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Original article

The teaching process of Casino dance in the China-Cuba cultural exchange

El proceso de enseñanza del baile Casino en el intercambio cultural China-Cuba

O processo de ensino da dança do Cassino no intercâmbio cultural China-Cuba

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ABSTRACT

The cultural exchange between China and Cuba has enabled the spread of essential elements of Cuban art, particularly the casino, a traditional dance of great significance in Cuban culture. Through this exchange, Chinese students have shown a growing interest in learning this dance, creating the need to adapt the teaching-learning process to an international context. This article

aims to present the main theoretical background on the teaching-learning process of Cuban casino, based on research conducted with Chinese students at the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center in Beijing. Theoretical methods were used, based on a review of literature on dance pedagogy and its adaptation to international contexts, combining practical and theoretical instruction focused on rhythm, steps, and the culture behind Cuban casino. The pedagogical approach allowed Chinese students to acquire dance skills effectively, maintaining the authenticity of Cuban casino without transforming it into another form of salsa. Additionally, they managed to understand the connection between technique and the rich culture behind this dance. In conclusion, teaching Cuban casino to international students not only facilitates the dissemination of Cuban art but also preserves its cultural authenticity. The combination of theory and practice helped students master the dance while keeping its traditional essence and promoted meaningful cultural exchange.

Keywords: casino; culture; process; pedagogy; dance; China; Cuba.

RESUMEN

El intercambio cultural entre China y Cuba ha permitido la difusión de elementos esenciales del arte cubano, destacándose el baile Casino, una danza popular y tradicional de gran relevancia en la cultura cubana. A través de este intercambio, los estudiantes chinos han mostrado un interés creciente en aprender este baile, lo que ha generado la necesidad de adaptar el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de este a un contexto internacional. Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar los principales antecedentes teóricos sobre el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del Casino, basado en una investigación realizada con estudiantes chinos en el Centro de Intercambio Cultural China-Cuba en Beijing. Se emplearon métodos teóricos como el histórico-lógico, fundamentado en la revisión de literatura sobre pedagogía de la danza y su adaptación a

contextos internacionales, combinando la instrucción práctica y teórica enfocada en el ritmo, los pasos y la cultura detrás del Casino; y empíricos como el análisis documental. El enfoque pedagógico permitió a los estudiantes chinos adquirir habilidades de baile de manera efectiva, manteniendo la autenticidad del Casino, sin transformarlo en otra forma de salsa. Además, lograron comprender la conexión entre la técnica y la rica cultura que sustenta este baile. Se concluye que la enseñanza del Casino a estudiantes internacionales no solo facilita la difusión del arte cubano, sino que también preserva su autenticidad cultural. La combinación de teoría y práctica ayudó a los estudiantes a dominar la danza mientras mantenían su esencia tradicional, promoviendo un intercambio cultural significativo.

Palabras clave: casino; cultura; proceso; pedagogía; danza; China; Cuba.

RESUMO

O intercâmbio cultural entre a China e Cuba permitiu a difusão de elementos essenciais da arte cubana, destacando-se o casino, uma dança tradicional de grande relevância na cultura cubana. Através deste intercâmbio, estudantes chineses têm mostrado um interesse crescente em aprender esta dança, criando a necessidade de adaptar o processo de ensino-aprendizagem a um contexto internacional. Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar os principais antecedentes teóricos sobre o processo de ensino-aprendizagem do casino cubano, com base em uma pesquisa realizada com estudantes chineses no Centro de Intercâmbio Cultural China-Cuba em Pequim. Métodos teóricos foram utilizados, baseados na revisão de literatura sobre pedagogia da dança e sua adaptação a contextos internacionais, combinando instrução prática e teórica focada no ritmo, nos passos e na cultura por trás do casino cubano. A abordagem pedagógica permitiu que os estudantes chineses adquirissem habilidades de dança de maneira eficaz, mantendo a autenticidade do casino cubano sem transformá-

lo em outra forma de salsa. Além disso, eles conseguiram entender a conexão entre a técnica e a rica cultura que sustenta essa dança. Conclui-se que o ensino do casino cubano a estudantes internacionais não só facilita a disseminação da arte cubana, mas também preserva sua autenticidade cultural. A combinação de teoria e prática ajudou os estudantes a dominar a dança mantendo sua essência tradicional, promovendo uma troca cultural significativa.

