VARNA FREE UNIVERSITY
"CHERNORIZETS HRABAR"

FACULTY OF
ARCHITECTURE

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS

TEODORA MARINCHEVA STANEVA

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN DANCE IN THE SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the educational and scientific degree of doctor, professional field 8.3 "Music and Dance Art", doctoral programme "Choreography"

Supervisor:
Assoc. Prof. Dr Ivaylo Ivanov

Varna, 2026 г.

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Prof. Dr Maria Kardzhieva

Prof. Dr Anna Pampulova

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The dissertation comprises an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion and nineteen appendices, totalling 484 pages. The main text contains four tables and three figures. The list of references comprises 139 titles in Bulgarian, Russian and English, and 24 online sources.

The author of the doctoral dissertation is a doctoral student pursuing an independent research programme in the Department of Arts at the Faculty of Architecture of Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar “.

The dissertation was discussed and approved for public defence at a meeting of the Department of Arts, Faculty of Architecture, Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar “.

The public defence of the dissertation will take place on 23 November 2026 at 10.00 in the conference room of Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar”. The defence materials are available from the Department of Arts office at Varna Free University “Chernorizets Hrabar” and on the University website, under “Doctoral Students “.

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Introduction

The dissertation is devoted to the theoretical substantiation and practical structuring of vocational education in the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, within Bulgarian secondary education. At the centre of the study is the development of a comprehensive educational model that brings together historically established individual techniques, classical academic training, contemporary movement practices, theoretical knowledge, improvisation, composition and stage work within a unified pedagogical system.

The study proceeds through three levels. The first is historical and theoretical, tracing the origins and pedagogical value of the ideas of François Delsarte, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and Rudolf von Laban, as well as the techniques of Martha Graham, José Limón, Lester Horton and other figures in modern dance. The second is comparative, setting American, Russian and Bulgarian educational experience alongside one another. The third is regulatory and programme-oriented, culminating in a model for the organisation, content and interrelationships of subjects from Years 8 to 12 at the Konstantin Preslavsky Secondary School of Humanities and Arts in Varna.

A significant feature of the dissertation is that its author also devised the curricula analysed in the study. These are the first curricula for the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, to have been developed since the new Pre-school and School Education Act came into force in 2016. The study therefore does not merely describe a programme developed by another party; it identifies, systematises and critically examines the concept underpinning the author's own educational model.

The central research question is what curriculum content should be included in a contemporary school programme in modern dance, and how the individual disciplines should be connected so that pupils can develop simultaneously as technically proficient performers, creative thinkers and responsible stage professionals.

2. Relevance and significance of the research topic

The topic's relevance stems from the rapid development of modern and contemporary dance and the continual expansion of its techniques, creative practices and stage forms. In vocational education, this diversity makes scientifically grounded selection necessary. Without clear historical and terminological distinctions, there is a risk that the subject will become a mechanical collection of movements, styles and individual teachers' preferences, lacking continuity and shared criteria for learning outcomes

The contemporary professional environment requires dancers to master more than one movement system. Classical training continues to provide strength, axis, balance, coordination and discipline, while professional practice also calls for work with weight, gravity, breathing, floorwork, improvisation, composition, different styles and interdisciplinary stage forms. Training must therefore combine academic rigour with creative autonomy, technical precision with individual expressiveness, historical continuity with openness to new practices.

The topic has particular regulatory relevance following the entry into force of the Pre-school and School Education Act in 2016. The new framework emphasises competences, the practical application of knowledge, pupils' interests and abilities, innovation and institutional autonomy. Legislation, state educational standards and model curricula establish general aims, teaching hours and vocational outcomes, but do not automatically create pedagogical connections between subjects. The author's first curricula for the specialism, developed after the regulatory changes, address precisely this gap.

The study's academic significance lies in systematising the historical, terminological and methodological foundations of the subject Modern Dance, distinguishing modern dance from contemporary dance techniques, and formulating an applicable Bulgarian model through comparative analysis of different educational traditions. Its practical significance lies in the possibility of translating regulatory requirements

into specific curriculum content, a vertical progression, expected outcomes, cross-curricular coordination and holistic assessment.

The topic also has broader educational and social significance. Vocational dance education develops physical literacy, self-discipline, creative thinking, critical self-assessment, teamwork, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to communicate interpersonally and on stage. Developing a sustainable model for the specialism in Modern Dance therefore concerns not only vocational qualification but also pupils' personal and social development.

3. Object and subject of the research

The object of the research is the process of vocational education in the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, within the Bulgarian secondary education system.

The subject of the research comprises the historical, theoretical, methodological, regulatory and curricular foundations for creating, organising, teaching and improving dance subjects, as well as their functions and interrelationships within a comprehensive educational model for Years VIII to XII.

The specific programme area analysed includes the author's curricula for the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance; school and model curricula; Framework Programme B, option B4; the state educational standard for the occupation; and the applicable legislation. The institutional context is the Konstantin Preslavsky Secondary School of Humanities and Arts in Varna, considered as the setting in which the author's educational model emerged and developed.

4. Research problem

The research problem lies in the tension between the dynamic, individual and authorial nature of modern dance and the need for vocational school education to be regulated, coherent, age-appropriate and amenable to objective assessment. Artistic freedom of expression cannot be reduced to standardised reproduction, yet vocational training cannot

depend solely on the personal preferences and experience of an individual teacher.

The problem includes the need to identify the subject's enduring historical and technical core; distinguish the concepts "modern dance" and "contemporary dance techniques"; establish the place of classical ballet class; and arrange individual techniques according to their own conceptual and methodological logic. At the same time, a way must be found to introduce improvisation, composition, stage interpretation and contemporary practices gradually without disrupting technical progression.

A further aspect of the problem is the absence of automatically prescribed pedagogical links between subjects in regulatory documents. The model curriculum identifies disciplines and teaching hours, but does not determine how theory, history, classical, modern, contemporary and jazz dance, practical training, repertory, composition, acting, ensemble work and work placement should function as a unified system.

Accordingly**, the central research question may be formulated as follows: how can international historical and methodological experience, the Bulgarian regulatory framework and the author's curricula be brought together in a sustainable, adaptable and professionally applicable educational model for the specialism in Modern Dance?**

5. Author's thesis

The author's thesis is that effective vocational education in the specialism in Modern Dance is possible when it is organised as a pedagogical system that is grounded in regulation, vertically coherent and internally integrated. This system should combine an enduring historical and technical core with variable content that enables creative development and adaptation to changes in dance as an art form.

The thesis is specified through the view that historically established individual techniques should be taught through their origins, philosophy, terminology and movement principles; classical ballet class should

function as a complementary academic foundation; contemporary practices should broaden rather than erase the distinctiveness of modern systems; and improvisation and composition should develop progressively on the basis of body awareness, technical control and an accumulated movement vocabulary.

The vertical organisation from year VIII to year XII should be spiral in character: core concepts are introduced at the initial stages and revisited with increasing technical, analytical and creative complexity. The unity of subjects, shared terminology, coordination among teachers and holistic assessment are prerequisites for developing a professionally trained dancer who combines technical resilience, creative autonomy, stage readiness, healthy movement practices and the ability to work in a team.

The curricula developed by the author are the practical realisation of this thesis. Their scholarly examination in the dissertation demonstrates how the new regulatory philosophy introduced after 2016 can be translated into specific, coherent and adaptable curriculum content.

6. Aim and objectives of the dissertation

The aim of the dissertation is to substantiate and develop a conceptual educational model for creating, organising, teaching and improving dance subjects in the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, within Bulgarian secondary education. It does so by systematising their historical and methodological foundations and identifying regulatory-compliant links between curriculum content, vocational competences and stage practice.

The following main objectives have been set in **order to achieve this aim:**

1. To trace the historical preconditions for the emergence of modern dance and identify the ideas and systems of direct pedagogical relevance to secondary vocational education.

2. To systematise the principles, terminology and methodological logic of leading individual modern dance techniques.

3. To distinguish the concepts “modern dance” and “contemporary

dance techniques", clarify their methodological continuity, and explain the complementary role of classical training.

4. To examine and compare American, Russian and Bulgarian experience in organising and teaching dance disciplines, and identify principles applicable to the Bulgarian educational context.

5. To reconstruct the institutional and cultural-educational preconditions for the creation and development of the specialism in Modern Dance in Bulgaria and Varna.

6. To analyse the regulatory foundations of education following the entry into force of the Pre-school and School Education Act in 2016, including Framework Programme B, model curricula and option B4.

7. To conduct a curricular and content analysis of the author's curricula for Years 8 to 12 and establish their vertical progression, strengths, risks and opportunities for improvement.

