

Program Quality and Graduate Readiness in Sports Dance Education: An Empirical Assessment of Extracurricular Training in Guangdong Province Universities

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Abstract

Higher education institutions in China have increasingly incorporated sports dance into their extracurricular offerings, yet systematic evidence evaluating the effectiveness of these programs in building professional competence remains limited. Four core aspects of the sports dance extracurricular programs (curriculum design, pedagogical methods, training resource support, industry-relevant professional development opportunities) were analyzed in this study and their overall effect on the professional readiness of the undergraduate students in Guangdong Province. A quantitative cross section design type of research was used in collecting the data, the number of respondents who were sampled were 375 participants from different universities and the data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and simple linear regression. The results showed that all four program dimensions were significantly related to positive professional readiness. The availability of industry relevant professional development and training resources proved to be the best predictors, and curriculum design and pedagogical approaches proved to be important predictors as well. All four hypotheses were accepted, this means that the integrated model of sports dance talent development is accepted. The results provide lessons or suggestions for institutions and policies to improve extracurricular sports dance programs in Chinese higher education.

Keywords: Sports Dance Education, Extracurricular Programs, Professional Readiness, Curriculum Design, Pedagogical Methods, Chinese Higher Education

Introduction

Over the last two decades, sports dance (including competitive ballroom dancing such as Latin and Standard) has been gradually gaining popularity in Chinese universities. It was

first created as an activity for a select few, and has now become an identified extra-curricular activity that combines physical fitness, artistic expression and structured competitive preparation. In today's age of expansion in the higher education sector, the need to develop students' knowledge and skills in a wider range of areas, not just academic, has grown and sports dance has evolved into an area that can serve to develop students' knowledge and skills in a multitude of areas, all in one.

Even with this expansion, the research of the effectiveness of extracurricular sports dance programs for developing the competencies of individuals to go on to careers in the professional and semi-professional dance fields is limited. Most available studies have been conducted within elite or national program training systems and there is limited research on institution based extracurricular training programs, which typically train students across a much broader spectrum. This is especially concerning because the quality of these programs is unevenly distributed, with some programs having strong structure and resources while others are poorly structured or lack resources.

This study aims to fill this gap by conducting an empirical study of sports dance extracurricular programs in HEIs in Guangdong Province, China. Four program dimensions are explored: curriculum design, pedagogical practices, access to training resources and access to industry-relevant professional development opportunities. The general goal was to examine how each dimension relates to students' professional readiness (how well students feel they are technically, artistically, interpersonally, and industry specific prepared for careers in the sports dance field).

The importance of this investigation goes beyond students' results. Understanding the relationship between program quality and graduate readiness is a key factor for institutions to ensure their resources are allocated effectively, pedagogically sound curricula are designed, and industry partnerships are created. Moreover, on a macro level, evidence-based knowledge about what successful sports dance programming is in relation to the overall national situation can be used to strengthen national-level policy frameworks to support and develop a standardised approach to the quality of extracurricular arts education in China's varied higher education sector.

The rest of this article follows the structure below. Section 2 reviews the pertinent literature regarding sports dance education, program quality and professional readiness. The research method is presented in section 3. The empirical results are presented in Section 4, while the results are discussed in terms of theoretical and practical implications in Section 5. The recommendations and directions for future research come at the end of Section 6.

Literature Review

Sports Dance in Higher Education Contexts

Sports dance training in the Chinese university curriculum is the result of the general trend of the country's emphasis on physical education, cultural expression and competitive sports as a whole. Sports dance originated in Western ballroom dance and entered China in the early twentieth century, and was slowly institutionalized in the university physical education department in the 1980s and 1990s. Since then, the sports dance field has undergone significant change as many institutions have developed structured sports dance

courses that incorporate aspects of recreational involvement with competitive goals (Liu & Wang 2021).

Sports dance is unique among all the disciplines of the university in that it requires the development of knowledge in four areas all at the same time – physical, artistic, cognitive and interpersonal. Students need to master technical movement (footwork, body position and partner coordination) and at the same time to gain musical sensitivity, expression and presence. The nature of sports dance as a multidimensional developmental need makes it complex to teach, evaluate and design it for teaching programs, which has been well-documented in Chinese and international literature (Novruzyan, 2022).