Palavras-chave: cassino; cultura; processo; pedagogia; dança; China; Cuba.

INTRODUCTION

Recognized as one of the most emblematic traditional and popular dances of Cuba, Casino has managed to transcend borders and establish a significant international presence. With its passionate and energetic character, as well as its deep sense of rhythm, Casino not only represents the diversity and uniqueness of Cuban culture, but also embodies the perfect combination of music and dance. This dance has evolved throughout history, and its influence has been evident in the development of salsa, which has diversified and adapted in several countries, with the Caribbean as its cultural center.

In this context, the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center in Beijing stands as a crucial space for the teaching and preservation of Casino. This center aims to foster mutual understanding between Cuba and China, through training programs that integrate both theoretical and practical aspects of dance.

The teaching methods used at the center are innovative and focus on combining practical and theoretical instruction, addressing not only the characteristic steps and rhythms of Casino, but also the rich cultural history that accompanies it (Zhang & Deng, 2010).

This approach allows students, both Chinese and international, to not only master dance techniques, but also appreciate the cultural and emotional depth of Casino, all of which allows for reflection and resistance to cultural and social oppression (Tennyson, 2024).

The training programs are structured in such a way that students can experience an immersion in Cuban culture, where they are instructed about the historical evolution of Casino, its social context, and its role in Cuban daily life. This interactive pedagogy fosters meaningful learning, allowing participants to understand the connection between dance technique and its cultural significance (Rodríguez, 2016). Furthermore, the center promotes respect for and preservation of the authenticity of Casino, preventing it from becoming a mere commercial representation or a variant of salsa (Padilla and Coterón, 2013).

Casino and salsa, as expressions of the rich Cuban musical tradition, have achieved worldwide popularity, conquering diverse audiences with their vibrant energy. This article aims to explore the cultural background and characteristics of Casino dance, as well as to delve into the historical evolution of Cuban culture.

Through this research, we seek to convey the unique charm of Casino and its role in strengthening cultural ties between Cuba and China, thus promoting a significant cultural exchange. For Dallal (1975), exploring the development of dance in Cuba encompasses both folkloric and classical and modern dance, its cultural and social impact on Cuban society, in which Casino, as a Latin dance originating in Cuba, is considered fundamental.

With the increase in the number of dance performances and competitions, the skills and number of qualified coaches have also increased worldwide. It is considered as a low-difficulty dance type, so non-professionals and dance lovers can also practice and participate in the competition (Brown, 2017).

In order to analyze the contradiction between need and reality in the context of the teaching-learning process of the Casino at the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center, as well as the problematic situation and the specific problem, certain elements can be identified.

There is a growing demand from Chinese and international students to learn about Cuban culture, especially in regards to its music and dance, such as Casino. This interest reflects a desire for cultural understanding and connection, as well as mastery of artistic skills that enrich their personal and professional development.

Despite this need, the Casino teaching-learning process may face challenges such as a lack of adequate resources, a shortage of highly trained teachers in the specific dance of Casino, and the difficulty in effectively transmitting the rich cultural heritage that accompanies it. Furthermore, the focus on more conventional teaching methods may not be sufficient to capture students' interest or to ensure effective learning.

The problematic situation centers on the fact that, although there is a growing interest in learning about Casino, the current teaching methodology may not be aligned with the expectations and needs of students. This can result in superficial learning, which fails to capture the essence of the dance and its cultural context, thus limiting the appreciation and real mastery of this art form.

The specific problem lies in the fact that the pedagogical approach used at the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center is not sufficiently adapted to address the needs of students interested in learning Casino. This could lead to a loss of authenticity of the dance and a limited understanding of its cultural significance. The lack of a methodology that effectively combines theory and practice can hinder the comprehensive training of students, as well as the true appreciation of the richness of Cuban culture.

This article aims to present the main theoretical background on the Casino teaching-learning process, based on research conducted with Chinese students at the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center in Beijing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted at the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center in Beijing, a space that promotes cultural exchange through the teaching of Cuban arts, including Casino dance. This center is committed to offering training programs that not only teach dance technique, but also delve into the cultural and historical aspects surrounding it.

The methods used in this study were theoretical in nature, focusing on the investigation of the cultural background and history of the Casino:

- Historical-logical: a literature review was carried out on the origin and evolution of the Casino, analyzing works by renowned authors in the field of Cuban dance and culture.
- Document analysis: documents and teaching materials used in the center's training program were analyzed, including guides on the Casino technique, as well as texts that address its cultural context.

