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Direct from the Connoisseurs: Articulating Philippine Folk Dance Documentation Practices

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Abstract: In the Philippines, most people believe that culture depicts dancing as part of customs and traditions, mode of expression, leisure activity, entertainment, and profession. Folk dances have been a part of Philippine culture which makes the country unique from others and have been preserved through documentation. The unavailability of a framework/guideline for folk dance documentation significantly affects the preservation and propagation of Philippine folk dances. Dance authorities, educators, and enthusiasts need effective, innovative, and quality means of documentation process to produce the best results or output.

This research aims to study the Philippine folk dances documentation practices. This research was conducted with the aim that the results, evaluation, recommendations, and implications will help the various segments of the education, community, and Philippine culture along with its contribution to planning, development, and implementation. This paper utilized the qualitative narrative analysis research design. Interviews from purposively selected folk dance authorities in the Philippines made by audio-video recording were transcribed, coded, analyzed, compared, and interpreted.

Findings revealed that the folk dance documentation practices in the Philippines involve ethical consideration, methodology, actual dance documentation, evaluation, and output. Through the different documentation methods and autochthonous practice, dance enthusiasts would be able to learn and understand further the multitude forms and styles of their field. The establishment of a dance academy concentrated on specialized training program for the cultural and folk dances with the patronage of the national government would substantially advance the level of inclusive cultural understanding, growth, and development.

Key Words: *Philippine folk dances; dance documentation; folk dance documentation practices*

1. INTRODUCTION

Philippine folk dances are as old as the history itself which at present generation are rarely seen. The unavailability of a framework/guideline for folk dance documentation in the country affects the preservation and propagation of our rich Filipino folk dances depicting our beloved culture, customs, and traditions.

Dance Heritage Coalition, Inc. (2006) stated that dance being the highest form of art receives the least number of research outputs, merely, because of the lack of availability of resources as well as very few individuals who are passionately want to do research and documentation. The organization also noted that “with good record-keeping of the role of dance in art and culture, scholars can better develop both the theory and the criticism that will ensure dance’s place in the academe”.



Related study of Smigel (2006) that reliable records of dance could further aid in the reconstruction of dances that are culturally obsolete and have been discharged from the present repertoire confirms the need for this kind of study. Through different documentation methods, dance enthusiasts would be able to learn and understand further the multitude forms and styles of their field.

Moreover, the road map of arts education (UNESCO, 2006) emphasized that dance is in the process of continuous solution and development. The lack of readily accessible body of information is deemed as a major setback for improving practice, influencing policy making, and integrating the arts into educational systems. Hence, it is significant that a current investigation on its present state be conducted.

Dance authorities, educators, and enthusiasts need effective, innovative, and quality means of documentation process to produce the best results or output. This research was conducted with the aim that the results, evaluation, recommendations, and implications will help the various segments of the education, community, and Philippine culture along with its contribution to planning, development, and implementation.

The legal basis of this study was anchored from Article 14, Section 18 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution entitled, Education, Science and Technology, Arts, Culture and Sports, (De Leon & De Leon, 2014) which states that: "(1) The State shall ensure equal access to cultural opportunities through the educational system, public or private cultural entities, scholarships, grants and other incentives, and community cultural centers, and other public venues. (2) The State shall encourage and support researches and studies on the arts and culture."

This research topic aims to create a Philippine folk dance documentation framework or process of documenting folk dances in the country, facilitate communication, and suggest folk dance documentation output. Information results of this study may help various fields of education and community in terms of academic, professional, leisure, and recreational development, planning and implementation.

Dance research can be used to demonstrate the strengths of a comprehensive dance curriculum in addressing educational needs. Topics such as problem-solving ability, self-concept, and holistic approaches to learning can be included in the dance research agenda.

Findings of such research could help build the case for the inclusion of dance, as well as the other arts, in education (Young, 1992). Dance experts, well-known choreographers, prominent dance companies, government and private educational authorities, researchers, and dance enthusiasts are important to this study to give insights, expert opinions, experiences, scientific knowledge, and remarkable comments, suggestions and recommendations.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Design

The purpose of this descriptive study is to explore the Philippine folk dance documentation practices, its considerations, issues, and challenges, and existing Philippine folk dance documentation outcome dissemination. The researcher utilized the qualitative-narrative analysis design to conduct the study with the aim of constructing a framework of information from data. This study used semi-structured questions that inculcated significant context of information from data and latter analyzing deeper with the used of related literature and studies.

The descriptive narrative analysis is designed to reveal a target audience's range of perceptions that directed responses with reference to specific problems or issues. The researcher elicited stories of experiences and events from people in order to gain access to their feelings and thoughts and to the way they make sense of and interpret their experiences (Jones, Brown, & Holloway, 2013). The narrative inquiry which is an umbrella term that captures personal and human dimensions of experience and perceptions over time, and takes account of the relationship between individual's or group experience and cultural context (Domingo, 2014).



