Article

The Training of Flamenco Dance Teachers of the Escuela Sevillana (Sevillian School): From Practical Experience to the Practice of Teaching

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Abstract: Flamenco is a traditional way of expressing values and knowledge from one generation to the next as part of informal education and is now a consolidated artistic genre in Andalusia. A legal framework was created to protect and promote flamenco as a unique element of Andalusian culture, and to incorporate flamenco studies into the official school curriculum. There is nothing written on what constitutes flamenco content or how it should be taught. We conducted a small phenomenological ethnographic study of women who teach a specific style of flamenco dance which is important in the field of teaching, namely the *Escuela Sevillana*, and we aimed to understand how they constructed the pedagogical content knowledge that enabled them to teach it in the public and private spaces where it is taught. The study design was qualitative and interpretive. The study population comprised all women teaching this style of flamenco dance. Data collection was through in-depth interviews, with a bibliographical review of relevant material for context. The results focus on interpreting and understanding the reality studied, and describing in detail how these dance teachers constructed the pedagogical content knowledge in order to teach it effectively. We draw the conclusions that there are various stages of teaching professionalisation, and experience-based learning is important for consolidation as a teacher.

Keywords: didactics; PCK; flamenco dance; *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco* (Sevillian School of Flamenco Dance); experiential learning

1. Introduction

In November 2011, the Directorate General of Cultural Heritage initiated the procedure to register the Activity of Ethnological Interest, the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco* (the Sevillian School of Flamenco Dance), as an Asset of Cultural Interest in the General Catalogue of Andalusian Historical Heritage [1], which was approved as Law 518/2012 of the Autonomous Community of Andalusia in December 2012 [2]. The *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco* was defined as "una extraordinaria expresión cultural, un estilo y un arte de baile, que surge de un proceso de codificación iniciado hacia 1830 … y que ha seguido consolidando y enriqueciéndose hasta la actualidad" (an outstanding cultural expression, a style and art of dance that emerged through a process of codification that began in the early nineteenth century … and which has continued to be consolidated and enriched to the present day). This singular expression of flamenco dance reproduces a specific set of gender-segmented values and patterns. It also very clearly distinguishes and gives prominence to the woman's dance, as opposed to the man's. Here, we focus on the woman's dance.

In April 2023, the Andalusian Flamenco Law created a legal framework for the protection, preservation and promotion of flamenco [3]. This remit includes the teaching and dissemination of knowledge of flamenco as stable curricular content at all levels of

the Andalusian educational system and promoting the professionalisation of all sectors of activity related to flamenco, ensuring the cultural diversity of flamenco as a form of artistic expression in constant evolution and transformation, and promoting flamenco as a stimulus for the participation and personal development of people with diverse abilities.

There are two immediate challenges associated with this objective. The first is that the teaching of flamenco dance, and the *Escuela Sevillana* in particular, has so far only taken place in informal and non-formal settings, often by women with no formal pedagogical training. The second is that there is no documentation associated with how and what should be taught in this style of flamenco dance. There is no approved syllabus, and no previous academic qualifications have been required to teach it. Like any other dance, flamenco requires specific content and understanding to be taught. In this particular dance discipline, however, before a dance teacher pursues a professional qualification within the formal education system, it has usually been necessary for them to be recognised first as an expert in the subject by their peers or teachers, based on an extensive content knowledge and regardless of their education or teaching experience.

In order to preserve it and teach it, therefore, it is of interest to discover how the present-day teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana* became teachers and learned to teach this particular style of dance, so that those in the educational sector can subsequently organise this teaching into the objectives, subject content and basic structures that will enable it to be taught in schools.

We designed a small, specific phenomenological ethnographic study of the set of women teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco*, a style of flamenco dance with its roots in the city of Seville, Spain. The foundations were laid by Matilde Coral, who transmitted, "codified" and spread the essence of this style from her dance school in Seville, for which she was awarded a national prize for teaching by the Chair of Flamencology of Jerez, in 2008. Our objective was to discover how the women teachers of this style constructed the pedagogical content knowledge necessary to teach it effectively. In order to try and construct the process followed by teachers of this style of flamenco, starting from the acquisition of academic content to their consolidation as teachers of this dance discipline, the following research question was posed: *How did the maestras* (used in the sense of skilled performers, as well as teachers) *of the Escuela Sevillana de Baile learn to teach flamenco dance?*

The problem area that this research study addresses arises from the need to highlight both the invisible nature of the teacher's contribution to flamenco dance as well as its importance, given that, as Alys Longley and Barbara Kensington-Miller put it, "a virtuosic performer takes precedence over the dedicated teacher" [4] (p. 29). Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is understood, therefore, as the knowledge base guiding the decisions and actions of teachers [5]. In flamenco dance, this involves rethinking the traditional professional teaching profile as a transmitter of knowledge, and taking an internal, pedagogical look at its application in the classroom. Assuming responsibility for new fields of study like the one here takes educational research into flamenco and focuses critical reflection and inquiry on knowledge of new ways of teaching and learning in this artistic discipline.

Flamenco, as a fundamental part of the training of dancers, is presented as a living art, the result of the experiential learning of dancers from their own artistic practice. Teacher education, viewed through the lens of the activity theory framework, is also an ongoing process of experiential learning in constant formation and transformation [6]. Educational research is sorely needed to adapt this art to the new paradigms of education. Bárbara de las Heras [7] looked at the current transformation of teaching systems and methods in flamenco dance through a comparative study of three generations of teachers and dancers and concluded that a quantitative and qualitative leap had taken place between the second and third generations in terms of teaching techniques, style, organisation and duration of classes, learning processes and other parameters.

A study of the construction of pedagogical content knowledge in flamenco is important for educational research for two reasons. First, it dignifies dance as a subject worthy of

study in the educational arena, and second, it brings the academic rigour of a social science to arts education and scientific discipline to flamenco as a symbol of social identity. The term pedagogical content knowledge refers to the deconstruction of learned content in order to construct teachable knowledge, a process of integrating pedagogical aspects into the specific content of the subject to be taught and thus learned by those who receive it.

