



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

**Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts**

of

**Elena Liu**

BA (Beijing Sport University, 2011)

**“Promoting children’s engagement in dance: a Qualitative Pedagogy  
Study”**

Department of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education

Friday, March 18, 2016

2:00pm

Graduate Students’ Society Building  
Room 112

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Tim Hopper, Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, University of Victoria  
(Supervisor)

Dr. Patti-Jean Naylor, Department of Exercise Science, Physical & Health Education, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Anita Prest, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Victoria

Chair of Oral Examination:

Prof. Andrew Newcombe, Department of Law, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to explore teaching approaches used by a middle school dance teacher that promotes children's engagement in dance and enhance their enjoyment of dancing. The study uses both ethnography and auto-ethnography research approaches. The goals of the research were; (a) to explore the connection between the dance teacher's and my own joy of doing and learning dance from our personal narratives that chart our life trajectories into becoming dance teachers, and (b) to explore how a middle school dance teacher in Canadian Middle School teaches dance as she tries to enable all the children in her classes to enjoy and want to engage in dance. The focus research question in this study was "How do dance teachers engage children and enable all children in school to enjoy dance?" This research drew on flow, process and happiness theories. As the researcher I observed two dance classes (grade 6 and 8), over a twelve week period, noting the teacher's and her students' behaviors. In addition, I interviewed (1) the dance teacher prior and after the dance classes, and (2) two students from each class in relation to observed classes. The findings from the ethnography offered emerging themes on how to engage students in dance, that included, (1) purposeful pedagogy, (2) creating trust, (3) within and between groups for each other, (4) encouraging quality movements, and (5) addressing shy, nervous and resistant students. The autoethnography insights showed that these themes emerged from the teacher's personal background, in particular in relation to her joy in performing dance at festivals and in her desire to encourage her children (two young boys) to engage in dance. The key findings from interviewing the students was that they felt involved by creating their own dance, enjoyed working in groups which were mixed gender but where they could choose which group to be in, and where able to create a dance festival performance. Selecting a dance style, music and costume, all motivated the students for the final performance.