**Jamie Mackay**

Could you introduce yourself and say a little about your arts education context?

**Tracy Hawkes**

So, I'm Tracey Hawkes. I have been a dance, and principally ballet teacher for over 40 years, and I run Dance For All in Edinburgh, which is a dance school for both younger pupils up to university age and also dance floor college, which is running a full-time professional dance course for sort of HND level into professional level dance.

**Jamie Mackay**

And can you see a little bit why you applied for the MEd program?

**Tracy Hawkes**

Although I've been teaching for decades and decades, when I first qualified as a dance teacher or trained as a dancer and dance teacher, there weren't any sort of formal academic qualifications. And so, you know I've been going through my career without having the sort of I suppose academic validation of where I got to, in my experience and my practice and I also wanted to, I felt a little stale as well. I wanted to gain a qualification, a recognition of my practice and skills, and also to develop them and to bring them into perhaps a wider context of how the performing arts are today and yeah, and also potentially in the future, have a another qualification that would give me a wider scope for freelance work if and when I go on from running my own business to working in larger field of dance.

**Jamie Mackay**

And could you describe your journey through the MEd?

**Tracy Hawkes**

It was, it was fascinating, frustrating at times. Obviously, we had the pandemic to deal with in between, in the middle, but actually, in some ways that was, that was good. It allowed me a little more time to focus and gave me some actually good practice and content to work with as well. It was great meeting other performing arts practitioners. That's a really big part of it for me, because I have always worked as a sort of, you know, solely running my own business, obviously with other people with me, but going into a wider field practitioners and learning from them and supporting each other, is fantastic. I just. I was very unconfident at first in my academic abilities and my cognitive, sort of skills. I think the journey from first year through to third year was fantastic in that respect. It is very, it was so supportive from the tutors, in developing my confidence in my attitude to how I could get out there and make a difference beyond what have already been doing, and shift my way of working. And yeah, the tutors were just superb in reacting, I think, to all of us in very, very individual way, and supporting us with our individual skills, but letting us, allowing us to find new confidence in alternative practices and wider and opportunities to develop. So yeah, it was. It was great. I miss it.

**Jamie Mackay**

That's good. Thank you. So what did you focus on for your final project?

**Tracy Hawkes**

I was focusing on researching how teaching in ballet education, is responding has been responding to contemporary gender issues and ballet is traditionally patriarchal, very heteronormative, and binary, and I wanted to, in my culture and context unit in second year, I'd investigated ballet’s, the artforms’ response to gender fluidity, and that had awakened a real sort of curiosity in me, as to how ballet education was responding to them to these contemporary issues, or not. And so that was, yeah, I looked at some dance teachers thoughts and practices, and how they were changing and what ballet education, might able to, how it might get to shift in the future. That was, that was the crux of my research.

**Jamie Mackay**

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

**Tracy Hawkes**

It had a lot of impact. I think you know, having taught for so long, let's see, that’s a lot of experience, but I felt that I had discovered a lot of contemporary context that I think I had been aware of, but hadn't really thought that ballet, particularly ballet, could, identify with these issues and change in a way that was going to be better. And it just made me stop and think so much about how I was teaching and how it's presenting ballet, and gave me, I think, a stronger insight into my students and my pupils, even from a young, you know, very young age all the expressions that we used. It's so shifted that for me and I think hopefully, because I was doing that, my students were introduced to a much wider, a much broader sense of what dance, what their dance careers could be, and what they were, as opposed to what they also themselves had perhaps been brought up to think that ballet was. And so, as a consequence, I think quite a lot of my students who'd never even thought of ballet as being something that's for them, that they might be, that they actually enjoyed or might be interested in following through into their careers. Suddenly it opened up a much wider world for them. Instead of thinking of going into, say, contemporary dance, where gender has traditionally been less of a, less of an issue, suddenly, it's like, ‘Oh. Perhaps ballet is a world that we can fit into’. So that was that was very gratifying. And really, yeah, really exciting. So, and I have also been asked, you know, as a practitioner and by people that know I've done this research, I've been asked to talk to organisations, I've been to National Youth Ballet, and I've done other presentations at conferences, education conferences, and that has been great, very nerve racking for me, something I've never done before. But again, sort of having so much that I want to tell people, and you know, and just awake their consciousness of this issue, that's again, that's something I never dreamt I would be doing, you know, 3 or 4 years ago, even 2 or 3 years ago, perhaps, that I would have the confidence to do that and be able to get out there, and not just to my own circle of people, some students, but to get out to other organisations that's been fantastic, and it's awoken such a, when I've done a talk or a presentation, there's been so much conversation about it, and so many people said, ‘Oh, and I never thought about that. I didn't realize’. And so that was yeah, as I said, really terrifying to do, but again, the course, doing the course gave me that confidence to go out there and effect some, in a small way to effect some change, or some shifting people's perceptions of ballet and ballet education.

**Jamie Mackay**

I mean, I think that I think you've already answered this question. But I'll ask, anyway, just in case there's anything else that comes to mind. What has changed as a result of studying the MEd?

**Tracy Hawkes**

Yes, yeah, I'm say my, my sort of, my confidence in my myself and my practice in my ability to go out into the wider ballet education world is, is more, much more confidence, and much more…. I suppose I feel I have more to give than simply, you know, being able to take a class and do the actual nuts and bolts of, you know, ballet classes and things which, which I love doing, and I, you know, I am still doing, but to take that further. Yes, so go out and talk to other educators about these issues and about how ballet can continue to develop into a relevant and contemporary education and art form. Yes, and I would like to, I was wanting to do a PhD. I thought of applying last year, I was off work for a bit with an injury, and then I've had to sort of shelve it just for the time being - too busy, but that is something as well that coming, thinking of potentially coming to an end of a full-time teaching career, I would very, very much like to continue on research and do a PhD at some point in the future. That's something I never ever thought that I would be saying, doing so that's certainly changed from that point of view. Yes, I really, the thought of being able to continue contributing and yeah, exploring new routes there, and the masters has given me that real buzz as well about thinking, well, you know, even if I do slow down and just end up teaching, perhaps freelance in much, much smaller chunks than I do now, I I'd have something still, something to contribute if I can continue on to do something like a PhD.

**Jamie Mackay**

thanks so much, Tracy, I really appreciate you taking the time to answer the questions.