In the rest of this article, we review the two main theories that constitute the educational theoretical context of our study: (i) pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) and (ii) Kolb's experiential learning cycle theory. Both of these run through the scant bibliography on the methodological and educational concepts, models, fields of study associated with the construction of PCK in flamenco and flamenco dance as an art form and the professionalisation of flamenco dance teaching. Finally, we present the methodology and results of the phenomenological ethnographic study conducted to describe and construct the process by which teachers of this style of flamenco learned to teach the *Escuela Sevillana* style of flamenco dance, starting from the acquisition of academic content to their consolidation as teachers of this dance discipline.

2. Theoretical Concepts and Literature Review

2.1. Construction of Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK): Theory and Developments

Schulman [8] was the pioneer of one of the main theoretical perspectives on which our study is based: pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). He not only paved the way for reflection as part of the shaping of teaching knowledge, but also ways of measuring these pedagogical constructs so that this line of educational research could be continued. In the early definition of the concept, the basic components made reference only to the knowledge and understanding of the student and the instructional strategies to be used [9]. The construction of content began with the teacher reflecting on what he/she was going to teach, its purpose and the planning and conceptual structure of the subject. According to Marcelo [10], Shulman's proposal referred to the temporary, transitional state that transformed the content for teaching.

The conceptual classification of Marcelo includes a number of concepts that are useful for the subject of dance that is the focus of attention in this study. A distinction is made between the following:

- General pedagogical knowledge, or general didactic knowledge: the pedagogical competencies that professionals must have in order to teach. These include the ability to plan a learning programme, to structure the teaching/learning methodology, to use didactic techniques and the ability to handle cultural influences that intervene in teaching;
- Content knowledge: the body of knowledge associated with the subject that teachers must understand in order to be effective. Content knowledge has a direct bearing on the execution of curriculum potential [11] There is a close relationship between content knowledge and PCK;
- Contextual knowledge: This includes everything that forms the context of teaching, from the classroom, the curriculum and also the student, as the recipient of the content of teaching.

Other lines of research have sought to integrate the two-fold distinction made between formal and practical aspects that underlies teacher training in individual subject areas. In these theories, contextualisation reasserts PCK, which is defined as the construct formed through the practice of teaching and the teacher's subsequent reflection on that same practice [12,13].

Yiğit provides a relevant study from the social sciences, studying the effect on primary school teachers of a learning and teaching experience in pedagogical content knowledge related to socio-scientific argumentation [14]. He concluded that PCK in socio-scientific argumentation improved as the teachers participating in the experience learned and taught. In another study looking at the influence of cooperating teachers on pre-service teachers, Norville and Park hypothesised that developing pedagogical content knowledge (PCK)

in teachers at the beginning of their teacher education programmes could be critical for their effectiveness in the classroom [15]. In their conclusions, they suggested giving pre-service teachers more autonomy during teaching practice in order to develop their PCK and emphasised the importance of reflection.

More recent studies in PCK have built upon previous categorisations and introduced a new concept: the Refined Consensus Model (RCM) of PCK for the teaching of science [16]. Carlson et al. describe the refined consensus model as "complex layers of knowledge and experiences that shape and inform teachers' practice and mediate student outcomes" [17]. A key feature of this model is the identification of three distinct realms of PCK: collective PCK (material or content held by all practitioners in the form of books and other materials), personal PCK (an individual teacher's general knowledge) and enacted PCK (that part of personal PCK that can be used in a specific situation).

Finally, Keller et al. studied the influence of the PCK and motivation of physics teachers on student attainment and interest [18]. They concluded that, to improve cognitive and affective outcomes in students, both the teacher's knowledge and motivation (perceived as enthusiastic teaching by the student) had to be involved.

2.2. The Experiential Learning Cycle

A discussion of learning processes in flamenco dance must necessarily include the experiential learning theory proposed by the psychologist David Kolb. According to this theory, learner behaviour is influenced by the individual's own individual make-up and the context in which they find themselves. Kolb indicates that the way in which the learner perceives and processes information depends on past life experiences and genetics, which includes thoughts and emotions, and the demands of the current social environment [19].

Numerous studies associate the importance of experiential learning and the proper assimilation of content [20,21]. More specifically, the importance of addressing this concept in arts education is also highlighted [22,23]. In the words of Fuentes, it is important to see learning as "un proceso por medio del cual se construye conocimiento reflexivo, dando sentido a las experiencias vividas" (a process of reflective knowledge construction that gives meaning to lived experiences) [24] (p. 838). Before flamenco studies officially became a subject to be taught in schools, the earliest forms of teaching–learning in flamenco dance were based on experiential learning, the result of the discussions, conversations, gatherings and neighbourhood celebrations that made it possible to acquire knowledge through personal experience. In flamenco, knowledge acquisition and learning are based on experience through the senses and the personal experiences of each individual [25].

Teaching–learning processes in flamenco are directly related to the learning cycle, also known as Kolb's experiential learning cycle (see Figure 1). The learning cycle starts with concrete experience and the individual practice of dance, which is associated with feeling. This is followed by a phase of observation of and reflection on that experience in light of what is already known, as a result of which understanding deepens. The third stage of abstract contextualisation involves thinking and analysis, when the individual is not only able to reflect on the specific nature of that experience, but also to generalise what has been learned as new insights. Finally, in the fourth stage of active experimentation, what has been learned can be applied to new situations.

