

THE DANCERS OF TOMORROW

The learning of ballet
Realizing yourself as a dancer



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Abstract

From my personal experiences as a graduate student of the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam it was logical to investigate the dance sector in the Netherlands. My concerns were especially focused on the young talented dancers who invest many years of hard work, without having any guarantee of success in their future career as a professional dancer because the chances of success are very low. To be more specific, the research question examines why it is so difficult to become a professional dancer in the Netherlands, even when the Dutch dance companies are internationally so highly recommended. Given the conceptual framework combined with my personal case this thesis can be considered reflective, in that the conclusion functions as an advisory report for the dance sector in the Netherlands. The data-gathering tool of the qualitative research is in-depth interviews with prominent individuals of the Dutch dance sector, which led to new insights and perspectives.

The main results were that compared to foreign countries, the ballet academies in the Netherlands do not include a boarding school, which can be a solution for young dancers to have more focus and structure, and fewer hours of travelling home. Furthermore, the Dutch mentality was mentioned as being not that motivated and eager to achieve goals and the Dutch body type was also not that suitable for the fragile, tiny body type that classical ballet requires. Besides, not all respondents were so excited about the level of the current generation of young dancers whereas most of them did see progression but all wish for higher level of young dancers in the Netherlands. Last, in terms of tradition the Dutch classical ballet tradition is not so deeply rooted as in other countries, which lead to less societal value for ballet and fewer financial possibilities for the ballet academies. To conclude, the advice will be to realize the plans of having one building of excellence for ballet in which all the facilities are available. Secondly, take more advantage of the top-class sport in terms of mental and psychic support and take it as an example to develop a well-organized support program for the young dancers as well. And third, to emphasise the craftsmanship of classical ballet by showing this more often to the audience in terms of watching open rehearsals or ballet classes. If these aspects are adapted it will hopefully lead to more successful Dutch dancers in the future and create an increase of societal value for ballet, so we can enjoy the beautiful art form of classical ballet for many more years.

Keywords: classical ballet, cultural economics, value-based approach, craftsmanship, dance sector, *oikos*, professional dancer, realizing values, human capital, talent development, bodily intelligence.

Preface

After a long and demanding journey I finally reached the point of deciding what the topic of my Thesis would be. I knew from the moment I started the Master that I would like to examine the dance sector in the Netherlands because of my personal background as a graduate of the National Ballet Academy Amsterdam. Ballet is an art form, which is therefore very close to my heart and it is also my mission to contribute to the dance sector in my future career after studying. So it was no coincidence at all that many of my essays and other writings were all related to something concerning the dance sector, although many different perspectives were addressed, which led every time to new insights. So far it was thus clear that my scope of research for this Thesis would be the dance sector but it took a long time to determine what would be the exact research question.

But one day I suddenly got an idea that it was quite strange that we had just one ballet academy in Amsterdam and The Hague, and not a well-established academy in the east of the Netherlands. This is also derived from a personal concern that I lived in Ermelo, which was 3 hours travelling each day to Amsterdam, so I was thinking that this location could have been quite an issue for other talented young dancers to decide not to audition, because the ballet academy would be too far away for them. My solution for this problem is that we should establish a '*dependance*', a small ballet academy in for example the city Zwolle, so more talented dancers will have a chance of becoming a ballerina. This idea arose because I was for many years concerned about the fact that we do not have many Dutch top professional dancers in the Netherlands, let alone that there are no Dutch ballet stars who could be an example for young dancers. To be more concrete, in the Dutch National Ballet approximately 10 out of 80 dancers are Dutch.

So these concerns all lead to a better focus in what I actually wanted to research, but will be more explicitly addressed in the introduction.

Besides, I felt the need to include prominent individuals of the dance sector in my research because they have interesting insights, and can also show their thoughts in the academic field to give inspiration for further investigation on ballet in general.

Therefore, I would like to thank the following people for their great contribution by inspiring me, and taking the time for an interview: Leontien Wiering, Marijn Rademaker, Rinus Sprong, Janine Dijkmeijer, Nathalie Caris, Klaas Backx, Jane Lord, Caroline Harder, Ernst Meisner, Grigory Chicherin, Ted Brandsen, and Jan Linkens.

Furthermore, I would like to thank my parents and sister Simone for their never-ending support for all these years of studying both at the ballet academy and in my current studies, and their help of making the next step in life from being a student to my upcoming working career. And many thanks to my supervisor Arjo Klamer, for his many inspirational hours of conversations about my life as a dancer, his feedback, belief and support. Also thanks for my mental coach Arjanne Bredemeijer who has been a great support in difficult times and helped me to be able to write this Thesis in such a personal way. Last, I would like to thank Bob and Kate, two Canadian professors, who I recently met and helped me to improve my English writings.

1. Introduction

“A school is the bedrock of any company, nurturing as it does the dancers and choreographers of the future” (Ninette de Valois¹)

1.1. Background

Four years ago I graduated from the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam after 10 years of intensive professional ballet training. I realized that my life as a professional dancer would not be satisfying enough and due to mental and physical constraints I decided to change my career path and study at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam. After successfully completing my premaster in Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship I continued with the Master in the same direction. My background as a dancer often helped me to write and elaborate on the theories that were discussed during the studies. Also, my experience could contribute to the discussion and the exceptional situations in the world of ballet often led to new insights. It became clear to me (and other students) that this profession of dancing was quite an exceptional case and moreover, quite unknown to many people. The closed world of ballet dancers' life is so extraordinarily demanding in that it does not only ask a lot physically from the dancers but also mentally, starting from a very young age. Therefore, it seems reasonable to investigate this subject in more detail and see where links are missing and how the ballet world can be optimized and create more openness so more people will feel connected.

This Master Thesis indirectly states my vision on the world of ballet as I have seen it myself as a professional dancer but more importantly how I have been investigating the ballet world from a cultural economic perspective during my studies. My view on this has been changed dramatically since the more years I have spent outside this protected world it becomes clearer what I have accomplished as a young girl and how much effort and dedication I invested in realizing myself as a dancer. This way of living, which is rather different from an ordinary childhood, makes you on the one hand very grown-up and mature but on the other hand there are gaps in the development of my childhood since normal daily life activities are not developed in a regular way. An explanation for this underdevelopment can be found, according to my

¹Famous ballet dancer and founder of the Royal Ballet: <http://www.royalballschool.org.uk/the-school/>

experience, in the few hours I had left to spend with my family. My parents were supportive, and I could call them every moment of the day but the real face-to-face moments were limited. To give an illustration; on a week day I left the house at 6.30 in the morning and came home more than twelve hours later around 8 o'clock. This meant only two to three hours of family time before going to sleep to rest and be ready for the next day.

Therefore, my motivation for this Thesis is focused on the difficulties that people come across when trying to become a professional dancer at a ballet academy. One of the aspects of this subject is the importance of the home, or the *oikos*, for young talented dancers. It seems so obvious that this must be of main importance yet it is according to my experience not enough explored in the organizational culture of the ballet academies. It relates in a large part to the mental capabilities that are asked from the young dancers. The stress, the competing elements between friends, the hard work, the dedication, the suffering, and the psychical efforts are all part of the life of a young dancer, not to mention the long days training in the studio which results in less or no time for a social life. Additionally, in my case there was the time spent commuting because I had to travel every day three hours from my hometown Ermelo to the city of Amsterdam by train. Moreover, I started at the age of nine years old at the ballet academy and from the beginning I travelled. Thinking about this now, I almost cannot believe that I actually did this at such a young age.

To make it more concrete, I have been calculating how many hours I have spent in the train after being ten years at the ballet academy. The rather shocking result is that I have spent around 6000 hours in the train not even counting the many delays I've had with the train and extra days I had to rehearse for performances during the weekend. Because of this calculation I realized that other children in my ballet class had 6000 hours more than me to spend with their family or to play with other kids and make friends. Given this calculation it became clear how extraordinary my childhood was and not only mine but all the other young children attending the ballet academy some of them living close some also further away. And thinking about the young children now waiting on the station for the train, tired of a long day with hard work at the ballet classes, doing their homework for school in the train and hoping to be home as soon as possible. Yet, they are all dedicated to live their dream because that is the thing they are striving for: to become a prima ballerina.

So why are so many children pursuing a dream of becoming a professional dancer while the chances of success are so low? Why would the investment at such a young age be so high and intense while the actual chance of becoming the next superstar ballerina is so small and quite unrealistic? When I try to answer these questions myself I come to the conclusion that I did not find it impossible at all that I would become the next soloist of the Dutch National Ballet and really believed in the possibility that I would succeed. Also, it would probably be the only condition under which you could continue your daily hard work and dedication. This dream of becoming a ballerina keeps you going through all the efforts otherwise it would be impossible to continue this practice. Consequently, the primary focus of this Master Thesis is on the realization of values for a young dancer and what it takes to realize this dream and learning the craft of ballet, which requires so much dedication and many years of ballet training. It addresses the difficulties to pursue this dream of becoming a ballerina and investigates the internationally high artistic excellence of the dance sector in the Netherlands.