8. To develop an integrated model of the interrelationships among technical, theoretical, creative, stage and vocational-practical training.

9. To formulate a comprehensive assessment system and the final competence profile of a pupil completing the specialism.

10. To identify pedagogical mechanisms for implementing, monitoring, updating and adapting the model to other model curricula and institutional contexts.

7. Research methodology

The research methodology is aligned with the aim, objectives and subject of the study. It is based on historical-theoretical and theoretical-methodological approaches through which the development of modern dance is examined in relation to the formation of its pedagogical systems and the need to institutionalise it as a school subject.

The following principal methods are applied:

1. **Historical-genetic analysis** - to trace the emergence, development and transformation of ideas, individual techniques and educational practices in modern and contemporary dance.

2. **Theoretical and terminological analysis** - to clarify the concepts

“modern dance”, “contemporary dance”, “individual technique”, “school subject” and “educational model”, and identify their pedagogical meanings.

3. **Comparative-pedagogical analysis** - to compare American, Russian and Bulgarian educational experience and determine principles that may be adapted to Bulgarian secondary vocational education.

4. **Documentary and regulatory analysis** -.to examine legislation, state educational standards, ordinances, framework and model curricula, ministerial orders and school curricula.

5. **Content analysis of curricula** -.to examine the aims, thematic areas, expected outcomes, teaching hours, progression and cross-curricular links in the author’s curricula for years 8 to 12.

6. **Systems-structural** and functional analysis - to determine the place and functions of individual subjects and the links between technical, theoretical, creative, stage and vocational training.

7. **Pedagogical analysis and structuring** - to construct a vertically and spirally organised conceptual model comprising invariant and variable cores, stages of training, coordination mechanisms and an assessment system.

8. **Analytical synthesis and critical reflection on professional experience** - to connect theoretical and regulatory findings with the practice of introducing and teaching the subject Modern Dance.

The author’s dual position—as creator of the curricula analysed and as researcher of the model embedded in them—is methodologically significant. It provides direct access to the logic behind their development. The analysis of the curricula is set against regulatory documents, specialist literature, international educational models, the internal vertical progression of content and the defined vocational competences. The study uses professional reflection as one source for constructing and critically examining the model.

The empirical component of the research includes pedagogical observation, a pedagogical experiment, expert assessment and analysis of educational activity. The empirical basis comprises the teaching of the

subject Modern Dance at the Konstantin Preslavsky Secondary School of Humanities and Arts in Varna. As part of the study, experimental work was carried out to improve the teaching of the dance discipline Modern Dance and to create optimal organisational conditions for the educational and creative process. The model was piloted over a complete course of study, culminating in a state examination in the theory and practice of the occupation for the award of the third level of vocational qualification.

8. Limitations of the scope of the dissertation

The following areas lie outside the scope of the research:

- Amateur dance;
- Education in the specialism of Choreography at higher education institutions;
- Training at private modern dance schools and clubs.

II. LENGTH AND STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation comprises 484 pages: an introduction (9 pages), a main text in three chapters (248 pages in total), a conclusion (8 pages) and 19 appendices (193 pages). Each chapter is divided into sections, and specific conclusions are presented at the end of each chapter. The main text contains four tables and three figures. The list of references (16 pages) comprises 139 titles in Bulgarian, Russian and English (87 in Cyrillic and 52 in Latin script), together with 24 online sources.

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I. ESTABLISHING AND INTRODUCING DANCE SUBJECTS IN THE SPECIALISM IN MODERN DANCE: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS

1.1 Historical aspects of the development of modern dance and preconditions for its introduction into education. Delsarte's influence on the pioneers of modern dance.

1.2 The nature of the foundational techniques incorporated into dance education internationally

1.3 Global dance education and theoretical approaches to establishing methodological foundations for teaching dance subjects in the specialism in Modern Dance at secondary school

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CREATING OPTIMAL CONDITIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION, TEACHING AND IMPROVEMENT OF DANCE SUBJECTS IN THE SPECIALISM IN MODERN DANCE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

2.1 Methodological and institutional foundations of dance education in the United States.

2.2 Methodological foundations and theoretical approaches to teaching modern and contemporary dance: the Russian educational model and its applicability to the Bulgarian system of secondary vocational dance education

2.3 Historical aspects and preconditions for establishing the specialism in Modern Dance at secondary school within the Bulgarian educational system.

CHAPTER III. ORGANISING, TEACHING AND IMPROVING DANCE SUBJECTS IN THE SPECIALISM IN MODERN DANCE AT THE KONSTANTIN PRESLAVSKY SECONDARY SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND ARTS, VARNA

3.1 A conceptualisation of the school subject Modern Dance in secondary education.

3.2. Regulatory analysis and a conceptual model for education in the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, at the Konstantin Preslavsky Secondary School of Humanities and Arts, Varna

3.3 A conceptual model for the structure, content and interrelationships of the subjects in the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, at the Konstantin Preslavsky Secondary School of Humanities and Arts, Varna. Analysis of the curricula.

CONCLUSION
REFERENCES
APPENDICES

III. SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

The introduction substantiates the relevance and significance of the research problem, which concerns the creation, introduction and development of school subjects devoted to modern and contemporary dance in the Bulgarian secondary education system. It defines the dissertation's principal aim and specific research objectives, identifies the object and subject of the research, and sets out its limitations. It presents the main research methods and approaches and the sources consulted. Particular attention is given to the relationship between the historical development of modern and contemporary dance, the transformation of dance vocabulary and teaching methodology, and the need to adapt them to the contemporary educational environment.

CHAPTER I. ESTABLISHING AND INTRODUCING DANCE SUBJECTS IN THE SPECIALISM IN MODERN DANCE: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL FOUNDATIONS

Chapter One establishes the theoretical and practical foundations of the subjects in the specialism in Modern Dance. It traces the historical preconditions for the emergence of modern dance and François Delsarte's influence, examines the pedagogical value of the techniques of Martha Graham, José Limón and Lester Horton, and identifies methodological foundations for a unified secondary-school training system.

The chapter argues that modern dance should not be taught as a rejection of the classical tradition. Classical dance offers a time-tested system for developing physical capacities, coordination, discipline and technical precision, while modern techniques broaden the movement vocabulary and foreground breathing, weight, gravity, inner impulse, individuality and stage expressiveness. A methodologically grounded combination of these elements makes it possible to develop a well-rounded contemporary dancer.

The first section examines historical aspects of the development of modern dance and the preconditions for its introduction into education. Important antecedents include the institutionalisation of professional dance training following the establishment of the Paris Académie Royale

de Danse in 1661; Jean-Georges Noverre's reform and his concept of ballet d'action; the development of the grand multi-act ballet under Marius Petipa and Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky; and Sergei Diaghilev's international activity. These developments established a professional and methodological foundation against which modern dance articulated its search for a freer, more natural and psychologically motivated movement language.

Modern dance emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries amid profound social, cultural and artistic transformations. It reacted against the conventions and strict codification of classical ballet, without rejecting all its achievements. Innovators sought correspondence between movement and the performer's inner state, freed the body from established gestural patterns, and made individual experience a source of stage form. François Delsarte, Émile Jaques-Dalcroze and Rudolf von Laban were particularly significant in this process. Their theories of expression, rhythm, space and movement qualities laid foundations for European free and expressionist dance and for American modern dance.

The section gives a central place to François Delsarte and his "System of Expression". Through systematic observation of human nature, Delsarte explored the relationship between the body, gesture, voice, facial expression and emotional state. His approach replaced mechanical imitation of established gestures with the search for physical expression arising from genuine inner experience. Through his pupils and followers, these ideas reached Isadora Duncan, Ruth St Denis and Ted Shawn and contributed to the formation of a more expressive and emancipated form of dance.

The analysis distinguishes Delsarte's original teaching from "American Delsartism", developed by Steele MacKaye, Genevieve Stebbins and Henrietta Hovey. Three phases can be identified in its American development: professional training for speakers and actors; physical culture for a broad public; and the application of aesthetic principles to everyday life. These different applications transformed the system and made it an influential model of stage expression.

The first phase is associated with Steele MacKaye, a pupil of Delsarte who developed the theory through practical exercises. His notes make it possible to reconstruct the principle that a performer's inner truth should find natural expression through voice, gesture and facial expression. MacKaye applied this approach to actor training and, in 1884, founded a school with a formal curriculum that became an early model for American acting schools

The MacKaye–Delsarte system combines semiotic and aesthetic approaches. The former recognises the meaning of the external sign, while the latter generates gesture as an organic result of emotion. The student first analyses movement and then, through practice, turns it into an internally motivated expression. The method aims to liberate the performer from mechanical imitation; Franklin H. Sargent later strengthened the school's practical orientation.