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The researcher systematically gathered, analyzed, and represented informants' opinions which challenge traditional and modernist views of truth, reality, and knowledge based on their experiences. This research described the depth experiences and/or expert opinions of the informants. The researcher opted and prioritized the results obtained through interview to collect information that are significant to the study.

2.2 Selection and Study Site

Morse (2007) noted that while the data collection and analysis are two processes that cannot be separated, excellent data are obtained through judicious sampling. This includes the importance of locating excellent participants to obtain excellent data and sampling techniques that must be targeted and efficient. The sampling schemes changed dynamically during the development process of research. The qualitative samples included processes of purposeful selection according to specific parameters identified in the study.

The researcher used non-probability sampling methods (Morse, 2007) that include (1) convenience, (2) purposive, (3) snowball, and (4) group interviews. The researcher utilized convenience sampling based on the accessibility of the informants. This method of sampling was used at the beginning of a project to identify the scope, major components, and trajectory of the overall process (Richards & Morse 2007). The purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) is a type of non-probability sampling technique revealed how informants gone through the particular stages of folk dance documentation. Snowball sampling ensured to get the best information from credible informants through referral of participants, while the group interviews provided further examples of the findings, expanded on, and verified the emerging concepts (Morse, 2007).

Ethical consideration was highly considered to meet the utmost confidentiality and protection of the informants declaring approved letter of information, waiver, and consent form. Sample size was based on the number of key informants who are available for interview.

As the study aims to determine the best practices of documenting Philippine folk dances, the researcher sought answers from dance authorities connected with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP), Philippine Folk Dance Society (PFDS), leading folk dance companies in the Philippine such as the Philippine Baranggay Folk Dance Troupe (PBFDT) and Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG), curriculum experts of Department of Education (DepEd) and Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and other informants with relevant experiences in Philippine folk dance documentation.

Patton (2002) stated that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, and the sample size depends on what one wants to know". Over-all, six (6) folk dance authorities and two (2) leading dance companies with four to five informants each, voluntarily (with consent) agreed to participate in the study. Furthermore, a social science research supervisor and three (3) educational management research experts provided assistance for the completion of this study.

The first round of interview of solo folk dance informants was conducted during 37th Philippine National Folk Dance Workshop from May 22-26, 2017 held in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippines. The group interviews were conducted on the preferred date given by the informants held in their respective dance rehearsal venue. Validations of findings were conducted through follow-up interview and electronic communication such as e-mails, phone calls, and other personal communication.

2.3 Instrumentation, Data Collection, and Mode of Analysis

With high regard to the prior ethical consideration process, interview semi-structured questions constructed based from "a priori codes" (De Guzman, 2015) were prepared by the researcher for the purpose of gathering data. The semi-structured guide questions were used so that the respondents may provide answers with ease and as well as to collect the relevant and appropriate responses needed for the study.



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In-depth interview (IDI) and focus group discussion (FGD) were employed to selected dance authorities, as well as to selected research expert interface to come-up with the output of the present study and to meet the criteria of triangulation, not to mention the critical analysis of related literature and studies. Field notes, transcriptions, memo, and diagrams of the researcher were very significant during the research process in obtaining significant concepts findings related to the study.

For the data gathering, the researcher used emails, smart phones, computer, and video-recording camera setting appointment with the authorities and experts and to ensure the needs for the interview to be able to hear the voice and responses of the informants. The researcher of this study obtained written permit and approval to conduct the study to the informants/dance authorities during 37th Philippine National Folk Dance Workshop from May 22-26, 2017 held in Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, Philippines. Likewise, the same was conducted to the focus group discussion with leading folk dance companies in the Philippines, the Philippine Barangay Folk Dance Troupe (PBDFT) and Ramon Obusan Folkloric Group (ROFG).

The narrative analysis was applied which extends the idea of analysing written text to that of the viewing narrations as text, whether in naturally occurring conversations or in interviews (Glesne, 2011; Silverman, 2013). Interviews made by audio-video recording were transcribed, analysed, compared, and interpreted using Wolcott's (1994) "Transforming qualitative data" reducing data by (1) organizing, (2) familiarizing, (3) categorizing, and (4) coding that describes analysis on agreed – upon knowledge, the recognition of mutually recognized properties which are inherently conservative, careful, and systematic (Domingo, 2014).