The practice and in-depth study of this learning cycle proposes "la reflexión en un camino prolífico y pragmático, en el que debe considerarse la heterogeneidad de los educandos, el compromiso del educador, así como la necesidad de perfeccionar los procedimientos de la praxis pedagógica" (reflection as a fertile, pragmatic pathway in which the heterogeneity of the learners, the commitment of the educator, as well as the need to refine the procedures of pedagogical praxis are all taken into account) [25]. As forms of knowledge construction, flamenco dance draws upon two main modes associated with the assimilation of content: specific experiences as the basis of experience (stage 1) and reflection and observation as a means of transforming knowledge (stage 2). It is emphasised that

flamenco dance and the artistic creativity of teachers is nourished by reflection on their own artistic praxis.
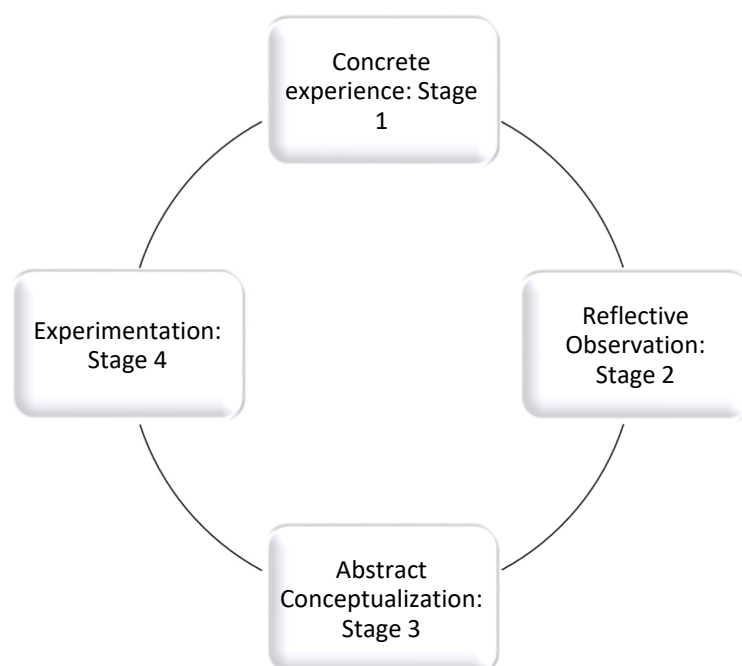

Figure 1. Kolb's experiential learning cycle.

2.3. The Construction of PCK in Flamenco Dance Teachers

In order to design our study, we first undertook a search of the bibliography addressing any methodological and educational concepts, models, lines of research pertaining to dance and flamenco as an art and the professionalisation of its teaching. The aim was to reconstruct the teacher in the area of dance and to determine the various patterns and criteria that would enable professionals in the subject to create a professional profile. As guideline questions, we asked ourselves what were the constituent aspects of pedagogical content knowledge in flamenco dancers? Where (which fields or areas) did this content come from? How was pedagogical content knowledge constructed in subjects that address flamenco dance? What factors were important in a didactic analysis of flamenco dance?

We found very little research on PCK in the social sciences, and even less on artistic and dance subjects, so it was necessary to extend the scope of the review to include specific studies whose perspective embraced the awareness of context and pedagogical practice that this discipline requires that could serve as a guide to train teachers in the area. At the same time, more recent notions of flamenco as a structured discipline were also included in this research process for, as Phaedra Petsilas points out, "the evolution of contemporary dance techniques and the introduction of somatic practices into dance training has altered the landscape for dance educators" [26] (p. 19).

A number of historical and cultural factors associated with the background, education and formation of flamenco dance teachers account for the gaps in research on PCK in this area. They are nevertheless part of the experience, knowledge and heritage of the flamenco teacher and are mentioned here. First, teachers of dance, especially those teaching flamenco dance have not, for the most part, received regulated training. In this respect, they can be likened to professional music teachers [27]. Like any other dance, flamenco requires specific content and understanding in order to be taught. The tendency of many teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana* has been to obtain a formal professional qualification only after they have been recognised as experts by peers and other teachers, based on an extensive knowledge of content. Many dance professionals use formal education to complete their professional academic training and acquire pedagogical training, but not

all have done this. The only specific official training in dance and pedagogy is provided by Higher Education Conservatories of Dance, and not all dance teachers have completed these studies or obtained the teaching qualification.

Second, some research claims that professional teachers construct their own PCK. This may be strongly related to what has often tended to be the case in dance, and flamenco specifically, where students learn the particular forms or dancing styles that are taught by the maestro with whom they have studied. The emphasis is placed on knowledge of content as a prerequisite for the construction of PCK, understanding content knowledge as a variable directly dependent on the PCK construct [28,29]. This still does not answer the question of where and how the flamenco teacher acquired his/her subject content knowledge.

Third, and following on from this, the training pathways where subject content has historically been acquired and constructed are clearly differentiated into formal, non-formal and informal teaching, without forgetting the importance of cultural transmission in flamenco teaching. Cristina Cruces has described the parallel paths of public and private flamenco. In essence, private spaces—the family, the neighbourhood and the workplace—have been crucial for the learning process and for practicing the basic structures of flamenco. The earliest private circles of flamenco were those closest to the people, so that the street, homes, taverns and the *Corrales* (poor multi-family tenement blocks arranged round a central courtyard) were privileged settings for cultivating good listening and observation habits, and for developing interpretive skills. The major transformations in flamenco, on the other hand, came about as a result of its commercialisation and artistic expansion to public spaces, and creation has been largely confined to the stage, the *Tablao* (venue for flamenco performances) and the major figures [30] (p. 78).

Fourth, flamenco dance education has been passed down from generation to generation as informal cultural education since the seventeenth century, which is when Navarro et al. [31], referring to the "bailes al modo de los gitanos" (dances in the Gypsy style), situate the first historical appearance of dances with characteristics very similar to what is known today as flamenco. In terms of formal professional development, Bárbara de las Heras notes that flamenco dance is very closely linked to the development of regulated dance education, so that flamenco dance, and the *Escuela Sevillana*, which is our focus in this study, is directly dependent on the educational context of the dance field in general [32] (p. 178), and there has been little interest until now in its preservation as a dance of ethnographical interest.

Over time, the teaching of flamenco has become increasingly professionalised with the intention of placing it on a par with other dances, such as classical dance, and is now included among the formal aspects of professional dance teaching in Spanish Conservatories of Dance. To understand flamenco dance in this analysis means seeing it as part of the same indivisible framework that views dance as both an art and a physical activity, for which certain skills and conditions of a practical nature are required to train a professional in the field. Following Abdelmaji et al. [33], the professional's individual practical experience in the subject prior to teaching is intrinsic to its subsequent implementation in teaching, as is the case with physical education teachers. In other words, the acquisition of content through practice—the non-teaching professional experience of the flamenco dancer—becomes part of the content that will later be taught by an expert teacher in the subject. Loewenberg et al. puts it as follows:

> To make practice the core of the curriculum of teacher education requires a shift from a focus on what teachers know and believe to a greater focus on what teachers do. This does not mean that knowledge and beliefs do not matter but, rather, that the knowledge that counts for practice is that entailed by the work [34] (p. 503).