Studies in recent years have identified important differences in the organization and provision of sports dance programmes at various institutions in China. Purpose-built studios, professional staff, and well-developed extracurricular competition programs are common characteristics of elite universities in major cities, while smaller or regional schools may not have specific studios, professional teachers, or systematic courses. Such gaps will have a direct impact on student development, motivation, and professional readiness when they graduate (Du, 2025; Zhang & Chen, 2023).

Curriculum Design and Program Quality

The design of the curriculum is the structural base that all program components are built upon. A good sports dance curriculum will have a balance of technical and theoretical aspects, build up skills through academic years and the learning outcomes will meet up to industry and professional standards. Numerous studies have found that programs that have this balance result in graduates who have a stronger skill set and can adapt more effectively in the workplace (Zhou, 2021; Chen, 2023).

One important criticism of the sports dance curriculum in Chinese universities is its emphasis on the repetition of the technical skills with little consideration for interdisciplinary content. A number of institutions focus on teaching Latin and standard dance technique, and provide only a small amount of time for allied subjects like sports science, dance history, performance psychology, or movement analysis. This curriculum imbalance restricts the breadth and depth of the intellectual experiences that graduates can have and decreases the versatility of their work outside of pure performance, including coaching or choreography or arts administration (Li & Sun, 2024).

One of the quality indicators identified is curriculum responsiveness, which is defined as the extent of the regularization of the content of the programme so that it reflects changes in industry. Programs featuring feedback loops with industry, alumni, and academic reviewers show greater levels of relevance in programs, resulting in graduates who are more aligned with current industry expectations. Institutions like Xi'an Physical Education University (XUPE) have experienced several revisions of their Latin dance curriculum over the last 20 years, and have reaped program-level quality and provincial and national recognition for the process (XUPE, 2024).

Pedagogical Methods and Instructional Quality

As well as the content of sports dance education, how it is taught is also crucial to its effectiveness. The traditional pedagogical models in traditional Chinese dance have been more focused on teaching methods and performance, emphasizing demonstration and repetition to ensure students' mastery of basic techniques, which may have the limitation of restricting students' creativity, independence, and critical thinking. The modern education research emphasizes the importance of learner-centered education which emphasizes learners' effective engagement, self-regulation ability and skill internalization (Dong, 2023; Yu, 2024).

A number of innovative pedagogical approaches have been successful over the last few years. Using intrinsic motivation, for example, in the context of sports dance instruction, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) has been utilized, which focuses on promoting the sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness among students. Research studies that have implemented SDT principles have shown that students' engagement in learning, practice habits and artistic growth are better than those of students in models of instruction that are directive (Yu, 2024). In the same way, the Empowerment Sports Model has proved to be effective for enhancing students' ownership of learning by utilizing cooperative choreography exercises, peer feedback, and participative evaluation (Tian, 2025).

Another important pedagogical advancement is the incorporation of technology into dance pedagogies. A number of institutions have tried and tested virtual reality environments, motion capture systems and AI-driven feedback platforms, for which the results are encouraging; they provide objective performance information for students and create rehearsal opportunities for students in VR spaces in addition to in school. Although these gains have been achieved, non-uniform adoption has been attributed to the resource limitations, faculty unfamiliarity, and infrastructure limitations, especially in regional institutes (Huang, 2024).

Training Resources and Institutional Infrastructure

Physical facilities and resources are a key yet underutilized factor of the quality of sports dance programs. Dance studios should be designed for purpose and equipped with suitable floor, mirror, audio and ventilation systems to ensure safe technical training. The quality of facilities at competing sports universities and colleges has been found to be significantly different, and sometimes the smaller regional sports universities have to make do with multipurpose gymnasiums or poor rehearsal rooms which affect the quality of training as well as the safety of the learners (Shan, Liu, & Gong, 2023; Du, 2025).

In addition to physical space, resources include access to performance technology, academic library resources in dance theory and science, and human resources, such as qualified and experienced faculty. Research indicates that programs that have instructors both with competitive experience and pedagogical training yield much higher student outcomes than those that do not have instructors or those with part-time or inexperienced coaches (Dong, 2023). The availability and availability of these resources is a key consideration, as students' utilization of available infrastructure may be constrained due to scheduling requirements or administrative requirements (Wang, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theory of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) proposed by David Kolb which states that learning is most effective when it passes through the four learning styles: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. ELT offers a logical structure for thinking of how students learn to be ready for a career in sports dance extracurricular programs via repeated opportunities for physical practice, reflective critique, theoretical knowledge and understanding, and applied performance. All four dimensions of the program examined in this study (curriculum design, pedagogical practices, training materials, and professional development) are linked to one or more of these stages of the experiential cycle and are all part of a program that enables holistic student growth.