To be more specific, there are a few matters that concern me in the Dutch dance sector, which might have a correlation and hence will be investigated in this thesis.

First, on a more societal level, what is missing in the way ballet dancers are perceived by the Dutch society? What is the mystique around the ballet world that so few people actually know the demands of this art form? Moreover, dancers consider themselves as being different from other people, and missing other daily things in life (Wulff, 1998). And more importantly, where are the Dutch ballet 'stars' as we have had in the past. The dance couple Alexandra Radius and Han Ebbelaar were quite famous in the Dutch society, and this definitely led to an increase in ticket sales for their performances. Nowadays, the only Dutch soloist of the Dutch National Ballet is Igone de Jongh and she is quite well known but not so much as in the past. Is this faded glory or a turning point of new initiatives?

Besides, why do we not have a ballet company consisting mainly of dancers with the Dutch nationality? As it is now only 10 out of the 80 dancers in the Dutch National Ballet are Dutch and educated in the Netherlands. It would make a big difference in terms of popularity if more Dutch dancers are involved and it will generate more attention in terms of stardom among dancers. And it could create a feeling like we have with the Dutch football team, of national pride. The popularity of ballet will never reach

the same level but it is interesting to see how this could influence the support for ballet in a broader sense.

Secondly, and related to the first issue just mentioned, is something on a more personal level which involves the many hours of travelling for young students to the ballet academy. I want to investigate if there is a correlation between the distance from home to the ballet academy and the chances of success as a dancer. To be more specific, I feel that the importance of spending a sufficient amount time at home can have an influence on whether a young ballet student will actually become a professional dancer at a ballet company. This hypothesis is based on my own ballet academy looking at other students in my class, which already shows that the ones living close to the ballet academy are now ballet dancers as their profession. However, also interesting to notice, is that those students are currently living abroad and working for ballet companies there, so also they left their home but at a more reasonable age when they were grown-up around 18 years old. They are building their own new *oikos* (Klamer, n.d.) or family abroad and try to make it comfortable to create this new place.

Last, to what extent do students at the ballet academy actually find a job? The majority of the graduates do not succeed in entering the working field. The main reason can be found in the lack of jobs available and more important the competition with the international dance world. Many dancers from abroad are auditioning all over the world and obviously also in The Netherlands. Therefore, the amount of Dutch dancers entering the Dutch ballet companies is very limited even though the government is stimulating the companies to contract more Dutch dancers. So what other reason can be found for this, a lack of talent among Dutch students? Or are the ballet academies in the Netherlands not of the best quality whereas in other countries the academies do have the required excellent level to enter the professional ballet companies? Yet, the ballet companies in the Netherlands are on an international level highly recommended and that makes it even more notable that the ballet academies in the Netherlands cannot deliver more high-standing dancers.

The above-mentioned aspects are all related to the question whether the dance education in the Netherlands is competent enough to optimize the talent of young dancers and educate them to the required artistic level that is needed at the ballet companies. From a cultural economic perspective, the main constraint will be that the young dancers are educated for a job in which the supply is of such a low level that it

seems to be questionable if these ballet academies are even needed. In the Netherlands there are two main ballet academies located in Amsterdam and The Hague and a few modern dance companies such as in Rotterdam, Arnhem, and Tilburg. So the question becomes: how do all these graduated dancers from the several dance academies obtain a job if only a few jobs are available? Moreover, the competition is on an international level since many dancers from abroad are also auditioning for jobs in the Netherlands.

1.2. Motivation

My first attempt at this Master Thesis investigated whether there is a correlation between the distance that ballet students live from the ballet academy and the chances of success that dancers have in their early professional life. However, after some research it turned out that the amount of people graduating and actually finding a job is so small that a meaningful correlation is impossible to find, and consequently my focus had to be altered.

So I started again thinking about my own experience and trying to identify what confuses me the most about the life I have been living as a dancer.

The main concern in my own experience is the lack of mental support at the ballet academy. There is not any support in the mental capabilities that are needed in order to survive the tough and demanding efforts that are asked in the ballet world. Besides, due to the young age of attending the ballet academy, it is important to mention that the development of young students should not only be focussed on their development as a dancer but also their development as a human being. If the mental support is already missing in the curriculum of the ballet academy it becomes even harder to give this mental support for their daily life. So, to make the research broader and involve all the mentioned concerns it will be interesting to examine the conditions that need to be optimized for young dance students and see where improvements can be made.

On top of that, the number of dancers that graduate and actually succeed in finding a job is relatively small since the supply of jobs is very limited. Besides, only the dancers with the highest artistic excellence and qualities have a chance to succeed so the actual numbers that become a professional dancer is only one or two per school year. For some of the students the dedication and effort it takes for them to be able to give this quality is simply too high and can result in a decision to quit or be advised to stop the training. Every year there is an examination board of teachers that examine whether the

students are to be accepted or rejected for the next school year on the basis of an assessment of their chance to become a professional dancer. This yearly examination causes a lot of stress and uncertainty for the students and consequently pressure to perform at their ultimate best. So it becomes more questionable what is missing and why it is so difficult to achieve what the ballet academies are meant for: delivering young professional dancers of the highest artistic level who can develop themselves in a successful career.

1.3. Research question

Therefore, the main research question will be: *Why is it so difficult in the Netherlands to become a professional dancer even though the Dutch dance companies are internationally so highly recommended?*

With this broader view many aspects that concern me will be investigated. Therefore, the qualitative research will include interviews with a few influential individuals in the dance sector and in particular directors and teachers of the different ballet academies, who are often all former professional dancers that have been educated at the ballet academy as well. Yet, it seems appropriate to investigate how these dancers experienced their time at the ballet academy and how they perceive the quality of the ballet academy in general. Also, it will be interesting to research how their childhood was and the role of their parents and in what ways it contributed to their development as a professional dancer. Furthermore, the level of the current young dancers will be addressed and their perception on how the level can be improved so that more Dutch dancers can reach the top and become a professional dancer at a ballet company.

1.4. The approach

First of all, the conceptual framework will address several theories and perspectives of the subject, which are important to answer the research question. It is based on a cultural economic perspective, theories on human capital theory and the peculiarities of demand and supply for the dance sector in general. Secondly, with a value-based approach issues such as craftsmanship, the role of the *oikos*, the support of parents, the values that need to be realized, and the lacking mental support within the ballet academy will form a grounded framework suited for the examination of the research. As a unique addition the next chapter is dedicated to my personal case in which I describe

my experiences at the ballet academy but more interesting how my values have changed over time, from dreaming as a little girl of becoming the next prima ballerina to actually giving up the dream after graduating because other values have come up to be realized. After that, it continues by focusing more on the research. This section will address the methodology used for the research and consequently the analysis of the research will be described in detail. Also, a table is included in this section in which the position of the respondents in the dance sector is mentioned to show their expertise and influence in the dance sector in the Netherlands. Last, the conclusion will answer the research question, showing the limitations and giving suggestions for further research. The conclusion can be seen as an advisory report for the dance sector in the Netherlands based on scientific research combined with a well-argued personal perspective, which can be useful for future generations of young dancers.

2. Conceptual framework

In academia there are all kinds of theories that could support the research and therefore be included in the conceptual framework. This section provides the needed assets to obtain a deeper understanding of the given subject and moreover what has been investigated in the past by other researchers on this subject. Also the conceptual framework is a way to reflect on the concepts that are addressed and it gives a perception of how I perceive the important concepts to make sense of the world, in general and in particular for the dance world.

Without concepts you cannot see clearly what needs to be seen for the scope of the research and it helps to organize your thoughts and ideas to make it more concrete. It becomes a better way of sense making and provides different issues that show how to perceive the world both as a professional dancer and a cultural economist. The method I have chosen is therefore a framework in which the theories are seen through two different glasses, or perspectives. In order to justify my experience as a dancer this framework will provide the necessary theories in sense making of the peculiarities of the dance sector. More specifically, the framework provides an approach in which investigation is the leading force to address the different theories. Therefore, the conceptual framework can be seen as research in and of itself because it investigates whether the perspectives are suitable to make sense of the world and could provide answers to the research question. This idea will be further developed in the case study, the next chapter, in which these perspectives will be applied as well.