Authors such as Mary Omingo [35] argue that the first step that the teacher should take in the construction of her own pedagogical content knowledge is to consolidate, interrelate and systematise everything that was part of her own learning process. Special reference is made here to learning from participants, professional colleagues and other

aspects of the field of dance that could be construed as important in non-formal education and peer interactions.

A key idea in the professionalisation of the dance teacher, mentioned by a number of authors [36–38], is reflective practice as a formative activity of teaching staff. Petsilas et al. mention the importance of context:

> Reflective practice is hard to teach in isolation, as it has to happen in the context of an event. We have to reflect about something. Reflective practice is often conflated with reflexivity, which can be thought of as the next step on from reflection, as it implies a change in practice as a result of reflecting [26] (p. 20).

The reflective process in flamenco dance starts with strategies for linking theory and practice, in which knowledge is based on personal experience. The knowledge that underpins pedagogical teaching attitudes in action in the classroom is built upon this kind of systematic analysis [39].

Grossman et al. [40] developed an explanatory model for understanding the way in which pedagogies of practice in professional education should be taught, with three types of strategy in which the student learns what it means and then implements it in practice. A *representation* is the way a practice is presented to the students; *decomposition* involves recognising the main components of practice (in connection with teaching and learning methodologies); *approximations* of practice offer students opportunities for simulating professional practices. In dance, the figure of the *maestro* or mentor plays an important role, especially in non-formal education, private dance schools, and even the preservation of an artistic legacy in family-based transmission. It is essential, therefore, for the trainee teacher to reflect on her own practice and to bear in mind at all times the work developed by teachers with more years of experience [41].

We wondered when this reflection took place. In the context of flamenco, at what point is a teacher considered to be a maestro? What does the literature on the subject say about when and how they learn to teach?

For the testimonies of two major figures in the world of flamenco dance, reference can be made to Matilde Coral and Cristina Hoyos. Matilde Coral laid the foundations for teaching the *Escuela Sevillana* by introducing a discipline in flamenco dance in Andalusia. In a conversation taken from an interview for her book, *Tratado de la bata de Cola* (Treatise on the Flamenco Dress; the bata de cola is the flamenco dress featuring a train with many ruffles worn by flamenco dancers), she sets out her own conception of *maestro* by stating that, like experience, the *maestro* is formed over time: "Porque estamos otra vez en manos de grandes maestros, que se denominan ellos grandes maestros, y son jóvenes, jóvenes, y un joven no puede ser un gran maestro. Nunca. Nunca" (Because we are once again in the hands of great maestros, who refer to themselves as great maestros when they are [still] young, young, and a young person cannot be a great maestro. Never. Never.) [42] (p. 94).

Her testimony contains the idea that the complete development of the maestro hinges on teaching experience. This coincides with the opinion of Cristina Hoyos, a well-known *maestra* in the world of flamenco dance, both as a teacher and a professional performer. She explains that she did not stop learning when she created her company, but that, even today, she "aprende de la gente joven que la rodea" (learns from the young people around her), considering that a maestra is constructed on a day-to-day basis, and defining learning, in her own words, as "una cuestión interior mía, de la capacidad que yo pueda tener, del interior y del sentimiento" (something to do with the inner me, of my potential capacity, what is inside me, my feelings" [43] (p. 13). Here, she is referring to the importance of continuous learning from her experiences throughout her life as a teacher of flamenco dance, enriching her knowledge and engaging in reflective practice.

In these two personal testimonies, there is a positive correlation between experience and the fully formed teacher, which allows us to state that the teacher becomes one through an experiential process that develops over the course of a professional career. The same idea is expressed in the literature by Vaillant and Marcelo, who refer to PCK as "un proceso evolutivo que comienza en la formación inicial, se prolonga en la práctica

docente y luego en el desarrollo profesional continuo" (an evolving process that begins in initial training, continues in the practice of teaching and then in ongoing professional development) [44] (p. 57).

Following Arias et al., we should consider pedagogical content knowledge as "un elemento central del conocimiento del profesor y resulta fundamental para promover el desarrollo profesional del profesorado e investigar sobre cómo mejorar la práctica docente" (a core element of the teacher's knowledge, fundamental to promoting the professional development of teachers and studying how to improve the practice of teaching) [45] (p. 8). In accordance with this approach, therefore, and applying it to our subject of study, we should view the way flamenco dance is taught as an amalgam of professional and personal factors, which include "conocimientos, destrezas, actitudes, expectativas y perspectivas . . . influenciada por la cultura institucional donde se desarrolle" (knowledge, skills, attitudes, expectations and perspectives . . . and influenced by the culture of the institution in which it is carried out) [45] (p. 8). In general terms, it can be said that there is no real reason why the construction of PCK in flamenco dance has to be any different from that in the exact sciences, since, in the end, teachers have to construct their own particular PCK before they can deploy the individual pedagogical strategies that enhance and reinforce the way they teach.

The general opinion of both Matilde Coral and Cristina Hoyos when it comes to continuous development and true learning in flamenco is very similar. Their biographies reveal that they were both taught, albeit at different times, by the same *maestra*, Adelita Domínguez, who trained and nurtured most of the female flamenco artistes of Seville of her time. According to Arias [45], and extrapolating to the world of flamenco, most teachers without previous pedagogical training learn how to teach, either through their own efforts or by following a model. Adelita Domínguez is a prime example of the teaching ideal shared by the artistes mentioned above. Along the same lines, other sources relate that the female flamenco dancers of yesteryear did not have pedagogical training. Accordingly, inexperienced teachers with no pedagogical knowledge, but with an extensive professional background and sufficient experience and knowledge of the subject, taught the subjects in the same way that they had studied them.