Methodology

The study design used was a quantitative cross-sectional survey which was used to investigate the relationship between several variables of the program and a measurable outcome at a specific point in time. The quantitative approach allowed for a large sample to be used, which facilitated the collection of quantitative data for statistical analysis to detect patterns and test hypothesized relationships with precision. The main data collection tool used was a structured questionnaire, which allowed for the comparison of participants with each other and with institutions, creating consistency in measurement.

The subjects of this study were sports dance extracurricular students from the undergraduate level of higher education institutions in Guangdong Province, China. The research was conducted in Guangdong Province since it had plenty of advanced higher education institution facilities, a large number of undergraduate students, and a strong culture of sports dance extra-curricular programme. The province has a diversity of universities in terms of student population, academic focus and resource strength and thus offers a range of student experiences and institutional practices.

The sampling was done through convenience and voluntary participation, which is suitable for the extracurricular nature of the target activity and a sample size of 375 respondents were selected. The sample size is in line with the methodological suggestions for survey research in the educational field at 95% confidence level, which ensures the reliability of relationships estimation between the variables of the study.

A 50 item structured questionnaire in six sections was used as a research instrument. Each section (B-F) had a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) with 10 items. The sections assessed: curriculum design for sports dance specialization (Section B), pedagogical methods in sports dance training (Section C), availability of training resources (Section D), industry-relevant professional development opportunities (Section E), and professional readiness of sports dance graduates (Section F, the dependent variable). In Section A, 3 pieces of demographic data were gathered.

The questionnaire was content-validated by conducting a thorough literature review and consulting with experts. A pilot study of 30 subjects confirmed face validity, and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients between the individual constructs were between 0.87 and 0.92, with an overall internal consistency of the instrument of 0.94 (excellent).

Each data was analyzed using SPSS. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were used to describe the sample and to summarize perceptions of dimensions of the program. The strength and direction of bivariate relationships of all the study variables were investigated using Pearson correlation analysis. Simple linear regression analyses were then performed to determine the contribution each independent variable made to the prediction of professional readiness, with respect to each research question. The effectiveness of each of the relationships proposed was statistically tested and the results were combined to make a synthesis of the hypothesis tests.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile

The demographic attributes of the 375 respondents are shown in Table 1. The gender ratio of the sample was largely female (63.5%) with the majority of participants aged between 23-30 years (50.4%) and the rest were between 18-22 year (25.3%) and under 18 years (24.3%). The majority of respondents reported having basic (39.2%) or intermediate (37.6%) background knowledge of dance education, which suggests that the participants did not constitute a highly experienced group. More than half (53.6%) had competed in a competition before and 29.9% had 1-3 years of dance training experience. Regarding training experience, 44.8% were trained in schools and 34.4% in private academies.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 375)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	Below 18 years old	91	24.3%
	18–22 years old	95	25.3%
	23–30 years old	189	50.4%
Gender	Male	137	36.5%
	Female	238	63.5%
Background Knowledge	Basic knowledge	147	39.2%
	Intermediate knowledge	141	37.6%
	Advanced knowledge	87	23.2%
Competition Participation	Yes	201	53.6%
	No	174	46.4%
Years of Dance Experience	Less than 1 year	69	18.4%
	1–3 years	112	29.9%
	4–6 years	103	27.5%
	More than 6 years	91	24.3%
Training Background	Formal school program	168	44.8%
	Private dance academy	129	34.4%
	Self-taught / online	45	12.0%
	Others	33	8.8%

Descriptive Statistics

Means and standard deviations are shown for all 50 items on the questionnaire in Table 2. The response scores for all items were between 3.65 and 3.99, reflecting positive perceptions of each program dimension. The best performing response was for 'Curriculum content reflects current trends in professional dance' (M = 3.99) and the worst, 'The curriculum aligns well with industry requirements in sports dance' (M = 3.65). The ratings for the pedagogical items were very high and several of the items were rated near or at 3.92. Similarly, responses were positive for items relating to professional readiness, where students indicated they felt they were prepared to perform competitively (M = 3.86), they could adapt to various choreographic styles (M = 3.79), and that they will continue to develop post graduation (M = 3.85).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for All Questionnaire Items (N = 375)