In order to justify my choice for the different perspectives it is first reasonable to mention which perspectives did not have my priority for this matter. I could have chosen a psychological perspective, taking the development of a child as central issue and investigating what struggles could come across but it would not give a comprehensive answer to the research question. Secondly, the sociological perspective could give a broader approach including the societal effects of the perception of dance in general in the society and its relevance for social cohesion for example. However, both mentioned perspectives are not comprehensive enough so therefore I chose a cultural economic perspective since it emphasises the consumer's behaviour and different values and is in line with the study program and my primary interest.

Yet, as we will discover in forthcoming section, a standard economic view on this subject will not be satisfying because the approach will be too narrow and many essential issues are hard to explain or clarify by only taking the economic perspective into account. Therefore, the second part will address a value-based approach in which the theories will give together a comprehensive support for the investigation of the subject. Besides, at the end it will become clear what is missing in the economic perspective and enhance the importance of the value-based approach as being the more preferred glasses, or perspective, to approach the research then to analyse the results.

2.1. Economic perspective

In order to address the standard economic perspective of the world of ballet properly the demand and supply for ballet will be addressed. To start of I would like to illustrate this matter with an anecdote:

Six years ago, on a Sunday in February I attended the audition for Het Nederlands Dans Theater, which is located in The Hague. This prestigious modern dance company is internationally well known and consists of extraordinarily talented dancers. Beforehand we already knew it was going to be very hard to get even to the next round in this audition and obtaining a contract seemed completely impossible. Yet, I attended the audition along with many of my classmates mainly for the experience of having been there and seeing what your chances are compared to the rest of the dancers. These dancers came from all around the globe, all feeling they had a chance of becoming the new dancer in the company. But the main issue, which is related to the supply side of the ballet world, is that there were at least 300 participants in the audition of whom none that year were chosen for a contract. Eventually, they took a dancer, whom they already knew because she attended ballet classes with the company. So, if we look at all these talented young dancers coming from all around the world paying their travelling costs and residence their investment is quite costly before even knowing how the audition is organized in terms of amount of participants. And when on top of that it turned out all these dancers actually came for nothing it becomes even more questionable whether the dancers' investment was worth it.

This anecdote shows clearly how high the supply of dancers is for a dance company. This excess supply results in the luxury for the companies to choose only the best dancers for their company but it also indicates that many dancers who are educated

will not obtain a contract at a ballet company since there are simply too many competitors even if they have invested so many years in intensive ballet training. The employers are searching for the most talented dancers and cannot rely only on colleges' certification as is common in the regular labour market (Towse, 2010). All the investment and time-consuming efforts at the ballet academy can consequently be considered as inefficient and therefore it obviously shows the excess supply of dancers in the labour market of the dance sector. However, as is generally known of artists, the hard training and low chances of success in the labour market do not affect the artistic choices since many are still committed to their profession whereas a rational individual would have changed his career path (Benhamou, 2003). Despite the unemployment and underemployment, which is common among artists in general, it is the satisfaction of dancing that attracts many young people since they consider their job as being highly satisfying (Steiner & Schneider, 2012).

In contrast, on the demand side the demand is rather specific for dance especially when focussing on the labour market. Here, the dance companies are the buyers searching for the best dancers they can possibly find so there is definitely demand but more in terms of searching for the highest quality than finding as many dancers as possible, or quantity. Hence it can be addressed as derived demand, since it is dependent on the demand that is being offered for the product itself, namely the attendance at performances (Towse, 2010). The willingness to pay by the visitors for performances of the ballet company is thus related to the derived demand on the labour market but no direct relation to the supply. To a great extent it is however difficult to indicate the demand for ballet in general – the amount of visitors – and consequently the amount of dancers that is needed. This difficulty comes from the fact that demand is based on the tastes and preferences of the consumers (Throsby, 2001). Yet, the peculiarity about setting a ballet production on stage is that beforehand the exact amount of dancers is already fixed since the choreographer of the production has already decided how many dancers will perform. So even when the attendance of the performance is very low, due to a lack of ticket sales, the costs remain very high because the derived demand in terms of amount of dancers is already fixed beforehand and cannot be changed anymore.

Secondly, given the subject of ballet education at the ballet academy it seems reasonable to address the human capital theory. "The basic idea of human capital is that people can invest in themselves by means of education, training and experience and

build up a stock of knowledge and skills that, like physical capital such as machinery and tools, they can use to increase their productivity and therefore earn higher incomes” (Towse, 2010, p. 308). Hence, it shows how developing skills can generate income and even how more investment in human capital can lead to differentials in terms of income and most commonly even to an increase of income. Interesting in the dance sector is, however, that the choice of the career and development of skills is decided at a very young age – around ten years old – so effect it will have eventually on the outcome and success in the working field is considerably uncertain. Yet, the decision for wanting a career in dance should be made at such a young age that, despite the uncertainty a full commitment from the beginning is necessary.

Also, given the issue of human capital, the risk of a young student at a ballet academy is quite high. In addition to the large amount of daily hours spend in the training there are also opportunity costs involved, meaning that other options of development are excluded since all the time and money is spent on the development of the student in becoming a professional dancer. The risk of not succeeding is also an important component in this, since it shows the tremendous dedication and belief in themselves that they are the ones that will actually succeed in obtaining a job as a professional dancer. Furthermore, it appears that good formal training is not a guarantee of financial success when working in the arts field whereas in other occupations this does have an influence on the financial reward later on (Throsby, 2001).

But there is another important economic factor that is specific for the dance sector. It is the constant need of people that are familiar with the ballet repertoire that is shown in the production in order to convey the meaning and correct movements to the dancers (Schimmelpfennig, 2003). Without the personal experience of the teachers the dance piece would not have the same quality as it is shown again over time and should be preserved with care and dedication from person to person. To put it in extremes, you could suggest that classical ballet can be seen as cultural heritage and needs to be preserved in order to maintain its existence in the future (Wassink, 2012). However, the difficult feature is that the preservation goes from teacher to dancer and often the teacher has danced the piece him/her self. This means that the continuation of face-to-face rehearsals is of main importance yet time consuming and therefore very costly. Also, it can be questioned whether these classical ballets still need to be performed in the current age or may it just be outdated and can we do without it?

From an economic perspective it would definitely be important to keep on performing the traditional classical ballet repertoire since it attracts the most visitors and consequently these blockbusters generate a lot of income. However, when the demand diminishes year by year for the classics it might indeed be questionable whether it should still be performed in the current age.

So far, we have acknowledged in this conceptual framework that the dance sector is a rather specific case in terms of economics and it can be concluded that the costs are high. These high costs count both for the dance companies in putting performances of high quality on stage but also the costs for young dancers at a ballet academy and their investment before having any security to succeed. However, there is much more to it than the economic values just discussed and therefore the logical next question is to address is: what is missing in the standard economic perspective?

First of all, the main concerns which have been discussed were concerning quantity, like for example the number of visitors for performances. But when talking about quality the discussion alters towards a more subjective approach involving different values. Yet, addressing only economic values will not be satisfying and other values such as cultural, personal or even transcendental values are more applicable to issues of quality. It cannot be explainable by the economic perspective since it cannot be expressed in terms of price or any other economic measurement.

Secondly, the values that are also of importance in this matter are option, existence, and bequest values in which the existence of the option to see classical ballet performance or in case of the bequest value that it exists for future generations (Frey, 2003). Without these values it would not only be of no use to perform classical ballets and have ballet companies but also the ballet academies would not need to exist. Besides, what about the inner drive of these young dancers to become a part of their so beloved ballet world and putting everything aside to achieve this goal? This is also something, which is hard to explain by mainly economic values, and this so called intrinsic motivation has more to it than just the willingness to become a part of the dance sector (Frey, 2003). It can be considered as their driving force and full commitment and dedication to become the next star professional dancer despite knowing beforehand that it asks many sacrifices and investments in order to achieve this. The difficulties that arise when becoming a dancer can also not be considered as being economic so more factors are involved which need to be examined.

To make it more concrete, the main concern, which is hard to explain from the economic perspective, is that despite the low chances of success, the extremely hard work that's been demanded, the low earnings, and the low demand for ballet in general, there are still people trying to become a professional dancer. This is hard to explain or understand given their circumstances and damage it could cause for their development as a child. Their investment in financial as well as in physical and mental efforts is so demanding yet the young dancers are striving very hard to realize their dream no matter what it takes beforehand.

To some extent an explanation can be found by addressing the investment in human capital but the intrinsic motivation and drive to pursue this dream involves much more than just the human capital theory. It is about values that cannot be scientifically or economically explained and involves investigation on a deeper level.

Therefore, the next section will address the value-based approach in which the missing links in the cultural economic perspective will be further explored. It gives a more comprehensive approach involving different values and aims to make more sense of the difficulties that arise when trying to become a professional dancer.