Other ideas involved in the construction of PCK mentioned by Schubert et al. [46] in a study conducted among teachers on an undergraduate nursing program who had not previously received teacher training included the value of continuous learning, ongoing support, advice and being mentored by more experienced teachers. It was stated that there was no process of mentoring by more experienced teachers with knowledge of subject content and that each teacher experienced the process differently depending on the opportunities for teaching–learning relationships available to them.

After analysing these various theories and points of view, and given that there is nothing specific written down about how to dance flamenco, we considered that the professionalisation of flamenco dance teaching—including the teaching of flamenco studies in master's degrees in Andalusian universities and official qualifications for experts in this art—should proceed by consolidating its foundations and configuring the didactics of flamenco in order to be able to teach it. This then prompted the question of whether those who teach flamenco dance were ready for the challenges of contemporary shifts in educational paradigms.

Research carried out by Baneviciutė [47] provided some insights from the training of Lithuanian dance teachers of what happened when the perspective of the teacher's role shifted from the dissemination of knowledge to the development of students' critical and creative thinking and acting skills. When the opinions of a total of fifty-nine pre-service teachers in five training programs for professional dance teachers were collected, the responses showed that they were well trained in concepts and knowledge, but insufficiently prepared to address the new educational paradigms.

Consequently, in order to train future citizens to play an active role in society, the teacher should be ready to bring about the necessary paradigm shifts in education [41]

(p. 29). To become a competent teacher, the professionalisation of flamenco teaching must require those who teach it to have the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to reinforce their existing didactic, educational and curricular knowledge of the discipline. To improve the quality of teaching, it is necessary to design further research studies that can help to distinguish between the good teacher and the expert in the subject.

Given the lack of studies focusing on the construction of PCK in flamenco teaching, the rest of this study will make a start in this area in order to professionalise the work of the flamenco dance teacher. Our emphasis is three-fold: to analyse where and how flamenco dance teachers acquired their subject content; the role of reflective practice in transforming or professionalising the teaching of dancers; the importance of the figure of the maestro or mentor in the transition from novice to expert, bearing in mind that pedagogical training can start in formal and non-formal settings where education in the flamenco arts may be construed in different ways.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Research Objectives

The main objectives of this specific study of the process of construction of pedagogical content knowledge among teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco* are as follows:

- General objective:

To determine the process of construction of pedagogical content among women teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco*.

- Specific objectives:

To identify stages of professionalisation in these teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana* starting from their training as dancers to consolidation as expert teachers.

To analyse perspectives on the construction of pedagogical content knowledge among teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco*.

To describe how teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana* learned to teach.

3.2. Research Design and Procedure

To describe the process of PCK construction, a qualitative research methodology was used, centring on an analysis of the set of teachers teaching the specific dance style (the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco*). Qualitative research is often used in the social and behavioural sciences to study people, their behaviour and real-world phenomena; it looks for meanings in social relations from the point of view of the participants, allowing for a fuller description of the subject's experiences, life lessons, feelings and the meaning of those experiences [48].

The aim of our qualitative research was to carry out an in-depth exploration of the study phenomena in their natural environment, in order to extract the data that shape meanings that allow us to analyse multiple subjective realities, forming an inductive process of knowledge construction [49]. A multiple case study approach was used to "investigar en profundidad distintos casos que pueden ser sujetos, situaciones, organizaciones, etc" (investigate quite different cases, whether subjects, situations, organisations, etc. in depth) [50] (p. 116), with the intention of describing the particularities and specific details of one or more observable phenomena in their real-world contexts, where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly drawn.

3.3. Selection of Subjects

The selected teachers comprise, at present, the entire population of teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana*, between Seville and Madrid, the existence of this style of dance being unknown in other regions. In order to contact only those professionals who continue to teach this style of classical flamenco dance, we used two main criteria. First, we approached the only school in Spain that preserves and teaches flamenco dance in the style of the *Escuela Sevillana*, the Matilde Coral Approved Dance School, in Seville, where we contacted

the flamenco dance teachers directly. Secondly, we carried out an exhaustive search for those flamenco dancers considered to belong to the *Escuela Sevillana*, using the specific criteria established in the Resolution of 9 November 2011 of the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage in Seville, which registered the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile* in the General Catalogue of Andalusian Historical Heritage as an Activity of Ethnological Interest and an Asset of Cultural Interest, plus the technical file on the *Escuela Sevillana* of the Junta de Andalucia. Those women approached who did not consider themselves to be precursors of this style or who did not want to participate were excluded from the study. The selected dancers, all female, are expert teachers of this style of dance, but belong to a generation that has now retired from the stage.

To safeguard the confidentiality of the data obtained, initials are used in the results to protect the identity of interviewees.

3.4. Data Collection Instruments

The interview is one of the most widely used qualitative data collection techniques. For an in-depth analysis of the professional lives of our subjects set out in the study objectives, the biographical–professional type was selected.

A semi-structured interview was designed, based on a script with open-ended questions focusing on three main dimensions: teacher training, their initiation into teaching and their current role as teachers. Although each main block contained a series of questions in sequence, we primarily created a dialogue about the main issues that needed to be addressed. If the questions specified beforehand were not answered in the course of the conversation, they were then asked directly. The interviews proceeded in a smooth, natural way, and the interviewees were allowed to respond in narrative form. This meant that the order of the questions varied according to the interviewee's account.

The interviews were pre-designed to follow a content structure that served as an outline for data collection. The instrument was validated using the Delphi method; ten experts from the University of Seville contributed to the evaluation. The criteria used were the precision, clarity and appropriateness of the questions asked.

For the interview, each interviewee was first given a presentation about the study to be carried out, outlining the three blocks on which the interview was based. The interviews lasted between an hour and a half and two hours and were first recorded and then transcribed for data analysis and conclusions. A total of seven interviews were carried out over approximately 12 h.

3.5. Techniques and Data Analysis

The processing of the information was carried out in three separate stages (Table 1):

Table 1. Phases of the data analysis.