The second phase is represented by Genevieve Stebbins, who combined what she had learned from MacKaye with works and manuscripts by Delsarte's French followers. Through teaching, performances and her book The Delsarte System of Expression, she made the system widely accessible. Its connection with acting, gymnastics, therapeutic exercise and breathing practices expanded Delsartism into a comprehensive form of physical and artistic training that influenced the pioneers of modern dance.

The third phase is associated with Henrietta Hovey, who disseminated Delsarte's principles beyond actor and speaker training and taught Ruth St Denis and Ted Shawn. Through Hovey and Edmund Russell, American Delsartism reached London and professional curricula, while Manuel Garcia Jr and Gustave Delsarte brought the system directly from France. This exchange demonstrates the transnational character of modern performance education.

Delsarte's influence on modern dance did not entail the direct transmission of a complete technique. As Thomas Leabhart emphasises, many followers knew only parts of the system or taught their own interpretations; there were principles, but no single fixed technique. This

very openness enabled Ruth St Denis, Ted Shawn, Doris Humphrey and Martha Graham to develop distinct movement systems from a shared understanding that gesture reflects the inner emotional state.

Delsartism reached modern dance through MacKaye and Stebbins and influenced both American and European developments. In Martha Graham's work, this is evident in the understanding that technique prepares the body to answer the demands of the mind. In Germany, Delsarte's and Dalcroze's ideas also spread through the women's physical training systems of Bess Mensendieck and Hedwig Kallmeyer, which combined gymnastics, physical culture and pedagogy.

Delsarte and Rudolf Laban shared a methodological interest in observing human nature and actual behaviour. Delsarte examined axis, balance, weight, falling and recovery; formulated the laws of correspondence and the trinity; and classified movements as oppositional, parallel and successive. These principles can be recognised in Graham's contraction and release, Humphrey's fall and recovery, and the work of Kurt Jooss.

Laban developed these discoveries into a clear system for analysing movement, its qualities and its dynamics, adding the concepts of effort, space, time, weight and flow. Drawing on José Rafael Madureira makes it possible to distinguish their emphases: Delsarte was primarily interested in the expressiveness of gesture, whereas Laban systematised movement itself. Labanotation and his analytical system gave movement a written and methodological form, while the Laban–Kurt Jooss–Pina Bausch lineage demonstrates how principles passed from theory into stage practice and dance theatre.

Delsarte's theory also influenced Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, who developed eurhythmics as a pedagogical system for studying music through movement. Archival materials and Dalcroze's early lesson plans provide the most direct evidence of this influence. He applied the Law of Correspondence in a new way by examining the relationships between feeling, physical action and musical phenomena. Eurhythmics develops rhythmic and metrical sense, plastic harmony, balance and movement

habits, while improvisation is established both as a pedagogical tool and as a creative method.

The synthesis of Delsarte's influence presents a network of continuity among American and European artists rather than a one-way line of transmission. The historical overview demonstrates that individual modern dance techniques share a conceptual root: correspondence between inner impulse and external bodily expression, and conscious work with the centre, weight, gravity, breathing and space. Each school develops these principles differently and creates its own vocabulary; understanding their shared origins is nevertheless necessary for the reasoned selection and systematic distribution of techniques in the Modern Dance curriculum.

The second section analyses the nature and educational value of three foundational techniques—that of Martha Graham, José Limón and Lester Horton. They are selected as fundamental systems that develop different but complementary aspects of a contemporary dancer's training. Comparing them brings out methodological approaches to developing movement culture, technical resilience, spatial thinking and artistic expressiveness. Their discussion does not exclude other individual techniques; rather, it provides a basis for subsequent development and the integration of additional dance disciplines.

Martha Graham's technique emerged gradually through her choreographic explorations. She rejected movements she regarded as external and unmotivated, and built a vocabulary derived from breathing, the body's centre and inner emotional states. Her classes functioned as creative laboratories in which choreographic practice gradually became a coherent training system. As her repertory developed, the number of exercises and combinations grew. Stable foundational movements were combined with opportunities for teachers to create their own phrases within the principles of the technique.

Central to Graham are contraction and release, the spiral, movement from the centre to the periphery, interaction with the floor and the

conscious use of gravity. Contraction is associated with exhalation and the shortening of the torso, while release is associated with inhalation, recovery and elevation. The spiral organises the rotation of the pelvis, spine and head around the vertical axis, creating dynamic opposition in the torso. Breathing is not an added rhythmic element but an inner motor of movement and a means of connecting physical action with emotional experience.

Graham's technique uses gravity as an expressive force and the floor as support, a place for landing and a source of new impulse. Class progresses from breathing and work with the centre to floorwork, standing work and movement through space. The system develops body awareness, coordination, discipline and psychological expressiveness. Stage spontaneity is understood as the result of deep technical preparation, rather than uncontrolled self-expression.

José Limón's technique further develops the principles of Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman. Its central concern is the conscious interaction of body, weight, breathing and space. Limón viewed the body as an "orchestra", in which each part can function as an instrument in its own right, while all segments must be integrated into an overall movement organisation. Training begins with isolations, rotations, stretches and bends of individual body parts, then progresses to travelling through space and coordinating the body as a whole.

Key concepts include potential and kinetic energy, fall, recovery, rebound, suspension, weight and isolation. In a fall, particular muscle groups are released under the action of gravity; in recovery and rebound, accumulated energy generates a new impulse; in suspension, movement is prolonged, creating the illusion that weight has been temporarily overcome. Breathing regulates the transition between potential and kinetic energy and sustains the organic rhythm of movement.

Unlike strictly codified systems, Limón's technique allows greater freedom in the spine, torso and arms and avoids unnecessary muscular tension. The upper body is a principal vehicle for dramatic and emotional expression, while a broad spatial range extends the performer's stage

presence. The method does not prescribe one final form but encourages dancers to discover their own movement and emotional expression. It therefore develops control of weight, balance, plasticity, musicality, spatial thinking and individuality at the same time.

Lester Horton's technique is conceived as a comprehensive system for strengthening, lengthening, isolating and coordinating the whole body. It synthesizes influences from classical ballet, yoga, ancient cultures, the visual arts and theatre, together with an in-depth study of anatomy and breathing. Horton sought a universal training system that would correct physical weaknesses and prepare performers for different forms of dance. The torso is central, although movement impulses may also originate in the shoulder girdle, rib cage, diaphragm and pelvis.

The system emphasises strength, endurance, joint mobility, a flexible and resilient spine, extensions, off-balance movement and work throughout the full spatial range. It is characterised by sharp contrasts between extremely slow and very fast movements, open positions, broad amplitude and the conscious opposition of gravity. Horton introduced a systematically organised terminology—Fortifications, Deep Floor Vocabulary, Dimensional Tonus, Torso Language, Pelvic Actions, Fall Variations, Aerial Vocabulary and other groupings—which provides a methodological framework for the learning process.

Improvisation has a particularly important place. Horton used guided improvisation to explore dancers' capacities, then selected and systematised movements of the greatest technical and artistic value. For the teacher, improvisation is a means of recognising a pupil's individual physical potential, dramatic expressiveness and creative independence. At the same time, systematic anatomical and technical training ensures that creative freedom develops on a stable physical foundation.

Comparing the three techniques reveals their methodological complementarity. Graham develops movement from the centre, breathing, contraction and release, and psychological motivation; Limón explores weight, fall and recovery, suspension and the free distribution of energy; Horton builds comprehensive anatomical, strength and spatial training

supported by a clearly systematised vocabulary. They share an understanding of the body as a bearer of inner meaning, work with gravity, the importance of breathing, the need for discipline and an aspiration towards comprehensive technical and artistic preparation. This supports their inclusion as foundational components that are built upon progressively in the Modern Dance curriculum.

The third section examines the development of dance education globally and derives theoretical approaches for establishing methodological foundations for subjects in the specialism in Modern Dance. The historical overview begins with European dance masters of the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, who laid the foundations of professional training and international exchange. Pierre Beauchamp codified the five basic positions of the feet, providing a basis for systematic ballet training.

The Russian ballet school is a particularly important institutional model. Under the influence of Italian and French traditions, Jean-Baptiste Landé established the first state dance school in St Petersburg in 1738. Systematic training was combined with early-stage experience; later, ballet became connected with drama, music and the visual arts. Examination performances introduced practical assessment of training. Agrippina Vaganova brought the achievements of the Russian school together in a coherent method based on technical precision, artistic expressiveness and progressive complexity. After the October Revolution, the international activity of Russian artists and teachers spread this tradition across Europe and the United States, establishing it as one of the leading models of professional dance education.