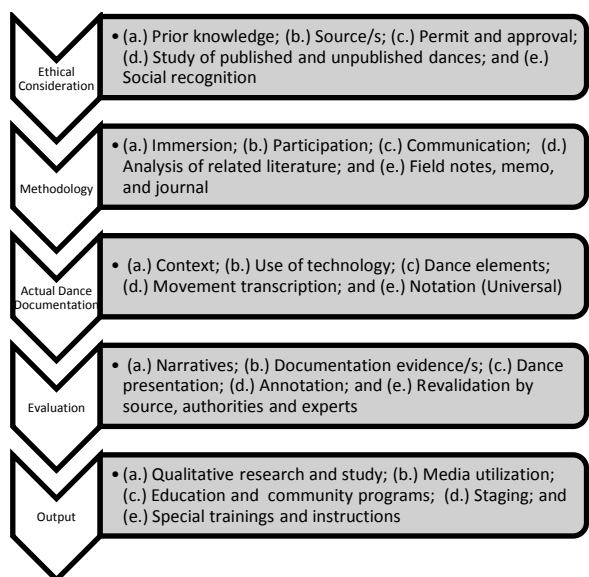
Conversely, the researcher at first organized the category of the interview based on their expertise and its importance to the study. Second, the researcher familiarized the answers of the informants by listening and reading the transcription for multiple times. Third, the researcher analyzed, compared, and core categorized the concepts of the narratives collected related to the study. Finally, the researcher coded the important concepts emerged on the interview.

Terminating data collection (Morse, 2007) sampling ceased the time of data collection the point it reached its saturation. Theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) refers to the part of the research process that there were no more emerging new concepts about the study. Theoretical sensitivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) was utilized in giving meaning to the gathered data that pertains to the attribute of having significant insight pertinent to the study.

The investigator of this study documented its research procedure for reliability. The validity of the data analysis was formulated based on its refutability principle, the constant comparative method, comprehensive data treatment, deviant case analysis, and using appropriate tabulations (the researcher used framework analysis rather than tabulations), (Silverman, 2013).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Through the critical procedure of this study from the visualization and conceptualization to verbalization of the informants, the *Proposed Philippine Folk Dance Documentation Framework* emerged (see Figure below). Interestingly, the framework depicts a variety of concepts about the Philippine folk dance documentation process.





Ethical Consideration

The ethical consideration relates to the significant elements that must be secured before field work of folk dance documentation. This core category is made up of (1) prior knowledge, (2) types of sources, (3) permit and approval, (4) study of published and unpublished studies, and (5) social recognition.

Methodology

Methodology is the core category name given to the significant concepts emerged in this particular group classification. This implies the various ways of folk dance documentation in general. This includes (1) immersion, (2) participation, (3) communication, (4) analysis of related literature, and (5) use of field notes, memo, and journal.

Actual Dance Documentation

This core category consists of denoting concepts such as (1) context, (2) use of technology, (3) dance elements, (4) movement transcription, and (5) notation system as emerged from the research process. Actual dance documentation is defined here as the utilization of specific tools necessary for folk dance documentation.

Evaluation

Evaluation is hereby defined as the validation process of emerged dance documentation tools. The said tools were previously discussed in the actual dance documentation core category of this study. This core category consists of denoting concepts such as (1) dance narratives, (2) dance documentation evidences of the used technology, (3) dance presentation, (4) dance annotation, and (5) revalidation by source, authorities, and experts.

Output

Output is a core category title given to the end product of transforming or disseminating the documented folk dance outcomes. Dance documentation transformation or dissemination ran through the process of evaluation of all documented folk dance materials leads to such (1) qualitative researches or research-based outcomes, (2) media utilization, (3) education and community dance programs, (4) dance staging, and (5) special trainings.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Philippine folk dances at present generation should not yield to the trends of acculturation. Some of these folk dances are mostly seen during cultural performances, entertainment, and cultural diplomacy exchange. The opportunities and threats of utilization of technological equipment and advancement provide advantages and disadvantages for the people conducting folk dance documentation.

For dance authorities, scholars, performing artists, enthusiasts, teachers, and students, with deep appreciation for the promotion and preservation of the rich Philippine folk dances, dance documentation is a form of retrieval to take one step towards understanding the window to the complex history of the Philippines showcasing customs, culture, and traditions. Propagating documented folk dances may be done through partnership, trainings, research dissemination, media utilization, inclusion in education curricula, community programs and services, and dance staging.

Indeed, there is a need to revitalize the program of Philippine folk dances starting from academic curricula to cultural understanding and development. It is integral to employ the expertise of people who are directly and indirectly may give significant contribution for the promotion and preservation of Philippine folk dances.



It is also imperative that with a proposed dance documentation framework or guidelines, dance scholars can conduct more documentation of unpublished research dances and better develop both the theory and the criticism that will ensure dance's place in the academe. Furthermore, with different documentation methods and autochthonous practice, dance enthusiasts would be able to learn and understand further the multitude forms and styles of their field. The establishment of a dance academy concentrated on specialized training program for the cultural as well as creative dances through the patronage of the national government would advance the level of inclusive cultural understanding, growth, and development of Philippine dances. In addition, dance research should also be rigorously encouraged and funded with support provisions.

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