Phase 1	Transcription	Conversion of approximately 12 h of recorded interviews into text.
Phase 2	Categorisation	Conceptual classification of a series of concepts associated with the dimensions studied.
Phase 3	Codification	Assignment of different codes to the categories determined previously to facilitate the extraction of results and allow them to be combined in a simpler and more organised way for the subsequent interpretation of the data.

In the first phase of the analysis, the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed and the information entered into Atlas.ti 22 qualitative data analysis software. The second phase categorised the most significant issues explored in the interviews from which we hoped to extract meaningful data. The third phase consisted of codification, which was carried out using computer software that allowed us to process a large volume of information. This process was used to interpret the data on the phenomenon being studied.

4. Results

Three categories emerged from analysis of the data obtained for this study on the construction of PCK in teachers of the *Escuela sevillana de baile*: "professional training", "initiation into teaching" and "current teaching role".

In terms of age, the study participants belonged to two distinct generations. The first generation (55 years and over) comprised P.M., M.M. and R.C., and the second generation (under 55 years) included I.B., C.A., A.M. and A.G. This distinction was useful for grouping the results.

4.1. Career Path/Training of the Interviewees

From the analysis of the interviews, we found that the first generation of flamenco dancers were of the *Escuela Sevillana* style, that their professional training had been preceded by an informal education in the home or the local neighbourhood, and that their artistic education was not based on official qualifications. Of greater importance was the achievement of individual prizes, such as national dance prizes, which conferred a certain amount of prestige. The testimonies of this first generation show that they had not received any teaching preparation or pedagogical training.

In terms of stages of professionalisation, the major difference between the first and second generation of dancers was that the second set of dancers had received pedagogical training in teaching and learning methods, lesson planning, teaching strategies and so on, thereby acquiring both an artistic education in the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco* and a formal education. A common denominator of both generations was that they had all been taught at the Matilde Coral School of Dance and been taught by Matilde Coral herself.

With respect to their professional artistic development, all except one of the first generation of flamenco dancers have had individual professional artistic careers of some importance. The exception was the daughter of Matilde Coral, who has devoted her whole life to teaching and continues, even today, to preserve the legacy inherited from her mother.

The second generation of artistes have spent their careers mainly in dance companies, which has given them personal and artistic prestige. Not all of them, however, have chosen to pursue their professional artistic careers, but rather to continue what they had done before, cultivating the family legacy through teaching.

They finished their studies at a very early age, between twelve and eighteen years old. An important detail is that they all combined their dance training almost simultaneously with their professional development as teachers:

> I.B.: "...es que yo todavía no había terminado mi carrera, era alumna y docente a la vez".
> (I hadn't even finished studying, I was a student and a teacher at the same time).

4.2. Initiation into Teaching

All of them, except two, started to teach at a very early age, before they had reached the age of majority, and without receiving any specific teacher training. The two exceptions were M.M. and P.M., who remained active in their artistic careers in the entertainment world, which prevented them from settling long enough to consolidate their teaching. They did not start to give classes until they were eighteen and twenty years old, respectively.

> A.M.: "...imagínate que yo tenía 12 años y allí había alumnas, eh, muchísimo mayores que yo, claro. Entonces, claro, es una niña, está allí dando sus prácticas de clase. Pues claro, era como de risa, la verdad". (Imagine it, I was twelve years old and there were students there, well, a lot older than I was, obviously. So, of course it's, 'she's [just] a girl, there she is giving practical classes'. Of course, it was a bit of a joke really).

For the transition from pupil to teacher, five of the seven interviewees not only started to give classes at the same time as they were being trained, but also taught at the Matilde Coral Dance school, either substituting for teachers, or as the répétiteurs of the *maestra*.

Another category analysed centres on accounts of their early teaching experiences. Most of these relate that they started to teach instinctively, without giving it much thought, and without even considering a specific method:

I.B.: "Empecé a dar clases sin plantearme muy bien cuál era mi metodología en absoluto. Claro, simplemente, pues imagino que empezaba. Empezaría imitando un poco lo que yo he recibido". (I started to give classes without really thinking about my methodology at all. Obviously, simply, well, I imagine I just started. I would have started by imitating a bit of what I had been taught).

Early difficulties in the classroom arose from these initial experiences. Only two of our interviewees encountered any difficulty, which turned out to be the same one, namely the lack of authority or respect deriving from the relative difference in age between the pupils and the teacher. Most of our participants, it should be noted, were younger than some of their pupils, which made it difficult for them to conduct the class in a natural way.

When asked how they made the content teachable, they all made two main observations. Firstly, they remembered how it had been taught to them and followed a model, and secondly, five of the seven interviewees said that they adopted the role of the pupil to see how they might understand it better:

C.A.: "Me ponía en el lugar del alumno, yo como alumna, yo como a mí, cómo me gustaría que me explicase, yo cómo entendería eso? Siempre me he puesto en el lugar del alumno, siempre era muy jovencita y todavía era alumna, ya que creo que eso también es importante". (I put myself in the pupil's place, with me as the pupil, and me as me; how would I like it to be explained to me, how would I understand that? I have always put myself in the pupil's place, I was always very young and still a pupil, because I think that that too is important).

A related question that we had to specify in order to clarify their responses was how they learned to be teachers, or how they became a teacher, or how they learned to teach. All our interviewees were unanimous, using the same terminology in their responses:

R.C.: "Yo me valgo de mi conocimiento natural. Sabe de lo que se ha hecho siempre en casa. Verdad que yo no he seguido nunca un método. Ha sido todo visual y lo que he ido poniendo en orden conmigo. Yo sí que es verdad que yo siempre que me enfrento a una clase me pongo en el plano del alumno antes que todo ¿Qué me gustaría qué necesitaría para que me entienda?" (I make use of my native knowledge. You know about what has always been done at home. I have never really followed a method. It's all been visual and what I've been putting together myself. Certainly, whenever I am in front of a class, I always put myself on the student's level before anything else. What would I like, what would it take to understand me?)

