that was just the training that's on offer for dancers. So yeah, that was what I decided to focus on, take it right back to the core - why are why are we not putting dancers into different sectors? Well, potentially, it's their training that's holding them back.

**Jamie Mackay**

And what impact did this have on your practice as an arts educator?

**Gemma Lockhart**

So the whole MEd has been huge for me as a, as a, to the way I approach and now how I teach, and I have so much, so much of a better understanding of not just churning out dancers, you know. That's not really what my job is. And my whole school has completely changed in the last 3, 4 years. It’s a much more holistic approach, its a much more inclusive approach. Not that we were deliberately not doing that, I just, I just didn't know any better. We just copied what had come previously do you know, and looked at other successful dance schools. ‘This is what they're doing, let's just repeat that’. And actually a lot’s changed not just for me in the last 4 years, but in in general, in society, and you know, the way children are taught, the way children are learning, the struggles that they're facing. It's so vastly different from it was 5 years ago that, you know, if I hadn't done this, I think if I hadn’t been on this MEd, I think I would have really struggled to make the changes, I think, speaking to people, and having different ideas and different approaches, and not just the same people with the same background as I had in the same training as I had, has really made a difference, and my final project, I still don't know. I still don't know what impact that's going to have. And I hope it's gonna have. I hope it is gonna have an impact, and I would like for it to take my career in a slightly different pathway do you know. I don't want to have gained all these skills and all this knowledge, and not to use that, do you know? But I just don't know where. I'm still kind of reeling from being finished. So I don't really know where it's going to go.

**Jamie Mackay**

I think you've just answered the question that is next, which is what has changed as a result of studying the MEd. I mean beyond your practice, I think, yeah, it's quite early, as you say, to do that, but have you seen changes in your learners, perhaps, over that time?

**Gemma Lockhart**

Yeah, I think I have seen changes, and maybe not so much, I teach really little ones. So you know not so much with them, and potentially, not necessarily with the learners. But I think the approach within the school, the relationship with parents, our seniors who are leaving, you know, vast majority of ours don't go on and dance, like we maybe get one a year, if that maybe one, every 2, 3 years that go on and do a professional dance course, a lot of them going to do other things. And they've always, they've always said, you know what a big impact dance, right up till they’re 17,18, has made on their future, but I think now the way I talk about it is different, you know? The way I approach it is different. I talk about… this comes from my final project, all the other skills that you're learning and dance that are not just how to be a dancer. So I think the way I communicate that now within the school is vastly different, and my school has really grown in the last few years, like hugely more than it had in the previous 10 years, and I think it's a different approach, because a lot of people are not looking for a dance school for their children to become professional dancers, they’re looking for a dance school where their children are going to be happy, and it's holistic, and you know, they're learning lots of other things, and they're socializing, but in a an environment where they're still, you know, learning something. So I think the way I approach it has changed, which is making the school…the success of the school… success, is maybe not the right word, but if you're looking at it purely in numbers and as a business, yeah then the success of the school has definitely improved. So, although my job isn't actually any different from when I started, I feel like it's vastly different from when I started

**Jamie Mackay**

That's great, Gemma. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this.