In the early twentieth century, modern dance entered education in the United States through new social and cultural conceptions of the body, individuality and creative freedom. Isadora Duncan's ideas about natural movement influenced physical education and gradually entered colleges and universities. By the 1930s, modern dance already held a central place in a number of programmes, requiring teachers to combine artistic and pedagogical preparation. Teachers College at Columbia University became a centre for new methods, while the work of Martha Graham,

Hanya Holm, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Alma Hawkins, Pearl Primus, Katherine Dunham and others laid the foundations of contemporary university dance education.

The historical survey traces developments from Delsarte, Dalcroze and Laban through pioneers Loie Fuller, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St Denis and Ted Shawn to the individual systems of Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, Doris Humphrey, Martha Graham and José Limón. Later movements include abstraction, the African-American tradition, postmodern dance, contact improvisation, butoh, dance theatre and new European forms of the late twentieth century.

This historical sequence shows that every innovation in movement leads to a change in teaching. Delsarte established the connection between gesture and emotion; Dalcroze linked movement and rhythm; Laban developed an analytical system for weight, space, time and flow. The pioneers affirmed natural movement, the spiritual and educational function of dance, and freedom for the female and male body. The major masters created individual techniques and professional schools. Postmodernism removed the hierarchy of stage space, admitted chance, everyday movement and interdisciplinary performance, while improvisation gradually became established as an independent technique and method of inquiry.

The accumulation of these practices changed the relationship between classical and modern dance. The initial revolt against ballet codification gradually gave way to synthesis, in which classical technique and modern systems are used as complementary resources. A contemporary performer must know classical dance, a range of individual modern techniques, improvisation, composition, and work with music, space and stage resources. A curriculum should therefore not be a mechanical collection of disciplines, but a coherent system in which each subject prepares for and develops the next.

The methodological model should combine a stable technical foundation with a gradual broadening of the dance vocabulary and creative tasks appropriate to pupils' age and preparation. Improvisation is

necessary for developing individuality, spatial thinking and artistic decision-making, but should not precede mastery of the fundamental movement principles. Creative freedom acquires educational value when grounded in discipline, body awareness, technical control and knowledge of historically developed vocabulary.

The section also identifies the social function of dance education. In a global society, dance creates opportunities for non-verbal communication, intercultural dialogue and overcoming social and cultural isolation. Through shared movement, pupils develop respect for difference, knowledge of other communities' traditions, tolerance and interaction skills. Training in modern dance is thus understood not only as professional development for performers, but also as a means of personal development and social inclusion.

KEY CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER I

1. The historical development of modern dance demonstrates that its leading techniques did not emerge in isolation, but through continuity, intercultural exchange and the transformation of earlier philosophical and pedagogical principles.

2. François Delsarte's system provides a shared conceptual foundation for modern dance through correspondence between inner experience and external bodily expression, work with gesture, centre, weight and gravity, and attention to the performer as a whole person.

3. Dalcroze and Laban developed this foundation in different directions: Dalcroze through the relationship between music, rhythm and movement, and Laban through systematic analysis of space, time, weight, flow and movement qualities.

4. The techniques of Martha Graham, José Limón and Lester Horton have fundamental educational value because they develop complementary competences: movement from the centre and psychological expressiveness; conscious use of weight and dynamics; anatomical resilience, strength, mobility and spatial control.

5. Classical dance and modern techniques should not be set against

one another. The classical system provides a technical and disciplinary foundation, while modern techniques broaden the body's movement vocabulary, creative thinking and expressive potential.

6. Improvisation and compositional tasks are essential elements in contemporary dance training, but should be introduced progressively, following and alongside the acquisition of fundamental technical principles.

7. Subjects in the specialism in Modern Dance should form a unified, coherent and age-appropriate system, rather than a mechanical collection of independent disciplines. The curriculum should develop technical, artistic, creative and reflective competences simultaneously.

8. Pedagogical effectiveness requires a combination of historical knowledge, movement practice, methodological progression, an individual approach, and a clear connection among movement, emotion, music and space.

9. Artistic freedom of expression is not an end in itself. In education, it is developed through discipline, body awareness, technical training, the gradual acquisition of dance vocabulary and the purposeful development of artistic thinking.

10. Dance education also has an important social function: it supports personal development, intercultural dialogue, tolerance, community work and the overcoming of linguistic and cultural barriers.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CREATING OPTIMAL CONDITIONS FOR THE ORGANISATION, TEACHING AND IMPROVEMENT OF DANCE SUBJECTS IN THE SPECIALISM IN MODERN DANCE AT SECONDARY SCHOOL

Chapter Two identifies methodological foundations for a comprehensive system of training in Modern Dance at Bulgarian secondary schools. The historical overview is connected with curriculum content, teacher qualifications, lesson structure, assessment and stage practice. The American model offers flexible standards and creative

autonomy; the Russian model offers academic progression and a strong classical foundation; and Bulgarian experience demonstrates the importance of state policy, cultural institutions, international exchange and individual initiative.

The overarching position is that none of the models considered should be copied mechanically. What is needed is a Bulgarian educational model that uses clear standards while preserving creative freedom; treats classical dance as a technical foundation while including the distinctive principles of modern and contemporary techniques; ensures continuity without restricting individuality; and connects school training with stage and pedagogical practice.

The first section examines the methodological and institutional foundations of dance education in the United States. Its historical development is traced from conflicting religious and social attitudes towards dance, and the influence of local, European and African traditions, to its recognition as an artistic and academic discipline. In the early twentieth century, movement and dance training were mainly associated with physical education, particularly in women's education. Scientific research on the body, the development of modern dance and the creation of specialised university programmes gradually changed the discipline's status.

Margaret H'Doubler, described as the "mother of dance education" in America, played a key role. Influenced by Bird Larson and Gertrude Colby, she developed a programme at the University of Wisconsin–Madison that treated dance as both an art and a science and was grounded in kinesiology, anatomy and physics. The programme and the student club Orchesis became models for other colleges and universities. In 1926, the first dance degree programme in higher education, designed to prepare future teachers, was established. Dance education thereby acquired a theoretical framework, a scientific foundation and a distinct professional profile.

At the same time, Martha Hill established the understanding of dance as an independent art form. Through her programmes at New York

University, Bennington College, Connecticut College and the Juilliard School, she created an environment for interaction among performers, choreographers, teachers and researchers. Dance festivals, including Jacob's Pillow and the American Dance Festival, complemented the institutional system through training, creative laboratories, archives, scholarships and professional networks.

During the 1960s and 1970s, federal policy encouraged the presence of the arts in schools through funding and programmes involving practising artists. Legislation on equal access to education helped separate dance from physical education and establish it within the performing arts. In subsequent decades, government reports and professional organisations called for clear learning aims, assessment and teaching by qualified specialists. Alongside positive outcomes, there was a risk that the arts would be marginalised by policies focused primarily on standardised tests and a narrow range of academic subjects, as seen after the No Child Left Behind Act.

The national guidelines for dance education, initially developed by the National Dance Association and subsequently advanced by the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), are particularly important. They provide a framework for the full K–12 system—from kindergarten to Year 12—and define expected knowledge, skills and outcomes without prescribing a single way to achieve them. NDEO's mission includes professional opportunities, support for teachers and greater public understanding of the place of dance in education and life.

American standards organise learning around performing, creating, responding and connecting. They cover dance creation and performance, literacy, interdisciplinary and cultural connections, community engagement, career orientation and lifelong learning. Pupils develop coordination, knowledge of choreographic structures, critical and creative thinking, and the ability to use dance to create and communicate meaning in different historical and cultural contexts.

The methodological value of the American model lies in its flexibility. The standards define common aims and levels of expectation,

while allowing teachers the freedom to develop a creative curriculum suited to pupils' age, cultural environment and particular group. Dance is understood not only as technique, but as a means of artistic thought, communication, and social and emotional development. An intercultural and interdisciplinary approach makes it possible to include different genres and traditions and to build connections with music, theatre, visual arts, history, health and public life.

The applicability of this experience to Bulgaria lies in age-appropriate teaching, clear and measurable yet flexible outcomes, teachers' professional preparation, equal access, and sustainable links between schools and cultural institutions. At the same time, the different aesthetics and philosophy of American modern dance cannot be transferred intact. They must be adapted to Bulgarian state educational standards, the professional profile of the specialism and the local cultural environment. The main methodological conclusion is the need for balance between a regulatory framework and pedagogical freedom.