2.2. Value-based approach

As already mentioned the value-based approach functions as an addition to limitation of theories when only addressed by the economic perspective. It will be a broader approach and necessary to be able to answer the research question since it entails more than just economics. So first of all, it is important to address the question: what is the value-based approach and in what ways does it contribute to the conceptual framework?

According to Klamer the value-based approach “stresses the values that goods enable to realize and recovers the wide range of goods that qualify, including collective goods and all those other goods that cannot be priced and cannot be bought and sold in a market” (Klamer, Ch. 6, n.d.). The latter part clearly states what is missing when only taking into account the economic values such as transactions in the market sphere.

In general, value gives an indication of the worth of a work or a piece of art and can give other value than just price since that is a clear economic value attached to a certain product or service (Throsby, 2010).

This value-based approach is necessary in this conceptual framework since it broadens the discussion on the subject and shows that there is much more to it when becoming a professional dancer than taken only from the standard economic perspective. Also social interaction, and contribution to the dance sector is an important aspect, for example, which cannot be explained by the economic values.

The value-based approach focuses on the realization of values. Especially for dancers it relates to the issue of realizing your values as a professional dancer. But in order to realize something and strive for a certain goal you are actually trying to realize a good (Klamer, n.d.).

Since the art form dance is so physical a significant part in the realization is about learning the skill. It takes many years of practice to master the classical ballet technique and therefore the diploma of a renowned ballet academy is an absolute necessity in the realization as a dancer. The diploma is an indicator for the many years of dedication in optimizing the body to be able to fulfil the required demands as a professional dancer. But there is of course much more to it; taken from the social sphere is the contribution as a dancer to the world of ballet as a goal in and of itself. It is about becoming a part of this special group of professionals in the dance sector all sharing the same good, passion and interest. In other words, it is about becoming a member of the creative commons (Klamer, n.d.) and contributing to this, but also as a way of exposure because without this creative common it becomes hard to realize your values as a dancer. Thus, it is about contributing on different levels and realizing the values on these different dimensions. In order to convey the meaning of these levels the next section will introduce them one by one and addresses what is especially important for the young dancers.

According to a commonly used scheme by Klamer (n.d.) on identifying the different levels of values that can be applied, the next section will identify these values for the young dancers:

Transcendental values

This could include in terms of the ballet dancer the search for meaning behind the art form dance and the search for the deeper layer in this realm. Also artistic values of the dancer could be categorized in the transcendental values, and their passion and inner belief to fulfil their dreams in the most meaningful way. It may differ from dancer to

dancer how much value they attach to the transcendental meaning of their profession, but if this deep understanding is missing it might be shown in his/her performances.

Societal values

This could be an important value for the established professional dancer but less for the young developing dancer. It involves the question what ballet could mean for the society and what the role of dance is as an art form. Societal values raise questions such as the contribution that ballet could have for social cohesion for example and in what ways it contributes to the society in general. Logically, the young dancer is not so much involved in these values since their personal values are dominant and when taking more distance as a more experienced dancer these questions could become of a more significant meaning.

Social values

On this level the main good to realize is the belonging to a group and in this case it would be the belonging to the world of ballet. Also contribution is an important feature in this matter because without a contribution to the group there is a major chance of exclusion. Besides, in ballet production is often the corps de ballet – a group of dancers dancing together – an important element during a performance and moving simultaneously is essential. So for ballet the social values could have a practical meaning in the sense that if there is cohesion within the group it leads to a higher quality and this of course also counts when dancing a duet. A great example can be seen for example in the ballets of famous Dutch choreographer Hans van Manen, where the dancers are dancing a duet and he emphasises that it should feel like a conversation between the two dancers expressed in terms of movements and this could have a magnificent outcome when performing these ballet pieces in that way.

However, in terms of realizing social values in the dancers' life it is something which is often missing, because there is not much time to spend with friends.

Personal values

The personal values are the most significant value in becoming a professional dancer because it involves years of training in learning the skill and developing one self every day to master the classical ballet technique. Besides, the craftsmanship and dedication it brings in the realization as a dancer is mostly because of personal concerns and pursuing the dream of becoming a dancer. Also this dream functions as an important striving goal in this realization of personal values and explains the unconditional

dedication to the art form. Without this realization of your personal values it would be very hard to become a dancer because this deep wish of fulfilling your ballet dream should be so important to you otherwise it would lack a great deal of motivation and perseverance.

Since the art form of dancing is in itself individual, the main focus when identifying the values lies in the personal level especially considering the young dancer at the start his or her career. In that period also the social values start playing a more significant role since the belonging to the dance sector becomes an important element. The remaining values, such as societal and transcendental, are more in the background but could become of more value when the career of the dancer is established and for example contribution to the society to keep a vital ballet scene can become a goal of a more established professional dancer and could lead to a more encouraging perception of dance in the society also for future generations. Yet, before this perception could be improved these values must be recognized and implemented foremost within the dance sector itself meaning by the professional dancers themselves. Also, these values must be identified already at a young age when these personal values start to develop for example at the beginning of their time at the ballet academy. It is important to have these values internally developed before addressing them to the outside world otherwise it will miss the importance of conveying the message that could improve the perception in the society about ballet in general.

But just identifying the different values will not be enough so therefore it is important to focus on the realization of the values and in order to do that we focus on goods. First, we are in need of a proper definition of the term goods: “Goods are tangible or intangible things that an individual, a group of people, or a gathering of people possesses; they are good for all kind of things, and their possession requires some kind of effort or sacrifice” (Klamer, n.d., ch. 6).

So, goods determine what values are most willing to be realized and values are made concrete into actions. Besides, from this perspective another important term will be introduced and that is the practice. This includes all the activities and exercises that need to be undertaken in order to sustain or develop the realization of the good (Klamer, n.d.). The practice is about learning the skill and also sustaining the high quality, which you have reached by practicing it over and over. Take for example a ballet dancer who has to do a lot of effort to learn the classical ballet technique during their training at the

ballet academy but also as a professional dancer this practice or exercise needs to be maintained and daily practice is still needed to keep up the high level.

The next section will deal more in depth with the issues that arise when applying the value-based approach to the dance sector. A major theme, which is often underestimated when discussing issues concerning professional dancers, is the issue of craftsmanship and the recognition that a ballet dancer should be seen as a craftsman. Therefore, the reasons for this will be discussed and also how divisions are made based on the quality of the dancers. Furthermore, a few hypotheses will be addressed and give some guidance in the way of thinking that is essential in the analysis of the research results. The hypotheses are based on my own perception and experience in the dance sector in the Netherlands and will be tested during the interviews with the respondents.

2.3. The *oikos*

Due to my own experience as described in the introduction, it seems reasonable to focus more intensively on the home situation of young dancers. A significant part of their young childhood is spent at the ballet academy so you would expect that having a stable and safe feeling of a home is the most important. Therefore, the next part is primarily dedicated to the importance of having a stable home situation for young dancers, which is preferably close to the ballet academy.

The hypothesis for this section will therefore be: *A stable home situation is one of the most important elements for young dancers at the ballet academy to perform at their best.* For me personally it mainly involved the lack of time for me to be with my parents because I had to travel many hours to go to the ballet academy starting at a very young age. The most vital and ideal situation would be that the parents live close to the ballet academy and travelling time is limited. It will give the optimal support and leaves time for building of a social life and developing a normal childhood.

When considering the *oikos* it seems reasonable to start by using a model of Klammer (2012) in which four different logics are being identified. In order to get a clear sense of the logic of the *oikos* first the other three logics will be addressed.

The logic of the market is mainly focussed on exchange of products or services in which price or any other equivalent plays a crucial role. It is about the transactions and only later value is being attached to it.

The logic of governance is more related to issues such as cultural policy and is mainly used in the governments. Especially for the arts, subsidies are an important feature for this sphere and contribute to bureaucratic matters by managers for example (Klamer, 2012).

In the logic of the social sphere the interaction between different people and the relationships are most dominant. It is the sphere in which the conversation is the key element and the social values such as friendship, compassion and reciprocity are of main importance.

The logic of the *oikos* is related to the family, and therefore mainly concerning personal values. *Oikos* means home in Greek and it attaches value to the issues of being together with your parents and close friends (Klamer, 2012). It is the logic in which love and care are essential values and the feeling of having a home. In most cases it is the sphere that is most precious and important to people but also vulnerable in a way that you don't want your *oikos* to be harmed or damaged so you will do anything to protect it.

To apply the logic of the *oikos* on young professional dancers it is obvious that the *oikos* is of main importance for the support of their hard work. Yet, it is a fact that starting from a young age at a ballet academy also requests something from your family. The whole family is organized around the child pursuing her dream and therefore the structure of the daily activities is altered and consequently the full dedication is to the child when he/she comes home very late. Growing up becomes then quite extraordinary because the structures are very different from growing up in a regular family where the attention is not so much focussed to one of the children.