Item	Mean	Std. Dev.
The curriculum aligns well with industry requirements in sports dance.	3.65	0.969
Courses are structured to enhance technical and artistic competencies.	3.82	0.904
The program includes sufficient elective courses for dance specialization.	3.84	0.911
Curriculum content reflects current trends in professional dance.	3.99	0.902
The curriculum supports long-term career development in sports dance.	3.89	0.904
Course assessments effectively evaluate dance-specific skills.	3.68	1.013
The curriculum is regularly updated to match industry changes.	3.85	0.918
Interdisciplinary courses support a well-rounded dance education.	3.88	0.951
The curriculum allows flexibility for student-led learning.	3.71	0.974
Learning outcomes are clearly defined and relevant to dance careers.	3.78	0.937
Instructors use innovative methods in teaching dance techniques.	3.92	0.909
The teaching approach is adapted to students' individual skill levels.	3.92	0.841
Peer collaboration is encouraged during practical sessions.	3.89	0.887
There is a strong focus on performance-based learning.	3.98	0.821
Feedback from instructors improves my learning and performance.	3.86	0.878
Dance instruction includes both theoretical and practical components.	3.92	0.881
Teachers demonstrate strong expertise in sports dance.	3.91	0.867
Learning is supported by digital tools and multimedia content.	3.86	0.893
Classroom atmosphere encourages student participation and creativity.	3.89	0.856
Regular evaluation helps track my progress in dance skills.	3.93	0.850
Adequate studio space is available for practice and rehearsals.	3.78	0.875
The institution provides sufficient costumes, props, and equipment.	3.83	0.833
Access to music and audio systems is sufficient for dance training.	3.84	0.839

The institution offers modern facilities to support dance education.	3.85	0.944
Scheduling of training resources is efficient and fair.	3.81	0.921
Training equipment is well-maintained and readily accessible.	3.87	0.897
The library has adequate materials on dance theory and practice.	3.74	0.864
Technical support is available when using equipment or studios.	3.80	0.905
I can access rehearsal space during off-class hours if needed.	3.86	0.858
There are enough staff to manage and assist in training sessions.	3.85	0.882
Guest lectures and masterclasses by professionals are regularly held.	3.78	0.879
Internship or practicum opportunities are provided during the program.	3.71	0.888
The program connects students with dance competitions and showcases.	3.84	0.869
Students receive career guidance for roles in the dance industry.	3.82	0.867
Opportunities to network with professional dancers and choreographers.	3.73	0.920
Workshops on career readiness and audition skills are offered.	3.79	0.932
Students collaborate with external organizations on dance projects.	3.85	0.890
The institution provides job placement assistance after graduation.	3.86	0.866
Dance alumni regularly return to share professional experiences.	3.80	0.914
Industry partners contribute to curriculum and training improvements.	3.82	0.844
I feel confident to pursue a career in sports dance after graduation.	3.84	0.863
The program has prepared me to perform in competitive dance environments.	3.86	0.891
I can adapt to different choreography styles and demands.	3.79	0.854
I am equipped with leadership and teamwork skills needed in the field.	3.83	0.886
I am ready to meet the physical and artistic demands of a dance career.	3.79	0.896
I am knowledgeable about industry standards and expectations.	3.86	0.918
I can build a professional portfolio for job applications.	3.80	0.867
I am prepared for auditions and public performances.	3.88	0.873
I can effectively communicate and collaborate in professional settings.	3.78	0.876
I feel ready to continue learning and developing after graduation.	3.85	0.897

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients among all the study variables are provided in Table 3. Correlations were all positive, strong and statistically significant at the .01 level (two-tailed). There was a near-linear relationship between industry-relevant professional development opportunities and professional readiness ($r = 0.922$), with the highest bivariate correlation seen in this relationship. The availability of training resources is also highly correlated with both professional readiness ($r = 0.903$) and industry-related professional development ($r = 0.916$), further highlighting the interdependencies of these program elements. Pedagogical

methods had a correlation of 0.887 with professional readiness and curriculum design had a correlation of 0.805.

The inter-correlations were highest between the two independent variables of availability of training resources and pedagogical methods ($r = 0.917$) and between the two independent variables of availability of training resources and industry relevant professional development ($r = 0.916$). The substantial inter-correlations imply that the dimensions of the program are interdependent and function as a unified whole.