The second section analyses the methodological foundations and theoretical approaches to teaching modern and contemporary dance in the Russian educational model and the possibilities for applying it in Bulgaria. This model was selected because of the historical connection between Bulgarian vocational dance education and the Russian school. Many Bulgarian ballet teachers trained or undertook specialist study in Leningrad and Moscow, while the curricula of the State Choreographic School and schools of arts were built on Russian classical dance methodology. Higher education training for teachers and choreographers continues this tradition.

Agrippina Vaganova's system is a leading example of a codified, coherent and comprehensive curriculum. Its institutional foundation is the Imperial Theatre School in St Petersburg, established in 1738 at the initiative of Jean-Baptiste Landé. Vaganova transformed accumulated stage and pedagogical experience into a coherent system combining technical accuracy, coordination, strength, plasticity, musicality and artistic expressiveness. This academic tradition was transferred to

Bulgaria and explains the affinity between the methodological approaches of Bulgarian and Russian teachers.

Analysis of Russian specialist literature shows that the terms “modern dance” and “contemporary dance” are not used consistently. Vadim Yu. Nikitin notes that the diversity of genres and styles at the end of the twentieth century was brought together under the term “contemporary dance”, without a clear, generally accepted definition having been established. Individual techniques—including those of Martha Graham, José Limón, Rudolf von Laban, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman and others—have distinct principles and their own understandings of the body and space. Consequently, the aims, movement principles and content of courses are often formulated differently.

V. V. Antipin argues that the constituent elements of the subject Contemporary Dance need to be examined theoretically within the framework of state educational standards for secondary vocational education. He distinguishes art-historical publications, which analyse history, style and particular stage phenomena, from teaching aids with a practical and pedagogical orientation. The latter contain methodological recommendations, lesson examples and systematised techniques, most often in modern and jazz dance.

L. V. Perlina’s teaching manual Dance Modern and Methods of Teaching It is examined as a significant example. The proposed four-semester programme brings together historical, theoretical and practical material and covers the place of modern dance in choreography, the emergence of the system, performance requirements, lesson structure, Martha Graham’s technique, musical accompaniment, the teacher’s role, the use of video materials, and principal styles and modes of performance. The course concludes with practical and theoretical examinations.

In Perlina’s method, correct breathing, inner and physical resilience, and the conscious coordination of breathing and movement are central. Preparatory elements from hatha yoga and Pilates are used, together with terminology and practices from classical dance and the techniques of Graham and Limón. The lesson is structured around floorwork, centre

work and travelling through space. Basic movements are introduced progressively, demonstrated and combined into sequences until the body becomes an instrument for expressing emotions through movement.

A similar practical orientation is found in the manuals of A. G. Boguslavskaya and V. Yu. Nikitin. At the same time, there is a shortage of comprehensive curricula devoted specifically to methods of teaching contemporary dance; existing developments are often produced to meet the requirements of a particular institution. Teaching manuals therefore serve as the main guide to the knowledge, competences, skills and practical approaches on which curricula are built.

Nikitin's Modern Jazz Dance: Stages of Development. Method. Technique systematises the history, interaction and technical principles of modern and jazz dance and offers richly illustrated lessons for different levels of preparation. Its structure includes warm-up, isolations, development of spinal mobility, floorwork, travelling, combinations and improvisation. Floorwork serves to warm up, isolate, develop spinal mobility, stretch and prepare coordination while changing levels. The development of thirty lessons of progressively increasing complexity demonstrates how a diverse vocabulary can be organised into a clear methodological progression.

The Russian state framework for specialism 52.02.02, "Dance Art", type "Contemporary Dance", offers five years of training with a strong practical orientation. The curriculum combines general education, vocational theory, practical training and stage practice. It includes classical, modern, contemporary, jazz and folk-stage dance; acting; art history and theory; pedagogical training; educational and work placement; rehearsal processes and performances. Additional pre-vocational programmes in Modern Dance are also available in schools and centres for work with children.

The year-by-year progression follows a logic from foundation to professional practice. The initial stage develops classical technique, discipline, musicality, flexibility, strength and endurance. In subsequent years, the contemporary vocabulary broadens; coordination, acting

individuality and stage presence develop; hours in modern, contemporary and jazz dance increase; and choreographic work intensifies. The final year focuses on repertory, original works, the graduation performance and professional stage readiness.

The Russian model is distinguished by its comprehensiveness, high level of technical training, daily practice and connection between classical ballet class, contemporary techniques and stage work. A risk is that strict academic organisation may restrict improvisation and individual exploration. An approach applicable in Bulgaria would retain classical dance as a foundation for strength, balance and discipline, while using modern techniques to develop work with weight and the floor, breathing, improvisation and stage authenticity.

The third section traces the historical preconditions for establishing the specialism in Modern Dance in Bulgarian secondary education. Professional ballet training in Bulgaria became institutionalised later than theatre, music and art education. In 1951, on the initiative of Anastas Petrov and with the assistance of the Russian teacher Vladimir Bely, the State Ballet School was established a Classical Dance Department. In 1956, a Bulgarian Dance specialism was opened and the school was renamed the State Choreographic School. In 2001 it became a national centre and was named the National School of Dance Art.

In the late 1970s, Margarita Gradechlieva began working with pupils in the Classical Dance specialism, introducing Martha Graham's technique. The study identifies Gradechlieva as a classically trained artist whose artistic explorations were oriented towards the West. The dance piece Ek, staged with the class, did not reach an audience, yet the work had long-term pedagogical significance. Gradechlieva's studies and specialisation in Cologne, London and Brussels with Maurice Béjart enabled her to bring carefully assimilated principles of contemporary dance to Bulgaria.

The studio she organised nurtured a generation of leading choreographers and teachers. Graham technique was gradually introduced into the training system as an alternative subject within the Classical

Dance specialism and was taught until 2004 at the State Choreographic School and at arts schools with dance programmes. After 2000, Mariana Deneva, Margarita Gradechlieva and Academician Kalina Bogoeva developed specialist training for performers in modern dance companies, dance theatre and musical theatre. In 2004, the National School of Dance Art opened a Modern Dance specialism, admitting pupils after Year 7.

The first curriculum model centred on Martha Graham's technique—floorwork, centre work and movement through space. Training developed the connection between breathing and movement, work with gravity, falling and recovery, impulse, isolation and spatial orientation. Principles from Cunningham, Hawkins and Limón, Laban's system, release technique, contact improvisation and jazz were subsequently incorporated. Classical ballet class and stage practice remained compulsory components.

Professional ballet education in Varna developed in an environment shaped by the Varna Summer International Music Festival, Varna Opera, the Summer Theatre and the International Ballet Competition. Between 1960 and 1980, the city became established as a festival and ballet centre, and the need for local professional staff became apparent. Publications from the period and later studies confirm the competition's role in strengthening Varna's international standing and the cultural openness of Varna and Bulgaria.

Galina and Stefan Yordanov played a central role. Their professional trajectories demonstrate the importance of training in established European and Russian schools for the development of Bulgarian dance pedagogy. After taking over the ballet school at Varna Opera, they set the goal of systematically training local personnel. In 1966, the first experimental ballet class outside the capital was opened as a branch of the State Choreographic School. Training combined specialist ballet subjects, musical preparation and acting, and was oriented towards the needs of the working theatre.

Publications from the period show that the school both selected children and established foundations in classical dance, while also

including character dance, folk-stage and historical-dance forms, and acting preparation. A significant proportion of its graduates went on to perform in Varna, Ruse, Stara Zagora and Plovdiv. The four-year experimental programme demonstrated that, with appropriate facilities, methodology and links to an opera company, professional ballet performers could be trained outside Sofia.

Although the first class closed in 1971, the initiative was revived in 1975. Stefan Yordanov argued that the most effective organisational form was a permanent ballet department within the music school, connected with the theatre and able to provide both experimental and regular classes. Galina and Stefan Yordanov's pedagogical concept combined accuracy, precision and discipline with improvisation, imagination and pupils' own creative expression. This balance anticipated contemporary understandings of training, in which a technical foundation supports rather than suppresses individuality.

In the 1990/1991 school year, a Classical Dance specialism admitting pupils from Year 4 and offering an eight-year course was opened at the Dobri Hristov Secondary Music School in Varna. The first cohort graduated in 1999 with the qualification "ballet artist and teacher", after examinations in classical, pas de deux, character and historical dance and stage practice. The graduates' successful professional careers in Bulgarian and foreign companies, and the return of some to the education system as teachers, confirm the importance of professional training outside the capital.