Moreover, in a broader sense, the issue of the *oikos* can also be seen as creating the best environment in which the child flourishes the most, since the well-being and joy a child has, especially at a young age, has an immediate effect on their performances. In particular for ballet where the dancers are for a huge part reliant on each other and have to cooperate when dancing group pieces, this creation of a joyful and pleasant environment can be essential. In many cases which I have experienced, it can happen that the ballet academy itself, where your classmates become your family or at least give you the feeling of a family. In that sense there is an automatic creation of an extra home or *oikos* or sometimes even a replaced feeling of a home if the situation in the family is difficult.

Besides, the support of the parents can also be exaggerated in the sense that it is more a matter of pushing the child to go to the ballet academy instead of being supportive. Also, it can be that the child is pursuing a parent's dream be it consciously or unconsciously. This border is very thin and therefore must be taken into account when talking about the *oikos*.

To go into more depth on the importance of the support of parents there is an interesting research to be introduced. There has been much dance research done by movement scientist Van Rossum (2010) who investigated how the support of parents has an effect on the achievements of young dance students. Besides, the amount of hours that are being spent at home is of a significant low level that this needs to be taken into account as well. Due to the fact that it is inevitable that the child becomes the central figure in the family and ballet takes a central place it is quite incomprehensible that there is so little attention for the role of the parents (Van Rossum, 2010). The results of the research of Van Rossum (2010) shows that many children do feel the full support from parents but there is a lack of attention from the ballet academy to acknowledge the role of the parents. Therefore, it seems important that the contribution of the parents to the success of the young dancers is recognized and stimulated just as can be seen in the top class sport with young talents (Van Rossum, 2010).

This section indicates one of the major difficulties that arise when having this extraordinary childhood and can be an important decision-maker in choosing whether or not to attend the ballet academy. Therefore, the parents are prominent figures, which should be taken into account when talking about the dream of becoming a dancer.

2.4. Value-based approach applied to the dance sector

So what has been clear from the latter part about the *oikos* is that the ballet students need all the optimal conditions and facilities also in the ballet academy in order to let them expose their exceptional talent as much as possible. Also, the art form dance can be considered an exceptional case in the cultural sector since it is the only art form, which requires such an intensive professional training starting at a very young age. Musicians also have to start playing an instrument at a young age and need hours of practice but the physicality of the practice is considerably less and therefore the learning of classical ballet can be considered as an exceptional case. Moreover, the duration of the career of dancers is also something noticeable since the career often

ends around the age of 38 years, because training the body at such a high level leads on the long term to limitations and the body is simply exhausted and not capable of maintaining the excellent level which is needed.

Another important issue is that organizational culture is quite outdated in the ballet sector. It is one of the few professions with a strict hierarchy based on the quality of the dancers. This is especially shown in the ballet companies where the dancers are ranked according to their excellence starting from *élève*, *corps de ballet*, *coryphée*, *grand sujet*, *second soloist*, *first soloist*. Also the roles that are given to the dancers for each production are chosen according to this ranking system and moreover the amount of salary differs among the different ranks. So the dancers can develop themselves and climb up to the next rank and will be promoted.

However, another aspect is that these promotions are entirely based on the taste or preference of the artistic director who decides whether the dancer has reached this new rank and thus leads to a lot of authority for the artistic director in the group of dancers. This could cause extra competition and imbalances among the dancers since there are no objective judgements on which these decisions are based. The downside of a hierarchical culture is that there is often no group or team feeling, which can be of main importance to create a flourishing environment in which the dancers and choreographers can work on a creative process in an optimal way.

Also, in the ballet academy this hierarchical culture is shown in terms of distance and respect to the ballet teachers and directors (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). These also relies on the dependency that the dancers have on their superiors since they are the ones to decide whether you are cast for a beautiful role and are also important for the success of your future career.

3. Personal case

Since the life of a young girl at a ballet academy is so extraordinary and the theme of the Thesis is derived from a personal concern, the next chapter will take a more in-depth approach to my experiences in my personal life and describe the peculiar situations a young talented dancer has to deal with. Additionally, in the approach of the research, by interviewing people from the dance sector in the Netherlands, the first part of the interview is dedicated to the personal lives of the respondents and more specifically on how they experienced their youth at the ballet academy.

Also, often the teachers of the ballet academies teach the way they have been educated themselves, so to investigate the peculiarities of the life of the young talented dancer is of value for the answering of the research question.

Furthermore, this chapter gives you a different viewpoint or perspective, and hopefully helps to look at the dance sector the way I perceive it because of all the experiences I went through. It also clarifies how I came up with the subject of this Thesis in the first place and gives an explanation for my concerns in the dance sector as described in the introduction.

3.1. Life world of a young dancer

Starting at the age of three to the local amateur ballet school was already a pleasure to me. Of course I do not have any memories of this time, but from the moment I do remember I always loved to go to ballet. When I was six years old I went with my mother to a performance of the Nutcracker at the Dutch National Ballet. Seeing those children at the stage was magnificent, the only thing I said was I want to be one of them too! These performances are important for young children to watch because it shows what can be achieved and it is also a way of identification with the young children that are performing on the stage. So also in my time at the ballet academy we went to see many dress rehearsals of new performances of the Dutch National Ballet.

But back to where it all started, because after seeing this performance it did not cross my mind to actually go and audition for the ballet academy in Amsterdam. However, one day my amateur ballet teacher mentioned there was an Open Day at the academy where you could see ballet classes and join in a few workshops. I went there and when the day was over I was joking with my mum about doing audition and at the

last moment we took an application form with us for the audition. We almost forgot about it but because the audition was held in the Music Theatre in Amsterdam² we thought it would be a nice opportunity to see this theatre backstage and just have a look at how the audition would go, without any expectations. But while participating in the audition I discovered that the other kids were not so good and I could do many things better, so I was quite certain that I passed the audition, which I did. In total we had three rounds of auditions including a ten-weeks audition course between the second and third audition. For my parents this was the exquisite opportunity to discover the city of Amsterdam because they had to bring me each Wednesday and Saturday to the ballet classes and waited a few hours until the class was finished. My adventure at the ballet academy was also an eye-opener for my parents because it enlarged their world in the sense that they left Ermelo, where they live, more often and discovered Amsterdam in a way they never experienced it before.

When I finally got accepted at the academy and started in September it was quite difficult for my parents, not only to let me go by train alone at the age of nine years old but more that they did not get a lot of support from family and friends in Ermelo. They thought why would you let a nine-year old child go to a dangerous city like Amsterdam all by herself? On the other hand they saw how happy I came home every day and they held on to that feeling of seeing me enjoying my time, and that they made the right decision. That is why the support and the attention that must be drawn to the role of the parents is so important because it is a huge decision to be made without having any security or guarantee that your child will succeed as a professional dancer and a lot of sacrifices have to be made both for the child but also for the parents.

One of the highlights in my time at the ballet academy happened at a very young age when I was eleven years old. I was selected to dance the leading child role of little Clara in the performance of the Nutcracker of the Dutch National Ballet. I will never forget the moment my father received a call that I was selected by the choreographer Toer van Schayk because we were jumping and dancing on the bed with the entire family. It was like a dream coming true, and this entire rehearsing period and performances where such a joy and I could dance a part with the leading man role, the prince, which was always very special of course. Moreover, this role which was around

² The name of the Music Theatre in Amsterdam recently changed in 'Nationale Opera & Ballet'.

thirty minutes of the entire two-hour performance, because later on the little Clara becomes tall and is danced by the prima ballerina, but there is also a solo involved for the little girl where I was all alone on the big stage dancing, which was so beautiful to do and gives such good memories. My mum said many times in this period that I should enjoy every minute of it and told me how special it was, and even though I was very young I think that is the reason why I still clearly remember many moments of being alone on the stage for instance. A year later we danced in Swan Lake, also a production of the Dutch National Ballet, and as previously mentioned, it is important to have these experiences with the company and not only watch the performances but also be able to see the dancers work closely. Even being together on the stage with the professional dancers or dancing together gives a boost to the motivation and feeling of knowing what you are doing it all for.

These first four years at the ballet academy were for me the best time because of the participation in the performances of the ballet company but more importantly, we had ballet and regular school classes in one building. Later on this changed and we had to travel from Amsterdam Oud-Zuid to the city centre for our ballet classes. Especially as a young child I consider it of main importance to have this stability in terms of facilities also to create a great atmosphere and flourishing place for the children to be able to develop their talent in the most optimal way. This building really gave me the feeling of having a second home and it felt safe and familiar to be there.