C.A.: "Pues yo me he hecho profesora sin darme cuenta. A mí nadie, a mí nadie ha entrado conmigo y me ha dicho Tienes que aplicar esto, tú tienes que hacer esto, tiene que. A mí nadie me enseñaba eso. Yo solita. Poco a poco, viendo". (Well, I became a teacher without realizing it. Nobody, nobody has ever come up to me and told me 'You have to apply this, you have to do that, you have to . . .' Nobody taught me that. It was just me on my own. Little by little, by looking).

4.3. Role as Teacher

To examine the role of the teacher in our study, we used lesson planning as one of our most important criteria. These teachers state that they do not follow a fixed lesson plan or structure, but tend to copy a model lesson, *"primero su calentamiento, después su poquito de técnica y por último variaciones y coreografía"* (first, warm up, then a bit of technique, and finally, variations and choreography). They did, however, specify that this varies depending on the type of student, and most importantly, on the institution or curriculum that applies where they give classes.

A.M.: "te tienes que adaptar como te adaptas en la vida a cualquier situación, porque te tienes que adaptar, pero realmente es muy difícil. Es muy difícil eh!" (You have to adapt the way you have to adapt to any situation in life, because you have to adapt, but it is really very difficult. It's very difficult, you know!).

With respect to teaching strategies, the majority of teachers have adopted a flexible approach, where the Bloom taxonomy is at the centre of the learning process, including in the planning of the class. At the same time, we have also found a more rigid approach, explained by one participant as follows. In order to really steep oneself in the *Escuela Sevillana*, it is not necessary to start from previous knowledge, but it is essential to forget what has been learnt in order to build new ways of feeling flamenco:

M.M.: "el conocimiento que tenga el alumno lo tiene que aparcar. Fíjate que todo lo contrario de lo que la gente cree que mira tiene que aparcar todos sus conocimientos y ahora yo le voy a enseñar otra técnica más. Entonces, para que amplíe su conocimiento". (Any knowledge the pupil has, they've got to put to one side. You see, it's like the very opposite of what people think they have to look at, they have to put everything they know to one side, and now I'm going to show them another technique. So, they can broaden their knowledge).

The rest of the participants adapt to the requirements of their pupils:

R.C: "yo lo único que cambio es cuando me cambia la gente que tengo detrás, según el nivel y según. Lo que pasa es que eso de los niveles es relativo" (Me, the only thing I change is when the people behind me change, depending on their level and so on. The thing about levels is that they are relative).

C.A.: "yo siempre intentaba organizarlo como yo, como yo lo hacía en mis clases personales. Pero sí es verdad que bueno, que siempre el alumno, el alumno, el que te va marcando un poquito la pauta, el nivel, el nivel que tenga esa clase en ese momento, después, individualmente, cada alumno, claro, el alumno, el que te va marcando un poquito la pauta". (I always used to try and organise it the way, the way I used to do it in my private classes. But it's also true that, well, it's always the student, the student, who sets your standard to some extent, the level, the level of that class at that time, and after that, each individual student, obviously, the student is the one who continues to set your standard).

The teacher–student relationship is presented in all the interviews as a close, warm, supportive and understanding relationship, with many interviewees using the term "emotions", which came up in a large part of the interviews. As a result, we were obliged to codify it, since it was essential for them as teachers to understand the student in their context, to understand their situation in order to be able to get the very best out of them.

One of the most important categories for our study objectives was to find out whether there were different stages, or phases, between their beginnings in teaching and their consolidation as a teacher or maestro. When asked, our interviewees responded that that there were stages, but were unable to specify explicitly what those stages were. Some of them told us that there was an initial stage, then a period of stagnation when they needed to retrain. Finally, we talked about the consolidation of teaching, when everything runs smoothly, and their knowledge and current role are shaped by experience:

A.M.: "porque yo la verdad que gracias a lo a la experiencia, no, a lo que tú vas viviendo como la parte docente, si vas aprendiendo con los años, o sea, no tiene nada que ver. Cuando yo empecé a dar clases a como actualmente he. Tú en parte. No, no tiene absolutamente nada que ver" (...) "tú eso lo tienes intrínseco, porque como tú, como tu educación no, la persona que tiene una educación ahora cambia de a otra y y se tiene que adaptar. Entonces yo creo que es un poco eso". (Because, honestly, it is thanks to experience, to what I have been going through as a teacher, learning over the years. In other words, what I can say is that the teacher I was when I started out has nothing to do with who I am now. No, it has absolutely nothing to do with

it" (. . .) "You've got it inside you, like your education, right. So, I think it's a bit like you are unconsciously copying what you have learnt and that's what you do when you are a teacher).

A.G.: "Y también hay una etapa de estancamiento. También hay un momento en el que necesitas, que es verdad, que estás avanzando, pero tú ves que necesitas más. Yo creo que todas hemos pasado por eso y ese es el momento en el que tú vuelves a tomar clase o formarte. De algún modo te reciclas". (And there's also a period of stagnation. There is also a time when what you need, it's true, you are making progress, but you can see that you need more. I think we've all been through that, and that's the time when you go back to take a class or get some training. Somehow you update yourself).

The changes currently taking place in education was another category that we looked at when analysing the interviews. All of them mentioned that they had experienced significant changes in the interest and motivation of students, emphasising especially the excess of information and the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the public who go to classes.

The purpose of teaching was another aspect that was discussed. All the results agreed that it was important to convey the way of feeling flamenco, which is linked to the aesthetics and the plasticity of movement that characterise the *Escuela Sevillana*.

Finally, we tried to identify teaching needs, the need for pedagogical training for teachers, but only those who had received it were able to grasp how useful the contents can be when applied in the classroom:

C.A.: "tengo que decir que cuando hice lo del módulo del superior, sí, sí es verdad que había algunas cosas que me ayudaron mucho bien, me ayudaron mucho, por ejemplo, lo de lo de realizar una unidad didáctica. Eso sí es verdad que yo inconscientemente ya no tengo la necesidad de escribirla y del objetivo y del contenido no tengo necesidad. Pero sí es verdad que eso me ayuda a, por ejemplo, a dirigir, como tener un guion". (I must say that when I did the higher education module, yes, yes, there were some things that helped me a lot, they helped me a lot, for example, the thing about creating a didactic unit. It's true that I don't consciously need to write it down anymore, and the objective and the content, I don't need that. But yes, it does help me to, for example, direct the class, like having a script).