The context was the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center, which not only offers training in Casino dance, but acts as a cultural bridge, facilitating mutual understanding between Cuban and Chinese traditions. Through the teaching of this dance, the aim is to preserve the authenticity of Casino and foster a true cultural exchange.

RESULTS

Research on Casino dance and its teaching in the context of the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center has revealed various antecedents that are fundamental to understanding the evolution of this dance form and its pedagogy. Below, the results obtained from the literature review and previous studies are presented, followed by an analysis of the evolution of Casino and its teaching.

The evolution of Casino has been characterized by the incorporation of new elements and styles over the decades. From its origins in parties and social gatherings, Casino has become a world-renowned cultural expression. Its teaching has been the subject of study in various institutions, which have explored how to teach this dance to diverse audiences, including those who are not familiar with Cuban culture.

The China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center has become a point of reference for cultural exchange and Casino teaching in the Chinese context. Although no concrete programs have been implemented, research has been done on how traditional Casino teachings could be adapted to a different audience. The focus on cultural interaction and respect for traditions has been crucial in planning pedagogical methods, which address both dance techniques and their cultural significance.

The reviewed background reveals a rich history of Casino dance and its teaching, highlighting the importance of a culturally contextualized approach. The evolution of Casino and its pedagogy in the context of the China-Cuba Cultural Exchange Center underscores the need to develop teaching methods that not only transmit techniques, but also foster a deeper understanding of dance as a form of cultural expression.

The traditional Cuban Casino dance is characterized by several fundamental elements. First, it features a strong sense of rhythm, influenced by the drum beats that mark its

cadence. The basic dance pattern is organized in two beats, with dancers typically changing their steps on the fourth beat.

Secondly, the steps are crucial; these include varied movements that reflect the energy of the dance, which may include jumps and transformations that show the dancer's personality. In addition, Casino relies on rich and expressive body movements, where body parts are used to convey emotions, with turns and arm lifts complementing the rhythm. Cooperation between partners is also essential, as this dance is performed in pairs and requires a deep mutual understanding during its execution.

Casino's fundamental steps include several basic movements. These include forward and backward steps, where the dancer alternates the movement of their feet. There are also left and right steps, as well as a blocking step that provides stability. Another key step is the step hold, which involves foot movements in coordination with the beat. Finally, the continuous turn allows dancers to coordinate their movement with the music, creating a dynamic and engaging experience.

The music chosen for the Casino, which includes genres such as salsa and Latin jazz, plays a crucial role in the dance. Traditional instruments such as drums and xylophones not only accompany the dance but also encapsulate the richness of Cuban culture. The lyrics of the songs, such as "Guantanamera", not only describe Cuban culture but evoke emotions and connections between the dancers, enriching the Casino experience.

Casino has emerged on the international scene through a historical process of diffusion and adaptation. Originating in the mountains of Cuba, this dance spread to the cities and began to gain international popularity in the 20th century. Its evolution has allowed the emergence of different styles, enriching its presence on the global stage.

Casino has been integrated into numerous international dance competitions, gaining recognition for its dynamism and uniqueness. Its popularity is due to the combination of unique steps and an attractive rhythm, which has led to a growing interest from dancers from various parts of the world. Furthermore, its inclusion in competitions has further boosted its development and appreciation of Cuban culture on a global level.

Teaching about the Casino should include a focus on its authentic cultural background, allowing students to appreciate its history and significance. This approach helps learners understand the Casino's beauty and artistic value, as well as experience its vibrant atmosphere.

In order to teach Casino effectively, various strategies can be implemented. These include the introduction of cultural background, the integration of the surrounding cultural environment, and the use of local languages and songs. These methods not only facilitate the learning of the dance steps, but also enrich the cultural experience of the students, allowing them to better understand the richness of Cuban culture through musical selections and song lyrics with a rich cultural background and historical significance.

Course content

It includes the selection of topics related to Casino, such as its history, culture and dance techniques. It is crucial to offer content that allows students to understand the cultural richness behind the dance.

Teaching methodology

Uses strategies that encourage active student participation, such as project-based teaching, group practice, and the use of audiovisual resources that show Casino presentations.

Material resources

It includes the use of spaces suitable for dancing, such as dance studios, as well as the incorporation of music and costumes that reflect the culture of the Casino.