Decentralisation continued with the opening of ballet classes in Ruse, Burgas, Plovdiv and Stara Zagora and the gradual introduction of modern dance. In 2010, the profile "Choreography—Contemporary Dance Techniques" was introduced at the National High School of Humanities and Arts "Konstantin Preslavsky" in Varna. From the 2017/2018 school year, the school has offered vocational education in the specialism in Modern Dance, leading to the third level of vocational qualification. Curricula are developed in accordance with the Vocational Education and Training Act, model curricula and the national examination programme

for the occupation of Dancer.

The historical analysis shows that Bulgarian dance education developed by gradually overcoming delays, centralisation and institutional difficulties. Five groups of factors were decisive: institutional—the establishment of schools, curricula and recognised qualifications; personal—the initiative of teachers and artists; international—the transfer and adaptation of global techniques; regional—the role of Varna and other cultural centres; and pedagogical—the combination of technique, discipline, stage practice and creative freedom.

KEY CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER II

1. Sustainable training in Modern Dance requires a regulatory framework, professionally trained teachers, institutional and financial support, a clear curriculum progression and ongoing links with stage practice.

2. The American model demonstrates the value of flexible educational standards that define common aims and expected outcomes while allowing room for creative decisions, interdisciplinarity, cultural diversity and age-appropriate pedagogy.

3. Excessive standardization and the dominance of test-based assessment can weaken arts education. Assessment in dance should track technical and creative progress without restricting personal expressiveness.

4. The Russian model is applicable through its academic progression, classical foundation, high practical intensity and early stage training. It should be complemented by purposeful development of improvisation, individual exploration and authorial thinking.

5. Terminological ambiguity surrounding modern and contemporary dance means that curricula must distinguish specific individual techniques, their movement principles, aims and methods. Only after such analysis can they be integrated into a coherent educational system

6. Classical dance should remain a technical foundation for

strength, balance, line, coordination and discipline, but not a constraint. Modern and contemporary techniques should build on it through work with breathing, weight, the floor, improvisation, individuality and stage authenticity.

7. Bulgarian historical experience shows that institutional development depends to a decisive degree on prepared and enterprising individuals who bring in international experience, create curricula, advocate for training and develop successive generations of teachers and performers.

8. The establishment of the specialism in Modern Dance resulted from the interaction of classical tradition and innovation. The introduction of Graham technique, subsequent expansion to other modern and contemporary techniques, and retention of classical ballet class outline the foundations of a comprehensive vocational model.

9. The Varna experience demonstrates that regional cultural centres can establish sustainable vocational education when schools, theatres, festivals, the public and pedagogical initiative work towards a common goal.

10. The optimal Bulgarian model should be adaptable rather than mechanically borrowed: it should combine the American model's flexibility and interdisciplinarity, the Russian school's methodological rigour, and the cultural and educational traditions of Bulgarian dance education in a unified system oriented towards pupils' technical, creative, personal and professional development.

CHAPTER III. ORGANISING, TEACHING AND IMPROVING DANCE SUBJECTS IN THE SPECIALISM IN MODERN DANCE AT THE KONSTANTIN PRESLAVSKY SECONDARY SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND ARTS, VARNA

Chapter Three translates the theoretical and methodological foundations into an applicable school model. Regulatory requirements are specified in learning aims, content areas, cross-curricular links, stages of training and assessment criteria. Modern Dance is the integrative core

around which classical ballet class, contemporary and jazz techniques, theory and history, composition and improvisation, repertory, acting, ensemble work, and educational and work placement are organised.

The model follows a vertical progression from Year 8 to Year 12: from physical adaptation, movement literacy and shared terminology, through systematic technical and theoretical development, to stage and professional readiness. Content develops in a spiral, with core principles revisited at increasingly advanced technical, analytical and creative levels. In this way, the individual components form coherent preparation for an independent and responsible performer.

The first section develops the concept of the school subject Modern Dance in secondary education. Terms such as Contemporary Dance, American Concert Dance and Creative Dance show that modern and contemporary dance are not defined solely by external stylistic features. Content also depends on the teacher's competences and creative position, which is why methodology often has an authorial character. Historical development is non-linear, and the boundaries between movements cannot be reduced to technique and style alone.

For the purposes of the study, "modern dance" denotes a historically formed system that emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an alternative to the established aesthetics of classical ballet. The concept is relative and may denote what is current in a particular period; in the educational model, however, it is primarily associated with the individual systems and ideas through which a new dance language is created and emphasis is placed on the performer's individuality. The core includes the techniques and concepts of Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, José Limón, Lester Horton, Rudolf von Laban, Mary Wigman and Kurt Jooss.

"Contemporary dance" is used for the later, open and dynamic field of postmodern and current movement practices. It does not necessarily reject professional training in classical dance, but exists within the broader system of contemporary art. It includes different approaches to bodily expression, space, partnering, improvisation and composition. A shared

impulse is the desire for the body to generate new understandings of dance and affect the spectator. The contemporary movement changes the relationship to dance as an art form and expands its future possibilities.

Within the school subject, modern and contemporary dance should neither be equated nor opposed. Modern dance provides a historical and technical foundation, while contemporary techniques complement it, add complexity and open it to new artistic practices. For methodological purposes, jazz dance, modern dance, and postmodern and contemporary practices may be distinguished. The first movements have more clearly established theory, whereas contemporary dance is more closely associated with current ideas and the teacher's individual technique. Educational progression should therefore be based on continuity: from established principles to their conscious transformation and creative application.

The main methodological problem arises from the tension between the free, changing and authorial nature of modern dance and the demands of institutional education for aims, progression, safety, measurable outcomes and assessment. Anna Sokolow's position against fixed academic rules expresses the concern that excessive standardisation may interrupt the art form's natural development. The task, therefore, is not to eliminate diversity, but to structure it without erasing individuality.

Research on vocational education points to the lack of a consistent understanding of the subject's content, the need to examine its components theoretically in relation to state educational standards, and insufficiently clear formulations of aims and movement principles. In Bulgaria, a further difficulty is the shortage of specialist literature and up-to-date theoretical information. Full training requires the different techniques to be adapted and integrated at particular stages, which complicates the development of a common methodology.

The solution is to select, classify and clearly describe the origins, principles, terminology, aims and expected outcomes of each technique. Access to visual materials in the contemporary media environment supports learning but does not replace pedagogical analysis. Criteria are

needed to help teachers determine what content is appropriate to pupils' age, preparation and vocational aims. In this way, the subject becomes a structured system rather than an arbitrary sequence of exercises.

The curriculum should clearly present the principles of the leading techniques: contraction and release in Graham; fall and recovery in Humphrey and Limón; independence and spatial organisation in Cunningham; linearity and comprehensive strengthening in Horton; and movement analysis in Laban. Comparison enables pupils to understand different movement systems rather than copy similar external forms. Postmodern and current practices may be included as a variable component following professional selection.

Martha Graham's principle of contraction begins in the body's centre—the pelvis and torso—and extends towards the limbs. Contraction, release and spiral connect physical organisation with the dancer's emotional centre; release is not passive relaxation. A methodological deviation occurs when movement is initiated solely from the solar plexus. This example shows that teachers must understand the logic of an individual technique and distinguish the original concept from later interpretations.

The analysis leads to an integrative approach combining the academic system and progression of the Russian methodological tradition with the creative autonomy, interdisciplinarity and connection to cultural context characteristic of the American experience. International practices should be adapted to the Bulgarian regulatory environment rather than transferred mechanically. Curriculum content should unite a stable historical and technical core with opportunities for renewal, improvisation, compositional thinking and stage performance. Assessment should take account of technical accuracy, individual progress, artistic interpretation, creative engagement, professional conduct and stage culture.

The second section conducts a regulatory analysis and develops a conceptual model for education in professional field 212, "Music and Performing Arts"; occupation 212050, "Dancer"; specialism 2120502, "Modern Dance", at the Konstantin Preslavsky Secondary School of

Humanities and Arts in Varna. The analysis covers the Pre-school and School Education Act; the Vocational Education and Training Act; Ordinance No. 4 of 30 November 2015 on the curriculum; Framework Programme B; model curricula B2, B4 and B6 of 2017; the state educational standard for the occupation of Dancer; the relevant ministerial orders; and school curricula.

The Pre-school and School Education Act defines school education as a unity of teaching, upbringing and socialisation and emphasises the practical application of competences, pupils' interests and abilities, innovation and institutional autonomy. The regulatory progression moves from the framework curriculum to the model and school curricula, and is then specified through subject curricula, annual schemes of work and the teaching and training process. School autonomy is not a departure from the model curriculum, but the use and specification of the flexibility it provides.

The Vocational Education and Training Act establishes the vocational nature of the training and the possibility for a pupil to acquire secondary education, vocational knowledge and practical skills, and a third level of vocational qualification at the same time. Modern Dance is therefore not merely a general cultural arts subject, but part of preparation for a specific occupation. Ordinance No. 4 translates general legal principles into the structure of teaching time. Options B2, B4 and B6 provide for five years of full-time study after lower secondary education and level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework, but differ in the balance between foreign-language and vocational training.