5. Discussion and Conclusions

We conclude by stating that the teaching approach of these maestras is based on their own learning experience and years of professional development, enabling them to become experts in their field. This wealth of accumulated knowledge acquired through multiple channels, especially in the informal sphere, has had a major influence on their teaching strategies. The absence of regulated studies when these teachers were trained meant that their training in the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco* began in informal education. At that time, there was no organised, coordinated system of artistic education.

Today, the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile Flamenco* is part of non-formal education. In one of its flagship schools, the Matilde Coral Approved Dance Centre, there is a course programme with annual planning of its specific studies designed by the current teaching staff. Those who teach the *Escuela Sevillana* style of dance also teach in other regulated institutions across Spain: the Professional Dance Conservatory of Seville, the Higher Conservatory of Dance in Madrid, the Cristina Heeren Foundation of Flamenco Art, the Matilde Coral Approved Dance Centre, as well as in a variety of dance conservatories. At the same time, they also continue to work in the informal sphere, both in dance schools and in major international festivals that participate in the cultural transmission of flamenco heritage.

One important outcome of this research was to find that these teachers almost instinctively use knowledge of developmental psychology in their daily teaching practice. Following Samper and Ramírez [20], we believe that these teachers have learned from their experiences by reflecting on the way they teach, making their learning a significant

experience through which they have acquired competences that they have been able to develop in their professional activity. Like Rodríguez [51] (p. 279), they all affirm that their experiential learning has played an essential role in socio-educational reconstruction.

Even though all of them agree that the essential part of their training as teachers was based on their practical experience, we cannot state that they followed the same teaching/learning methodology, because each teacher had a different experience, resulting in a unique praxis. We agree with Fuentes, when she points to the importance of considering learning as a process of reflective knowledge construction that gives meaning to lived experiences [24] (p. 838). What we have been investigating is the modus operandi; in other words, how each person has acquired knowledge informally (not through books and manuals) and transformed it, extracting content from what they have learnt in order to design their own way of teaching.

Another characteristic that we noted in each of the teachers interviewed was the extent to which their teaching is personalised. In support of this approach, Gleason and Rubio state that, "para que el alumnado sea el protagonista activo del aprendizaje, es necesario implementar estrategias y métodos didácticos que generen experiencias vivenciales significativas las cuales contribuyan a desarrollar las competencias deseadas" (in order for students actively participate in their learning process, it is necessary to implement strategies and didactic methods that generate meaningful life experiences that help to develop the desired competences) [52] (p. 266). These ideas are in line with the theory of David Ausubel [53], when he says that the learner's inner processes (cognition, psychology and physiology) are structured in accordance with the main socialisation factors (culture, family, social and economic context, among others) with which he/she interacts and develops. And, as Rodrigo Rodríguez recounts, "Muchos investigadores han estudiado las diferentes variables que afectan el proceso de aprendizaje en los estudiantes y han propuesto diversas teorías, entre otras se destaca la idea de que los estudiantes aprenden de forma diferente, por lo que el ejercicio de la enseñanza debería realizarse en consecuencia." (Many researchers have studied the different variables that affect the learning process in students and have put forward various theories; among other things, a key idea is that students learn differently, so that the teaching exercise should be conducted accordingly) [54] (p. 54).

While certain features of the *Escuela Sevillana* are laid down as basic tenets that all teachers must adhere to, such as the style, aesthetics and the grace and expressiveness of movement, the close nature of the teacher/student relationship should also be highlighted. The teachers get to know their pupils well as individuals, and the relationship goes beyond the time spent in the classroom.

Returning to the research objectives previously established for this study, we can now provide answers by way of conclusions. Firstly, we concentrated on the stages of professionalisation of teachers of the *Escuela Sevillana de Baile* from their early days in teaching until maturity or retirement. The interviews showed that, in the first stage, which we can call a "practical stage", the teacher taught without consciously thinking about it, concentrated on mere execution or repetition of previous models, and put herself in the student's shoes in order to resolve a variety of classroom situations.

Secondly, there was a stage of "retraining and professional restlessness", in which, after several years of teaching, were driven by curiosity and need to continue their training, either through videos, taking courses or watching different shows and performances that nourished the teacher's creativity. According to Arias,

> "La experiencia práctica es una de las fuentes más importantes en el aprendizaje docente; a medida que el docente conoce nuevos casos y situaciones va profundizando y cualificando su saber práctico. Cuando el docente adquiere el hábito de reflexionar su práctica logra que ésta se convierta en fuente y origen de conocimiento".

> Practical experience is one of the most important sources of teacher learning; as teachers encounter new cases and situations, they deepen and refine their

practical knowledge. When teachers acquire the habit of reflecting on their practice, it becomes a source and origin of knowledge [45] (p. 10).

Finally, we found a stage prior to retirement, the last fifteen years of teaching, where we can see the accumulated experience that drives professional activity. This is the "stage of consolidation" as a maestra. We should understand, therefore, that "el conocimiento didáctico del contenido es un elemento central del conocimiento del profesor y resulta fundamental para promover el desarrollo profesional del profesorado e investigar sobre cómo mejorar la práctica docente" (pedagogical content knowledge is a central component of the teacher's knowledge and indispensable for promoting the professional development of teachers and investigating how to improve teaching in practice) [55] (p. 8).

To conclude, it is important to highlight the importance of reflective practice in education in order to achieve a level of professional development commensurate with current educational needs. Flamenco education is a field of study with innumerable topics that can be reflected upon and researched in the educational sphere. According to Padalkar et al. [55], constructivist processes in teaching and learning praxis are the result of a compendium of studies that bring together aspects of cognitive, developmental psychology and human development, pedagogical knowledge of subject content and socio-cultural approaches to learning. From these are derived the empirical criteria that emphasise the need for scientific dissemination on the continuum of teacher learning, learning by doing and the job of the teacher as an active agent in the teaching–learning process.

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