Assessment

Implement assessment methods that measure not only technical performance but also cultural understanding. This can include self-assessments, presentations, and group feedback sessions.

Cultural integration

Promote activities that connect students with Cuban culture, through gastronomy, music and local traditions, creating a more immersive learning experience.

Essential premises to take into account:

- Student motivation: the willingness and interest of students to learn dance are essential. Efforts must be made to create a motivating environment that encourages their participation.
- Interpersonal skills: The ability to work in pairs and collaborate with other dancers is essential in Casino. Fostering social and communication skills helps strengthen group dynamics.
- Cultural Identity: Students' personal relationship with Cuban culture can influence their learning. Promoting exploration of their cultural identity can enrich the dance learning experience.
- Self-efficacy: Building confidence in students' dance abilities is essential.

This can be achieved through consistent practice, positive feedback, and celebrating individual achievements.

These components are interdependent and contribute integrally to the teaching-learning process of Casino dance. The combination of a

sound pedagogical approach and the personal development of students creates an environment conducive to learning and appreciating this rich cultural tradition.

Didactic components

Problem: Identify the need that drives the teaching-learning process.

Objective: to define the aspirations to be achieved in the training of students, guiding the educational process.

Content: knowledge, skills and values to be learned, determining what the student should learn.

Method: describe the order and sequence in which the contents are presented, facilitating the appropriation of knowledge.

Organizational form: refers to the structure of the classroom and the relationship between the teacher and the students, which can influence the dynamics of learning.

Media: material and technological resources used during the educational process, such as books, equipment and tools.

Results: the transformations that have been achieved in students at the end of the training process, evaluating their impact.

The personal components of the training process focus on the characteristics of the main actors: teachers and students:

Teachers:

- Knowledge: The teacher's training and mastery of the subject matter taught. His or her in-depth knowledge of the subject is essential to guide and facilitate student learning.
- Teaching skills: the teacher's ability to employ different teaching strategies and

methods that adapt to the needs and learning styles of students.

- Attitudes and motivation: The beliefs and values that teachers have towards teaching and learning directly influence their commitment and the classroom atmosphere.
- Previous experience: the educational and professional background of the teacher that can enrich the teaching-learning process by providing relevant examples and contexts.

Students:

- Prior knowledge: What students already know and how it relates to the new content they are learning.
- Skills: the ability of students to apply knowledge and techniques learned in different contexts, including their motor and expressive development in dance.
- Attitudes: the dispositions they have towards learning, which can be influenced by their social, cultural and emotional context.
- Motivation: the internal force that drives students to learn and actively participate in the educational process, being crucial for learning success.
- Personal experiences: the cultural and social backgrounds that each student brings to the classroom, which influence how they learn and how they connect to the content.

These personal components are essential, as they affect how the teaching-learning process develops and how knowledge and skills are integrated in the Casino context. Effective interaction between teachers and students is essential to create a dynamic and enriching learning environment.

DISCUSSION

Casino, which emerged in the 1950s in Cuba, has been influenced by diverse cultural traditions, including African and Spanish ones. According to Pérez (2019), this dance has evolved from a folkloric style to a popular dance form that is practiced at festivals and celebrations. This development has led to a growing interest in teaching Casino at an international level, including its adaptation in other cultural contexts.

In terms of music selection, the music commonly used in Casino dancing includes traditional Cuban music, salsa and Latin jazz, among others. Among them, traditional Cuban music is one of the most important sources of Casino, and includes traditional Cuban folk music.

Traditional Cuban instruments such as drums and xylophone are often used in this music, which embody deep-rooted Cuban customs and cultural characteristics. The musical selections and lyrics of the Casino dance have a rich cultural background and historical significance. They are not only the accompaniment and background of the dance, but also an important part of the dance culture (Padilla and Coteron, 2013).

In order to teach Casino with an authentic cultural background, teaching methods and strategies may include the following aspects:

- Before teaching the dance, one can introduce the historical and cultural background, including the origin of music, costumes, emotions, and dance, and even introduce some legends and stories that can help students and dancers to understand more deeply the perceptual connotation and cultural background of the dance.
- In the teaching process of Casino, the surrounding cultural environment such as culture, literature and movies can be integrated, so that dancers can have a deeper understanding of local cultural

characteristics, which in turn can make Casino dance unique and ornamental.