For implementation at the Varna school, the study analyses option B4, approved by Order No. RD 09-4677 of 1 September 2017, which includes extended foreign-language study. In Year 8, English has the largest number of teaching hours. Dance training is organised through elective lessons in classical dance and contemporary dance techniques and through extracurricular Modern Dance activities, bringing the total dance allocation to 216 hours per year. This stage serves a language-adaptation and movement-preparation function: it develops posture, coordination,

balance, mobility, musicality, discipline and an initial dance vocabulary.

In Year 9, extended foreign-language training continues, while vocational specialisation proper begins. The curriculum includes dance theory and methodology, Modern Dance, practical training in modern, jazz and classical dance, repertory and extended vocational preparation. Including elective subjects, vocational and dance training reaches 360 hours; with the contemporary dance techniques ensemble as an extracurricular activity, it reaches 648 hours per year. Pupils begin to distinguish technique from practice, movement from stage application, exercise from repertory, and practical performance from theoretical understanding.

Integrated vocational training begins in Year 10. In Year 10, technique, theory, jazz and classical dance, ensemble work and practical training move pupils from performing a movement to understanding its principle. In Year 11, theory and history connect with composition, improvisation, acting, repertory and ensemble work. Year 12 completes the process through artistic and vocational synthesis, stage practice and preparation for the state examination.

The conceptual model is a pedagogical system that is grounded in regulation, vertically organised and internally integrated. Its invariant core includes classical ballet class, historical individual techniques, modern and jazz dance, composition and improvisation, history, theory and methodology, acting, and stage and work-placement practice. Its variable core includes contemporary dance techniques, contact improvisation, dance theatre, interdisciplinary and digital stage forms, and original school projects. This balance allows standards to define what pupils should be able to do without prescribing a single artistic means of achieving the outcome.

Content is organised into six permanent areas: technical training, individual techniques, creative practice, theoretical training, stage practice and professional culture. These are studied throughout the course with varying emphasis. The guiding principles are spiral progression; unity between theory and practice; initially distinguishing and subsequently

integrating techniques; progression from acquisition and awareness to variation, improvisation, composition and stage work; individualisation; healthy physical resilience; and stage and professional orientation.

The pedagogical process proceeds through diagnosis, demonstration, conscious acquisition, practice, improvisation, composition, rehearsal, stage performance and reflection. Three strands develop in parallel: technical—from fundamental principles to integrated performance; creative—from movement exploration to an original project; and vocational—from educational and rehearsal processes to stage and work-placement practice and professional engagement.

Assessment combines initial diagnostic assessment, ongoing observation, annual examinations or assessed classes, creative tasks, stage practice, self-assessment and a state examination in theory and practice. It assesses technical performance, body awareness and safety, artistic expressiveness, creative activity, ensemble work, theoretical literacy, professional conduct and reflection. Results are used to provide feedback and update content and methods.

A strength of option B4 is that it combines vocational training with extended foreign-language competence, supporting the use of international sources and participation in intercultural professional exchange. The risk is that vocational specialisation begins more slowly. Continuity between Years 8 and 9, diagnostic assessment at the transition to Year 10, compensatory work, shared terminology and coordination among teachers of classical, modern, contemporary and jazz dance, repertory, theory and methodology are therefore needed. The vertical pathway can be summarised as movement adaptation, technical development, theoretical understanding, vocational integration and stage synthesis.

The third section develops a conceptual model for the structure, content and interrelationships of specialist subjects and analyses the curricula for Years 8 to 12. Vocational training must take account of the academic character of the educational process and the need for future performers to work within different systems of movement expression,

including floorwork and technically complex elements. This is possible through close interdisciplinary communication and a shared understanding of the curriculum across the educational community.

The connections among disciplines form a coherent system. Dance history provides cultural context, while theory and methodology explain principles, terminology and individual systems. Classical ballet class, modern dance and jazz dance establish the technical foundation; contemporary techniques broaden it; and practical training automates and stabilises skills. Composition and improvisation generate new material, repertory organises it into artistic form, acting develops motivation and imagery, and dance theatre brings movement, role and dramaturgy together. Ensemble work develops partnership and collective responsibility, while work placement transfers the whole training into a real or near-real professional environment.

The core pairing is “Modern Dance” and “Practical Training: Modern Dance”. The first subject introduces principles, terminology, movement logic, structure and historical affiliation; the second provides repetition, automation, increased complexity, application and performance resilience. Modern dance and contemporary dance techniques are distinguished but taught in logical continuity, from historical individual systems to the conscious extension and transformation of vocabulary. Classical training has a fundamental and stabilising function: it develops placement, strength, axis, balance, coordination, line and discipline, enabling freer work with weight, gravity and the centre.

Jazz dance contributes isolations, polycentrism, syncopation, rhythmic precision, dynamic changes and stage communication. It provides an established foundation for mastering terminology, positions, spinal work and movement at different levels. Repertory turns technique into artistic performance and tests memory, stylistic accuracy, spatial behaviour and ensemble work. Composition and improvisation transform the pupil from a performer of set material into an active creator, while acting, dance theatre and ensemble work develop stage presence, partnership, dramaturgical thinking and responsibility for the collective

result.

The curriculum is organised into six enduring strands: physical and movement preparation; technical preparation in modern dance; class-based training through dance class; musical and rhythmic preparation; spatial and compositional preparation; and artistic-performance and professional preparation. Topics do not follow an isolated linear sequence but are interwoven in every lesson. Knowledge and skills are revisited, consolidated and made more complex at regular intervals.

Year 8 establishes the foundations of body awareness and modern dance terminology. Concepts such as weight, centre, gravity, balance, contraction, release, lift, spiral, breathing and floorwork are introduced. This stage is orienting and diagnostic, and focuses on principles rather than mechanically accumulating movements. In Year 9, Martha Graham's class is structured and Cunningham's principles are introduced: verticality, independence of body parts, changes of direction and spatial mobility. Pupils progress from acquiring individual movements to understanding an entire technical system.

In Year 10, the Limón–Humphrey technique takes the lead, with its principles of fall and recovery, weight, impulse, and the relationship between movement and breathing. In Year 11, this is developed further and release technique is introduced, focusing on releasing unnecessary tension, anatomical awareness and smooth transitions between the floor and standing. In Year 12, knowledge is consolidated, and pupils move between different systems and make independent technical and artistic choices.

Classical ballet class develops in parallel as an academic foundation. Barre and centre exercises, adagio, allegro, turns and work on demi-pointe develop strength, resilience, axis, coordination, range, musicality and professional stamina. Its connection with modern dance is functional: plié supports shock absorption, falling and recovery; a stable axis supports complex changes of direction; adagio develops control and fluidity; and allegro develops dynamics and spatial mobility. Academic technique does not impose a single model; it teaches pupils to choose

consciously when to maintain verticality and turnout, and when to work in parallel, off-balance or organically released movement.

Theoretical training also follows a vertical progression. In Year 9, pupils study the origins and content of modern dance, Isadora Duncan and German expressionist dance. In Year 10, they examine Laban's analysis and the pioneers and individual systems of American modern dance. In Year 11, the curriculum includes postmodern dance, contact improvisation, jazz, release technique and contemporary artists. In Year 12, international history is connected with the development of modern dance in Bulgaria, improvisation, composition and the creative process. Knowledge thus progresses from historical and terminological to analytical, methodological and creative.

By the end of Year 12, pupils should have a comprehensive set of knowledge, skills and professional dispositions: terminology and stylistic features of classical and modern dance; the principles of Graham, Horton, Cunningham, Limón–Humphrey and release technique; musical-rhythmic and spatial literacy; technical clarity, balance and coordination; work with weight, gravity and floorwork; the ability to improvise, compose, memorise and perform in an ensemble; discipline, self-control, care for the body, critical self-assessment and creative initiative.

The curricula provide a meaningful vocational foundation by progressing from movement principles to the structuring and integration of different techniques. International practice demonstrates the need for professional performers to master not only classical dance but also the core techniques of Graham, Limón, Horton and Cunningham. In the twenty-first century, the boundary between "classical" and "modern" dancers has weakened, and professional command of different classical, folk, stage and modern techniques is required. An integrated model linking theory, academic training, individual modern techniques, contemporary practices, jazz, improvisation, composition and stage practice is therefore most suitable.

KEY CONCLUSIONS OF CHAPTER III

1. The school subject Modern Dance should be defined as an integrated vocational discipline, not as free movement, a single individual technique or a mechanical collection of exercises.