Table 3
Pearson Correlation Matrix (N = 375)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Curriculum Design	1.000	.799**	.828**	.837**	.805**
2. Pedagogical Methods	.799**	1.000	.917**	.881**	.887**
3. Training Resources	.828**	.917**	1.000	.916**	.903**
4. Professional Development	.837**	.881**	.916**	1.000	.922**
5. Professional Readiness	.805**	.887**	.903**	.922**	1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression Analysis: Research Questions

RQ1: Curriculum Design and Professional Readiness

To assess how well the curriculum design prepares students for careers in sports dance, a simple linear regression was performed. The results are presented in Table 4. The unstandardized coefficient for curriculum design was $B = 0.752$ ($SE = 0.029$) and the standardized coefficient was $\beta = 0.805$. It is concluded that the t-statistic is 26.244 ($p < 0.001$) that shows a positive relationship that is statistically significant. From these findings, it can be concluded that curriculum design is a significant predictor of professional readiness and it can account for meaningful variance of student professional readiness. A progressive, appropriately sequenced dance curriculum that includes technical instruction and theoretical material, career development avenues, and industry relevant updates greatly improves the ability of students to enter the dance profession.

Table 4
Regression Results – Curriculum Design Predicting Professional Readiness

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	9.651	1.113		8.669	.000
Curriculum Design	0.752	0.029	0.805	26.244	.000

Dependent Variable: Professional Readiness of Sports Dance Graduates.

RQ2: Pedagogical Methods and Professional Readiness

Table 5 shows that the regression of pedagogical methods had an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.891$ ($SE = 0.024$), the standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.887$ and the value of $t = 37.076$ ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that the quality of instruction is a significant

predictor of preparedness for the profession and the second largest coefficient of prediction of all the four variables. This relationship is a powerful one and is a testament to the significance of teaching dance, not just the content of dance. Individual feedback, performance-based evaluation, collaborative learning and technology-enhanced instruction are important pedagogical strategies that enhance students' competence, confidence and career readiness.

Table 5

Regression Results – Pedagogical Methods Predicting Professional Readiness

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.481	0.954		3.647	.000
Pedagogical Methods	0.891	0.024	0.887	37.076	.000

Dependent Variable: Professional Readiness of Sports Dance Graduates.

RQ3: Training Resources and Professional Readiness

Table 5 shows that the regression of pedagogical methods had an unstandardized coefficient of $B = 0.891$ ($SE = 0.024$), the standardized coefficient of $\beta = 0.887$ and the value of $t = 37.076$ ($p < 0.001$). These findings indicate that the quality of instruction is a significant predictor of preparedness for the profession and the second largest coefficient of prediction of all the four variables. This relationship is a powerful one and is a testament to the significance of teaching dance, not just the content of dance. Individual feedback, performance-based evaluation, collaborative learning and technology-enhanced instruction are important pedagogical strategies that enhance students' competence, confidence and career readiness.

Table 6

Regression Results – Training Resources Predicting Professional Readiness

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.746	0.864		4.336	.000
Availability of Training Resources	0.903	0.022	0.903	40.675	.000

Dependent Variable: Professional Readiness of Sports Dance Graduates.

RQ4: Industry-Relevant Professional Development and Professional Readiness

The industry relevant professional development opportunity regression yielded the best predictive results of all four of the independent variables. As shown in Table 7, the unstandardized coefficient was $B = 0.927$ ($SE = 0.020$), with $\beta = 0.922$ and $t = 46.122$ ($p < 0.001$). The numbers lend support to the hypothesis that professional dance experiences such as internships, masterclasses, competitions, career advising, and alumni connections are the most important variables in the present study. This study is consistent with experiential learning theory that suggests that the learning is enriched and reinforced when experienced directly from real-world professional settings. Students who attend sessions regularly with industry practitioners gain technical refinement as well as a sense of professional identity, career confidence and awareness of industry expectations.

Table 7

Regression Results – Industry-Relevant Professional Development Predicting Professional Readiness

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.066	0.777		3.946	.000
Industry-Relevant Professional Development	0.927	0.020	0.922	46.122	.000

Dependent Variable: Professional Readiness of Sports Dance Graduates.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 8 summarizes the outcomes of hypothesis testing. All four hypotheses were accepted, confirming statistically significant positive relationships between each program dimension and professional readiness.