Also, I remember I felt really like I was living my dream of becoming a prima ballerina. I was one of the best students in the ballet class, was successful in my regular school classes, and the impartiality you have as a child made us think that everything was possible and we would be the next prima ballerinas of the Dutch National Ballet. The teachers and the whole creative environment also lets you believe in the ballerina dream; if you work hard it will pay off and you can become a ballerina. Even though it was not realistic, and especially we did not realize that only a few were going to make it in the end, we also were too young to see that we were not only friends but also each other's competitor. This made the friendships later on at some points quite difficult and resulted in the fact that I do not have many friends left from that time at the ballet academy.

When I was 15 years old this familiar setting changed and we had to move to another building to take our ballet classes in the city centre of Amsterdam. Also, it was

not only a physical change to another building but for me personally also a change of perspective. The dream of becoming the prima ballerina was not so realistic anymore and it became a matter of tremendously hard work instead of the joy I used to have while dancing. Also in my first year in the new building I had a Russian teacher, who was very strict and not so equipped in teaching in a very pedagogically responsible way, which also changed my perspective towards my own body. I realized that I did not have the typical perfect classical ballet body, which I never realized before, because I was not thin enough, had too much female curves, and my feet were not perfect. This led for me to a feeling of insecurity and moreover quite abrupt ends to my prima ballerina dream. Also, dealing with all these changes, I realized I could probably not become a ballerina, so I started to see myself more as a modern dancer. The teachers also endorsed this change of perspective and it was sort of common sense that if you did not have the perfect body type for classical ballet you could always go more into modern dance, as if this was lower in rank and had less prestige but you could still become a dancer. When I now look back at it this was quite strange but at the time it was common sense, so I quickly let go my dream of being a classical ballerina, which was actually quite a shame looking from my current perspective.

Besides, when I now visit performances I often choose the classical ballet productions over the modern repertoire because that is still closest to my heart and my dream as a little girl.

So to continue my life story, in those last years my joy of dancing also slowly disappeared; some classes were still very inspiring and I liked very much but overall it became just very hard work, rehearsing for many hours, long days and being very late at home. The weekends were just a matter of loading myself up for the next week so I also had no time for parties or drinks with friends. I must have felt quite alone at that time, because I basically did not have a social life besides my friends at the ballet academy and also because I did not live in Amsterdam I could not stay for a drink or something when we had free time in the evenings. So the life of a young dancer is not only a matter of full dedication, hard work and many hours, but moreover a way of living and your entire life is build around ballet. This is something, which should be taken into account when starting the ballet academy, and is important to stress towards the parents as well. Often the parents are unsure whether the prospects of the child are secure enough and their chances of success are low, so what happens is that they force their child to flourish also

on the regular school education and do their best, which can be sometimes very hard if this way of living towards ballet is so dominant.

Once I was near the end of my pre-education another issue came up. Because I did VWO, or pre-university education, I had to study one year longer, six years, than my classmates who did HAVO, which is five years. This meant that because there were not so many of us, we had to do ballet classes with the level below our group for this final year. It would lead to less progression and moreover, I would be one year later finished which was not so beneficial for auditioning for the companies because they often wanted just young dancers.

So therefore I chose to start to do the HBO part of the ballet academy next to my last year of pre-university education. It meant that I danced the entire day instead of just the afternoon and in my own time in the evenings I studied for my exams for the regular school. I did not go to classes anymore but just taught myself and prepared for the tests and the final exams, from which I graduated in the end. During this quite hectic year I received an offer from the modern ballet company Scapino Ballet in Rotterdam to do an apprenticeship as a dancer. This was a great opportunity to see how it works as a professional dancer and I got nice opportunities to dance in their performances as well as being part of their regular training and rehearsals. I was doing well and the artistic director wanted to offer me a contract at his company but it was the same period as the subsidy cuts of the government in the Netherlands so he could not offer me anything because of the uncertainty at that time. Also many excellent dancers left the company the year after to search for other opportunities. And their policy turned into accepting more apprentices which led to a decrease in quality of the company and that is also the reason why many dancers left at that time.

After graduating in 2011 I decided to stop dancing. A quite unusual decision after having danced for so many years, and above that it is also the ultimate decision of giving up a dream that started when I was a little girl. Dancers who have graduated decide to stop dancing for many reasons, but in my case it was quite unconsciously. In my last year I got physical and mental problems. I discovered I had a slow-working thyroid, which can cause constant tiredness and weight gain, rather difficult for a dancer. And secondly during that same period I became burnt out because the pressure of performing at peak levels for so many years at such a young age became simply too high. After six months of rest, therapy and recovery I could still graduate but the consequence

of my burnout was that I actually suddenly stopped dancing while thinking I would start again soon but that never happened. Because the next step I made quite rapidly was to start studying. I discovered that during my studies I could still think, write, and analyze the dance sector. Perceiving the dance sector more from an economic and managerial perspective turned out to be a fulfilling experience, which I missed when I was still dancing. And as I mentioned earlier, during the tough year of combining my secondary education with the first year of the HBO, there was already some sort of restless feeling or inner conflict that something was missing, which I tried to cover by searching for new challenges but finally meaning and real fulfilment came when I started studying. The first plan was also to combine my dancing career with my new studies but slowly the practice of dancing just faded away and I took a ballet class only rarely, which made my decision to stop quite unconsciousness.

Another reason for my decision to stop dancing was that I discovered that I did not like the life of a professional dancer that much because of the many performances and I was afraid it would become a routine instead of pure joy of being on stage. This is an interesting thought because it shows that the luck of making a profession from your hobby does not always have to be considered as something positive and maybe in some cases it would have been better if the adoration for ballet had just stayed a hobby. Moreover, the peculiarity of becoming a professional dancer compared to other art forms is that it is a necessity to start at a very young age and the career ends quite early at the age of approximately 38. Yet, the desire to become a professional dancer is for many children quite appealing, which makes it even harder for parents to decide whether their child should start with the academy even though the prospective is not so promising. Additionally, the decision to start has to be made at an early stage while a regular person will start thinking about their future around the age of 17, which is almost ten years later than for a child who wants to become a professional dancer.

Moreover, it is notable that giving up my dream of becoming a ballerina not a conscious choice, as it would have been explained by perceiving it only from the economic perspective, but entailed much more which can more easily be addressed by the value-based approach. Also, it is not rational thinking when decisions, which are close to your heart are made, with interference from emotions. In general realizing values is not an act of rational behaviour, and something that just happens especially when values change over time.

Most interesting about my personal case in the realm of this Thesis is the change of path that I made when I was 19 years old. Thinking and believing for ten years that my profession would be professional dancer and working tremendously hard to achieve this goal, yet it turned out to be different. I am often thinking and reflecting on this entire period, also together with my psychologist, to discover what was missing and how this extraordinary youth effected my personal and emotional development. It is quite intense to realize that the decision to stop dancing was at the time quite unconscious and luckily turned out to be a good decision but it could also have been an endless feeling of regret for the rest of my life. But the turning point from ballet to studying has been without any doubt rather difficult but also gave more meaning to my personal values in life. The change of path at a relatively young age is shocking and requires a different mind-set in realizing my values. Whereas I first thought that only values to my life as a dancer were important to me, I feel now that many other values as a whole person are important to realize. For example, in terms of societal values, as a dancer the focus was more individual in realizing myself as a dancer, but now I want to contribute something to the world and more specifically, contribute in some way to the dance sector in the Netherlands to improve the facilities or policies of the academies for instance. So to be more accurate, I made a change in the realization of my values, which has been painful and tough but now gives me much more meaning in my life.

Therefore, more specifically about values, it is interesting to take a closer look at my personal case and reflect upon how the ballet academy may affect a young growing girl or whether it was just something that happened to me.

It can be stated that a young girl is in need of emotional support by either the parents or people in her close environment. In my case and for many others, this emotional support was lacking in the educational system of the ballet academy but also because of the many hours of travelling it was missing at home. The amount of support that is needed cannot be given in such a short amount of time at home, and because the child is far from home during the entire day, also the feeling of emotional support might be lacking or at least be less than in regular cases.

Moreover, arguing about the lack of support in the educational system it can be reflected that in my personal case this was clearly missing because there is too little attention spent on the rest of your life besides ballet, and your development as a whole person. And this becomes even more problematic in combination with the situation that the

children are long days away from home.