2. Modern and contemporary dance should be distinguished terminologically but connected methodologically. Historical individual techniques provide a stable core, while contemporary practices complement, transform and update it.

3. Institutionalising modern dance requires a balance between artistic freedom and regulatory organisation. Standards should define minimum competences and outcomes without imposing a single artistic method.

4. Individual techniques should be taught through their origins, conceptual foundations, terminology, movement principles and methodological progression. Reproducing external movements without understanding the system leads to methodological deviations.

5. The regulatory framework provides a sufficient basis for vocational education in the specialism in Modern Dance. A comprehensive educational model emerges, however, only when the subjects and modules in the model curriculum are connected through shared terminology, vertical progression and coordinated assessment.

6. Option B4 provides staged vocational specialisation combined with extended foreign-language training. Its advantages are international orientation and flexibility; its risks are the later start of intensive vocational training and the need for diagnostic and compensatory work.

7. The vertical model for Years 8 to 12 proceeds through movement adaptation, technical development, theoretical understanding, vocational integration and stage synthesis. Each stage builds on the previous one and prepares for the next level.

8. Spiral progression is a fundamental principle of curriculum content. Concepts of centre, weight, breathing, balance, space, rhythm, dynamics and impulse are introduced at the outset and developed with increasing technical, analytical and creative complexity.

9. Classical ballet class is a fundamental academic basis for strength, axis, line, balance, coordination and discipline. Its role is to expand the modern dancer's technical capabilities without restricting work with weight, gravity, parallel alignment and individual expression.

10. Vocational preparation is comprehensive only when theory, technique, practical training, improvisation, composition, repertory, acting, ensemble work and work placement function as interrelated components.

11. Assessment should be combined and track not only technical outcomes but also process, body awareness, artistic interpretation, creative output, ensemble conduct, reflection and professional discipline.

12. The final educational outcome is a professionally trained dancer who combines technical resilience, historical and methodological knowledge, creative autonomy, stage adaptability, healthy movement practices, teamwork and readiness for continued development.

IV. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation's scholarly contributions summarise the original findings of the historical-theoretical, comparative, regulatory and curricular-content analysis of vocational education in the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance. In formulating them, one fundamental circumstance must be explicitly acknowledged: the dissertation's author also authored the curricula analysed in the research. The work therefore does not examine an external, pre-existing curricular product, but provides a scholarly substantiation, systematisation and critical examination of the author's own regulatory-pedagogical product.

The curricula analysed are the first curricula for the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, to have been developed after the new Pre-school and School Education Act came into force in 2016. This gives them a pioneering character: for the first time, the requirements of the new regulatory framework were specified as comprehensive curriculum content, expected outcomes, methodological progression and a system of vocational training in the specialism. In view of this particular

feature, the dissertation's contributions are simultaneously theoretical, applied and practical.

I. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

1. For the first time, a comprehensive account is provided of the school subject Modern Dance as an integrated vocational discipline with its own historical, terminological, technical, creative and stage content. The subject is presented not as a mechanical collection of movements and styles, but as a pedagogical system integrating body awareness, technical training, artistic interpretation, creative thinking and professional culture.

2. A distinction of scholarly and methodological significance is drawn between "modern dance" and "contemporary dance techniques". Historically established individual systems are defined as the enduring core of training, while later movement, improvisational, partnering and interdisciplinary practices form a variable and developmental component. This overcomes terminological conflation and provides a basis for more precise curriculum structuring and assessment.

3. The pedagogical foundations of leading individual modern dance techniques are systematised, including their historical origins, philosophy, terminology, movement principles and methodological progression. The need to teach the techniques of Graham, Limón–Humphrey, Horton, Laban and other established systems according to their own conceptual logic, rather than by externally copying isolated movements, is substantiated.

4. A principle for an integrative and adaptable national model is formulated through comparative analysis of American, Russian and Bulgarian educational experience. It combines the Russian school's academic system and progression, the American model's creative autonomy and interdisciplinarity, and the institutional and cultural experience of Bulgarian dance education, without mechanically transferring a foreign system.

5. A concept of vocational education in modern dance is developed as a unity of classical academic foundations, historical individual

techniques, contemporary practices, jazz dance, theory and methodology, improvisation, composition, repertory, acting, ensemble work and stage practice. An invariant core, ensuring compulsory competences, and a variable core, enabling artistic and methodological renewal, are identified.

II. APPLIED SCHOLARLY CONTRIBUTIONS

6. The first curricula for the occupation of Dancer, specialism in Modern Dance, developed after the entry into force of the Pre-school and School Education Act in 2016, have been created and academically substantiated. These curricula constitute an original applied scholarly product through which the new regulatory philosophy has been translated into the language of specific vocational dance education.

7. The requirements of the Pre-school and School Education Act, the Vocational Education and Training Act, Ordinance No. 4 on the curriculum, the state educational standard for the occupation of Dancer, Framework Programme B and model curriculum option B4 have been rationalised in regulatory and methodological terms. Regulatory aims and outcomes have been translated into specific subjects, thematic areas, expected competences, teaching hours, cross-curricular links and assessment criteria.

8. A vertical model of education from Year 8 to Year 12 has been developed, based on the spiral increase in complexity of content. The model proceeds through movement adaptation, technical development, theoretical understanding, creative application, vocational integration and stage synthesis. Core concepts and movement principles are introduced early and revisited at each subsequent level with greater technical, analytical and artistic complexity.

9. The functions and interrelationships of specialist subjects have been identified. The complementary roles of classical ballet class, modern and jazz dance, contemporary dance techniques, theory and history, practical training, improvisation, composition, repertory, acting, contemporary dance ensemble and work placement have been substantiated. This provides a basis for purposeful cross-curricular

coordination, shared terminology and unity among theory, technique, creativity and stage practice.

10. A comprehensive, competence-oriented assessment system has been proposed, extending beyond the measurement of technical accuracy alone. It includes body awareness and safety, musicality, spatial control, artistic interpretation, creative activity, theoretical literacy, ensemble conduct, professional discipline, self-correction and reflection. A final competence profile for pupils completing the specialism has also been formulated.

11. Pedagogical mechanisms have been identified for implementing option B4 of Framework Programme B: continuity between Years 8 and 9; diagnostic assessment at the transition to Year 10; individual compensatory work; teacher coordination; early inclusion of stage and ensemble tasks; and vocationally oriented foreign-language training. Solutions are thus proposed for combining extended foreign-language study with the staged development of vocational dance competences.

III. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

12. The set of curricula developed provides a directly applicable basis for organizing instruction, preparing annual schemes of work, coordinating teachers' work and monitoring pupils' progress. The curricula turn general regulatory requirements into a usable pedagogical tool.

13. The model may serve as a basis for updating curricula in the specialism, developing school curricula and adapting training to other options under Framework Programme B and to other institutions providing vocational dance education. Its sustainability derives from a clearly defined historical and technical core, while its adaptability derives from variable content and the possibility of incorporating new artistic practices.

14. A practical framework has been formulated for the sustainable development of vocational training in modern dance through systematic monitoring of the educational process, analysis of outcomes, feedback

from pupils, teachers and professional organisations, and periodic refinement of content and assessment criteria. The curricula are thus conceptualised as an open pedagogical system capable of developing alongside dance as an art form and professional practice.

V. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE DISSERTATION

1.**Staneva, T. (2021).** MODERN DANCE IN THE SECONDARY EDICATION SYSTEM – HISTORICAL ASPECTS. "Science, Education and Innovation in the Field of Art" Volume 2 (Third International Scientific Conference, Plovdiv, 2021) https://www.artacademyplovdiv.com/amtii/konferencii.html

Link to scientific article: https://www.artacademyplovdiv.com/amtii/Konferencii/MNK%20Nauka%20obrazovanie%20inovacii%202022%202%20(Temp).pdf стр.94

2.**Staneva, T. (2021).** FUNDAMENTALS OF DANCE TRAINING IN THE SYSTEM OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN VARNA, scientific journal Klironomy Culture and arts in the context of cultural heritage. Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference. Klironomy, 3 (3), 150-165. Hlučín-Bobrovníky: "Anisiia Tomanek" OSVČ. (in Bulgarian)

Link to scientific article: http://tuculart.eu/ftpgetfile.php?id=252

Link to a collection of articles:

http://tuculart.eu/ftpgetfile.php?id=262

3.**Staneva, T. (2026).** FRANÇOIS DELSART AS A CONCEPTUAL PREDECESSOR OF MODERN DANCE . E-Journal VFU, 26, 193-211. https://doi.org/10.53606/evfu.26.193-211