- When teaching Casino dancing, relevant local languages and songs can be used, which will not only facilitate students and dancers to master and understand the dance steps and performance methods, but also improve their perceptual knowledge and experience of local culture.
- In addition to teaching Casino, cultural displays other than dance can also allow students and dancers to learn more about Cuban culture, such as local food, crafts, and traditional festivals, among others, which can enhance their understanding and experience of Cuban culture.

Attention should be paid to cultural heritage and promotion, and various teaching methods and strategies should be comprehensively used, such as introducing historical and cultural background, integrating the surrounding cultural environment, and using language and songs, so that students and dancers can better understand the connotation of Cuban culture and pass it on (Brown, 2017).

Several studies highlight that dance teaching in Cuba has traditionally been linked to oral transmission and community practice. The focus on improvisation and creativity has been key, allowing dancers to develop their personal style. This aspect has been especially valued in intercultural teaching contexts, where students are encouraged to understand and connect with the essence of dance.

For García *et al.* (2021), studies on cultural identity in Cuba and Latin America are numerous and characterized by diverse, often controversial approaches. From the assumption or not of the validity of the term to the complexity of the concept itself, a multitude of investigations have been generated from fragmented areas of knowledge, although it would be unfair not to recognize the call-in recent decades for its recognition as an expression of interdisciplinary.

Aprill (2020) formulates two hypotheses regarding the neglect of dance in social science research: its dominated position is what gives it the features of a popular object, and possibly, it is simpler to reexamine a popular problem than to explore the cultural and intellectual foundations, due to which a large majority of intellectuals have lost interest in this object called dance. Such an approach is correct; in the case of teaching Casino dance, it goes beyond the simple transmission of steps and involves an educational process that connects technique with culture and emotion.

According to Donnelly (2015), dance education should integrate practical experiences with theory, creating a collaborative environment that fosters creativity and expression. This vision is fundamental to Casino, where improvisation and personal interpretation are essential. The dynamics of dance, which require close cooperation between partners, highlights the importance of building a tacit understanding between dancers, as the authors point out in their research on teaching methodologies (Pastor and Morales, 2021).

In addition, Casino learning not only develops technical skills, but also enhances socio-emotional competencies.

Karkou, Oliver & Lycouris (2017) address various perspectives on dance and its impact on well-being. They report that its role in education, community and health care promotes emotional and social well-being and, therefore, quality of life. In addition, they emphasize that dance is a powerful tool for self-expression and interpersonal development.

This approach is relevant in the Casino context, where dancers express emotions through their movements, creating a deep connection with the music and with each other. Therefore, the inclusion of cultural and emotional elements in teaching is vital to increase student engagement and motivation.

Music, with its rich cultural background, plays a crucial role in the Casino learning experience. Appropriate music selection not only accompanies the movements but also enriches students' understanding of the roots of dance. By understanding the history and culture surrounding Casino, students can better appreciate the beauty and meaning of dance (Thompson & Allen, 2020).

On the other hand, it is essential to take into account in the approach the criterion of Naví (2016), who reflects on the significance of the decolonization of Latin American thought through new transformative educational practices that are visible in popular artistic expression and, from a critical perspective, integrates categories of the imaginary, art, and the construction of the social subject that evolves towards new forms of socialization that include the Environment, ethics, aesthetics, economics, and art.

Finally, it is essential that dance educators adopt strategies that promote a deep understanding of the cultural context of Casino. This includes incorporating legends, stories, and the experience of Cuban culture into teaching, allowing students to emotionally connect with dance and improve their performance.

The Casino teaching-learning process must have a comprehensive approach that considers technique, culture and emotion, promoting not only dance skills, but also an understanding and appreciation for this rich cultural tradition.

Authentic teaching of cultural background can help students and dancers better understand and inherit the essence of Cuban culture and promote the development and inheritance of traditional culture. By studying Casino dance, we can not only appreciate the artistic charm of this dance, but also deeply understand the cultural and historical heritage of Cuba.

Teaching Casino dance with an authentic cultural background can better spread the characteristics of Cuban culture to the world and provide new

opportunities for the development of the local tourism industry.

In short, only by combining authentic cultural background with dance teaching can we better promote and inherit Casino dance, make local Cuban culture more recognized and spread throughout the world, and ultimately achieve prosperity and development of cultural diversity.

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