By connecting this to the issue of the home, as mentioned earlier, it seems quite clear that in the life of the young dancer this base is lacking and also in the organizational structure of the ballet academy not professionally organized or even noticed or considered a problem for the children. However, by reflecting on the issue of values it can be argued that my personal values have expanded quite well although they are all related to ballet and realizing this dream. Of course this is encouraged and stimulated by the ballet academy because that is their specialty, and it is how the teachers have been raised themselves in their time at the ballet academy. However, in terms of development of education in general many aspects have been improved and this seems lacking in the dance sector at the ballet academies. In terms of mental support, compared to what is common in top-class sport, there is not much arranged for the children and on the support of my parents, which was strong but limited. If I needed any help or someone to talk to I went to my physiotherapist, which was helpful but not professionally organized by the ballet academy like for example mental coaches or psychologists. With reference to the home, it is important to mention that the family structure can become quite unbalanced too because everything surrounds the talented young girl. In other words, the attention of the parents is entirely focused on the realizing of the dream of their daughter especially the limited time that she is at home. For the other children in the family this can become an issue, but also for the parents in terms of dividing my attention properly even though one child is doing something extraordinary compared to the others.

So what could be concluded from these just mentioned issues experienced at the ballet academy is that there is too little attention paid to the rest of your life, and how you interact and behave as a person, as a whole person, not just the ballet part. Or in other words, how you are realizing your values while growing up and becoming who you want to be instead of putting the sticker on your forehead that you are talented so you should become a dancer. This personal searching is difficult to achieve for each child in a primary or secondary school, but it could and should definitely be something to aim for, not only creating top ballet dancers but also building well-functioning happy personalities who are ready for the mature life. Moreover, it is not just the qualifications that an academy should be striving for but it is also the extraordinary life the young dancers are living, often being far away from home and missing time to build a social

life. To be more specific, it is the isolation of this ballet world, which makes it hard to connect to the regular daily life, at least, as I experienced myself. It loses a sense of reality because you spend so many hours daily in this isolated world that you do not have the connection with daily activities in life, which makes you vulnerable.

To conclude, what can be argued about the just addressed personal case is that the main issue that was missing for me in the ballet academy was the attention drawn to the social values and how to interact in the 'regular' life as a person not just as a dancer. Development of values are dealt with in some ways but this was solely directed towards becoming a professional dancer so in fact you can relate all these learned values in the ballet academy to this realization of being a dancer. This can be considered positive but in realizing yourself as a person in the current society one of the values that is certainly left out are the social values. A major reason can be found in the lack of social time of the students of the ballet academy but also the isolated world they are living in and the lack of understanding from friends for the extraordinary life they are living. Besides, in my case, it was also the distance from my hometown, which led to the fact that I lost around the age of 12 my friends from primary school because I was always in Amsterdam and they did not understand my life anymore.

Furthermore, it is important to take into account that the changes of success are low, and it is already known beforehand that most of the students are not going to make it. Considering that the end of the career is, like already mentioned, around the age of 38, there is a whole career after the life of being the professional dancer. Also from this perspective it is important to acknowledge that just focusing on the realizing of values in favour of the ballerina is not satisfying in the long term and might possibly lead to mental problems when the career has ended. Hence, we can address the issue of isolation or at least the feeling of isolation that could lead to problems, and recognition of issues that were missing in the education. In the research results section of the paper, it will be interesting to examine whether the respondents feel or experience the same sort of missing links in their realization of values and in particular, if these social values are such an issue for them as it has been for me.

The next part of this chapter will be more in depth on the development of dance in the Netherlands and will address the history, traditions and dance as an art form. It functions as background information to a better understanding of the research results and will continue with the personal concerns that were derived from this, meaning that

the integration of the values to my personal case will be addressed from an historical perspective.

3.2. The history of classical ballet

“The economics of ballet is impossible to understand without understanding its history, its heritage and its working” (Schimmelpfenning in Towse, 2003, p. 85)

Classical ballet is an interesting and distinguished art form in terms of its rich history and its traditions. It is quite extraordinary for a performing art form that productions from almost 100 years ago are still performed in their original choreography, while it is for example in theatre performances quite common to produce new versions of out-dated productions. But what makes classical ballet so special and such a delicate form of art that needs to be preserved to maintain the tradition for future generations? To answer this question it is important to address the history of classical ballet more in depth, and see where the roots of classical ballet originated, so this will be addressed in the next part. Also it gives a good perspective on the cultural context that young dancers are living in and therefore also how I have experienced this idea of being part of a creative common will be addressed.

Classical ballet was established as western theatre art form between approximately 1830 and 1900. Its style and technique have developed from that period until now but the roots of classical ballet go back further in history. The so-called tragedies of ancient Greece can be considered as the first forms of theatre, which was however more about storytelling than any form of dance. In the Middle Ages the first real dance can be identified in the form of religious dance, which evolved over time in folkdance (De Wilde, 2008). But the real forms of ballet are seen in the late 15th and 16th centuries in the royal courts of Italy. This so-called court dance became a significant form of entertainment to show prestige and the magnificence of the court in the time of the Renaissance. It became an important part of the elite society and Catharina de Medici brought the court dance to France in 1519 when she married King Henry II and organized parties in which the court dance played an important role.

What is more commonly known about the history of classical ballet is the role of King Louis XIV in France, who codified ballet in the 17th century and gave permission to build the first ballet academy in 1661. A group of ballet masters started this academy, which was called the Royal Academy, or Académie Royale de Danse, and later on also

established a dance company namely the Paris Opera Ballet.

Here you can clearly see the deep roots of classical ballet for especially France and also Italy and therefore it is not a coincidence that the tradition of ballet is in France very strictly preserved and conserved so it remains in the culture of the French people.

To continue the history, eventually a new independent art form was established and ballet developed and flourished in the Romantic period in the 19th century, which would otherwise have vanished (Schimmelpfenning, 2003). It flourished as an art form in which masterpieces were created that are well known nowadays and considered as successful classical ballet productions. A few examples are *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and *Giselle*, which are currently still performed in almost the identical choreography as in the past.

Worth mentioning is Marius Petipa (1819) who choreographed most of the classical ballets and used the music of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky and the classical ballet technique to create full-length ballet productions including a romantic story line (De Wilde, 2008).

Also in the 19th century in terms of movements, revolutionary dance technical changes were accomplished by the introduction of the point shoes in which ballerinas were dancing on their toes, and created an illusion as if they were almost floating over the stage (Utrecht, 1988). Moreover, complicated pirouettes and virtuoso floating jumps were introduced for both men and women dancers, which created an enormous development in classical ballet technique and abilities and efforts of the dancers (1988). Nowadays the choreography is still the same, however the abilities of the dancers have improved tremendously so in that sense there is a huge development in terms of impressive technical ballet tricks but the score of movements remained mostly identical (De Wilde, 2008). This latter development is quite important because it shows how old the tradition of classical ballet actually is and moreover how important it must be considered to preserve this form of art, not only the productions but also the classical ballet technique in general.

To put it in other words, an important part of Europe's cultural heritage can be dedicated to ballet just as many other art forms. Yet, ballet has exclusive conditions for its conservation namely that "in order for its heritage to be able to survive, ballet has to live on as a performing art" (Schimmelpfenning in Towse, 2003, p. 89).

But more importantly continuing the personal casus, it is the consciousness of contributing to a cultural context as a professional dancer, and in the case of classical

ballet also the contribution to a long tradition. In my case, I felt this contribution to the tradition of classical ballet but it was also my willingness to contribute which made it even more certain that I wanted to become a dancer. At some point it is not only just a dream to fulfil but also a drive from the satisfaction and fascination for the art form. To become familiar with this tradition we were often watching videos of old productions. But even more exciting, we went often to the dress rehearsals of the performances of The Dutch National Ballet with the entire school, which also helped in forming this idea about the tradition and also in developing our own personal taste. Besides, a quite extraordinary skill of dancers is, that they can observe each other very well in the sense that they know when a dancer is very talented, has an exquisite ballet technique, or when he/she is doing the movement in a perfect way. This skill is for a huge part learned by watching these performances and observing each other every day in the ballet class, especially when the teacher gives corrections, but it is very hard to understand for lay people.

Also, dancing is more than just doing the steps, and the exposure to the tradition is essential. It is about giving value and meaning to the tradition of ballet and also contributing to the preservation of the art form itself. It is not a matter of preserving an old monumental building by renovating, because there are always human beings involved that need to master the classical ballet technique to be able to perform the productions also for future generations. It is in that sense my personal contribution to the society and that I find it important to have classical ballet as a well-established art form in our civilization.