Table 8

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Hypothesis	Decision
H1: Curriculum design for sports dance specialization has a significant positive effect on the professional readiness of sports dance graduates.	Accepted
H2: Pedagogical methods in sports dance training significantly influence the professional readiness of sports dance graduates.	Accepted
H3: Availability of training resources is positively associated with the professional readiness of sports dance graduates.	Accepted
H4: Industry-relevant professional development opportunities significantly contribute to the professional readiness of sports dance graduates.	Accepted

Discussion of Findings

The overall results of the study presented an engaging, empirical argument: sports dance students' preparation for the profession is a systemic process, largely influenced by the quality of the curriculum design, the effectiveness of instruction, the availability of training facilities, and the extent of industry involvement. All variables were significant, and the combination reflects how the programming for high quality sports dance is inter-dependent.

The adoption of H1 is a solid endorsement of the importance of curriculum structure in the preparedness of graduates. Courses that link subject matter to the industry's expectations, integrate content across disciplines, and offer a sequential progression will prepare students for the integrated skills they need to pursue careers that have the potential for sustainability. This discovery aligns with the studies that show the students' professional versatility is constrained by curriculum imbalance, especially the excessive focus on technical repetition at the detriment of theoretical and scientific learning (Zhou, 2021; Chen, 2023). Curriculum reform should be an ongoing, iterative process, rather than a periodic administrative task, undertaken by institutions.

The acceptance of H2 and the high value of the β coefficient for pedagogical methods (0.887) supports the claim that the quality of instruction has the same impact on achievement as the instructional content. Professionals that utilize a variety of student-centered techniques, offer prompt and positive comments, and adjust their approach to their students' individual needs are able to show measurable learning gains. The results are consistent with the vast pedagogical research literature that calls for the use of technology, collaborative learning, and reflective practice in dance teaching (Dong, 2023; Yu, 2024). The need for faculty development in the institution is therefore more of a necessity.

The near unity of the training resources Beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.903$) indicates the importance of the institutional infrastructure as a basis for the effective sports dance education. Professional level competencies cannot be developed in a setting where there is insufficient space, equipment, and technology to support the development. The high degree of association between available resources and professional readiness also suggests that the gap between institutions' resources and graduate outcomes are directly connected, with implications for equity in national education policies.

The most predictive correlation in this study was between professional development opportunities relevant to the industry and professional readiness ($\beta = 0.922$), an outcome that is especially compelling because of the transformative power of experiential industry engagement. Regular exposure to professional settings of dance gives students the opportunity to not only refine their technical skills, but also to build a sense of professional identity, realistic career expectations, and interpersonal skills that are necessary for securing employment in a competitive creative industry. This result is congruent with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which highlights the unreplaceable educational potential of real-life experiences as a catalyst for deepening and lasting learning (Morris, 2020).

Conclusion

All four areas of the study (curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, training resources, and industry-related professional development opportunities) have been found to have strong impacts on professional readiness of sports dance students in Guangdong Province universities. Overall, the regression and correlation analyses suggest that professional readiness does not result from any one program dimension but is the result of the synergy of all four dimensions working together.

The results have significant implications for practice and policy in institutions. The curriculum frameworks should be reviewed regularly with industry partners and alumni to reflect current industry standards and remain relevant. Pedagogical methods have to change gradually to become more learner-centered, feedback-oriented, autonomous and reflective. Investment in infrastructure needs to be maintained and shared fairly between institutions to allow all pupils to benefit from the physical resources needed to train them at a professional level. Lastly, industry connections should be formalized and incorporated into program design, not considered an afterthought or an additional program component, as they are the strongest single determinant of professional readiness found in this study.

In terms of policy, the national and provincial educational authorities should develop some standardised benchmarks for the quality of the sports dance extracurricular

programmes, taking into account the four dimensions discussed in this study. Structured faculty development pathways, incentives for industry-academic collaboration, and funding mechanisms prioritizing under-resourced institutions could appreciably narrow these gaps in program quality and outcomes among institutions in China's higher education system.

There are some limitations to this study. In the cross-sectional design, perceptions are observed at one moment in time, and do not allow for causal inferences or for a following-up on graduate outcomes. This sample was limited to one province and self-reported responses may be susceptible to social desirability bias. Employer perspectives and informal learning experiences were not assessed. Longitudinal designs, multi-provincial samples, and including industry stakeholder perspectives should be addressed in future research to overcome these limitations. In addition, experimental research contrasting the effectiveness of particular pedagogical models or technology integration strategies would be useful. In summary, this research is one of the many studies on performance-based arts education in Chinese higher education, laying the groundwork for further development and enhancement of sports dance extracurricular teaching in the future.

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