Furthermore, as a dancer personally, you are part of a cultural context in which you are living in and being a creative individual in the bigger picture. To put it in other words, you can consider it as being or becoming part of a creative common, as described in the value-based approach. It is the sense of belonging, participating, and even adapting to the way of living of such a creative common and consequently the place in history is an important element in this realm. Also, in the practical sense, it includes that you are eager to learn everything about the dance sector as a young dancer, including the rich history and the roots of the art form. This all contributes to the establishment of the creative common, of which you wish to be related to, so you will do anything in your power to realize this. Besides, it is not just being part of a creative common but making ballet as a practice. It

is a way of living, which requires years of practice, or training, and by being aware of the history of all these dancers who have been through the same experiences in life, it can become also a wish to prolong this practice in the future and make it your own. It is another way of contributing but as deeply rooted, as being part of the old tradition of classical ballet, and it is definitely something that I was trying to realize as a dancer.

Therefore, to address the cultural context, the next part will address the development of dance for in particular the Netherlands. Also, in terms of tradition is the Netherlands an interesting example so it shows the interesting cultural context for Dutch young dancers.

3.3. Development of dance in the Netherlands

The development of dance in the Netherlands is quite peculiar and not so deeply rooted as in France or England, for example. The main reason for this can be found in the way we have dealt with our own ballet tradition throughout the years. For many years we took all the influences from other countries and brought in new choreographers and dancers. It is beautiful to have a rich mixture of different dance cultures but also might have the downside that it is a loss in building our own tradition of dance and loses a sense of identity towards what is real Dutch dance art. These are interesting thoughts that can be a subject for an entire Thesis but for now it seems more important to observe that this has happened in the past. And to identify in what way it affects the young talented dancers in the Netherlands that are willing to become the next professional dancers. Furthermore, the history of ballet in The Netherlands identifies the different opportunities that people might take when they are foreigners or want to go abroad. However, I remember clearly that I felt proud about being part of the tradition of ballet in the Netherlands, especially when new dance pieces were created. I was also proud when I saw, for the first time, my name on a website of the Theater encyclopaedia. These things can be considered quite small but it really helped me in my development and also realized my values in the sense of contributing to the art form, and in realizing my societal values in terms of contributing to the society.

To address the history of ballet in The Netherlands in particular we get to the point in which the founders started building the dance culture. Just like in many of the West-European countries there was no ballet culture after approximately 1880, because the developments were more observable in America for example. But around 1930 there

were two ballet groups founded in the Netherlands, the Ballet Igor Swezoff and the Ballet Yvonne Georgi (De Wilde, 2008). They were in particular meaningful for The Netherlands but did not have any role in the international ballet development. Yvonne Georgi, was an especially important figure in the development of ballet in the Netherlands. During the Second World War she continued with her dance group as much as was possible, and thought it was important to have employment for the dancers and that the public still have the opportunity to go out (De Wilde, 2008). It was the first time that ballet groups received subsidy, but they were at the same time accommodated under the occupied Common Theater Business of the Germans. As a consequence it led to the resignation of her two Jewish dancers, who were hiding afterwards to survive the war.

After the liberation commission boards were assigned to filter the Dutch artists that had been collaborating with the Germans by imposing an appeal ban (De Wilde, 2008).

Yvonne Georgi was forbidden to give performances in the Netherlands for two years and she became unpopular and left the Netherlands in 1949. Her ballet group in Amsterdam was continued by her pupil Mascha ter Weeme under the name of Ballet of the Low Lands, *Ballet der Lage Landen*. This was the founding of the Dutch National Ballet and the ballet academy was led by Nel Roos (De Wilde, 2008), which became an important founder in the development of young dancers in the Netherlands. Also, Nel Roos was the founder of what is currently the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam.

3.4. Dance as an art form

By just addressing the history of ballet in the Netherlands there was still a missing link in understanding the dance as art form on a deeper level. What about the question what is dance? According to Utrecht (1988) the answer to this rather complicated question will be that “dance is an in time and space arranged movement” (p. 15). This includes two aspects which can be extracted into on the one hand the time in which is meant that the dancer shows a certain rhythm and tempo with its movements which are the time patterns of the dance, and on the other hand the issue of space which entails that the movements take place in a certain way in the space (Utrecht, 1988). Other aspects of the art form dance include the realizing of the psychical dance impulses, in which physical energy is being mobilized coming from a primary emotional physical dance impulse, as described by Utrecht (1988).

From a philosophical perspective, dance has been described by Aristoteles as a *mimesis*, which means an image of the inner world of which Aristoteles gave as examples in particular music and dance as examples. In other words it means that *mimesis* must be seen as expression of the transcendental inner world, which is the mental world of for example thoughts, feelings, and meanings (Utrecht, 1988). More specifically a dancer can be described as projecting his/her own expressions of their inner world, which can create an impressive experience for the audience.

H'Doubler (1940) describes dance as “the art which expresses emotional values in movement, so to dance one must study and explore and know movement” (p. xxix). In other words, the requirements of the prospect dancer are incredibly high, not only physically but also mentally. The profession of dance belongs to the most demanding professions in the world, comparable to professional top-class sport and the mining industry (Utrecht, 1988). Therefore, the dancers must stay in optimal physical but maybe even more important, mental condition because it includes a lot of concentration and self-discipline.

Addressing this issue from my personal perspective, it is interesting to acknowledge that the meaning behind dance is not something that is explicitly learned at the ballet academy. Yet, it can be considered quite important in the development of the young dancer, especially in terms of transcendental values to be realized. This includes according to me the search to the deeper meaning behind the art form and what it means to you personally to dance every day. Obviously, in the ballet academy the attention is drawn to the physicality of the dance, but to understand this issue more in depth could be an essential addition to the curriculum of the education. Moreover, also related to the history of classical ballet, it is at least important to educate the young dancers the awareness and consciousness that they have as individual of being part of a bigger picture, or in other words, part of a cultural heritage.

3.5. Dance as a craft

To address the abilities that are needed for a prospective dancer, the next part will elaborate on the perspective of addressing dance as a craft in the realization of the values in becoming a professional dancer.

First of all, the institutional facilities need to be available otherwise the chances of young dancers to become professional are just zero. To put it in other words, in order to learn

the craft of ballet, acceptance at a ballet academy is essential. This institution must be the place for the talent to flourish and more particularly to provide a place where the craftsmanship of dance is explored at the highest level of excellence. But can a ballet dancer consider him or her self a craftsman?

My first answer as a ballet dancer would be a definite yes, because the hours that need to be spent in order to master the classical ballet technique are high and the precision and dedication it requires to optimize this technique is a very delicate and a time consuming effort of daily training. Also, the young age that needs to be started is an essential component in the craftsmanship of dancing and a requirement for considering ballet as craftsmanship. Sennett in his book *The Craftsman* describes the phenomenon of craftsmanship in the modern age and how care for the work has been overtaken by quick results while neglecting the value of the working process (2008). This definition is important to the concept of individual artistic excellence since it explains why a particular dancer can derive at his/her highest level of talent resulting in extraordinary performances. Those are performances that might not have been expected beforehand by either the artistic director or the other dancers in the company. In other words, the art of mastering the difficult classical ballet technique and total body control, combined with creativity and the artistic expression of dance might result in the highest form of artistic excellence (Sennett, 2008).

In ballet performances only the outcome of the intensive training is shown so the ultimate result is in the form of a beautiful outstanding performance. On top of that, one of the characteristics of classical ballet is that the movements must look effortless as if the dancers are floating over the stage especially when they are dancing on point shoes. So, one of the lessons that can be learned involving the issue of craftsmanship, is that it could be interesting for the audience to experience more of the daily efforts by the dancers in their rehearsals for performances. Also Klammer (n.d.) addresses this notion that the involvement as spectator in the practice and learning of the craft can be a contributing feature into more attention and understanding for the dance sector in the society. Therefore, it seems interesting to show more of the creative process, which happens before the actual performance since that can be sometimes even more interesting than the performance itself. For students at the ballet academy this might also give insights in their daily life and hard work that needs to be fulfilled every day and their development in mastering the craft of dancing. This will obviously be very

interesting for the audience and the developments among the different ages are also something, which can acquire more attention.

To be more specific, dancers need a significant amount of daily training in order to be able to excel in the difficult classical ballet technique. The mastering of the body requires years of professional training provided in a creative environment, such as a ballet or dance academy. Dancers have to start at a very young age with the craft of mastering the bodily movements. As a rule of thumb is stated in research on talented sportsmen, artists, and dancers that it acquires at least 10,000 hours of training and dedication to reach the highest professional level (Van Rossum, 2010). For dancers that would mean twenty hours of ballet training each week. That obviously shows that talent alone is not sufficient. Yet, this general rule would confirm that dancers could indeed be considered as craftsman since they spend many years on mastering their craft, which only evolves in higher artistic excellence once they mastered the skill.

Another important aspect considering craftsmanship is the ongoing dependency on teachers and in the ballet sector we can speak of the master-apprentice construction we have seen in the guilds in The Middle Ages. These are an important characteristic of craftsmanship (Sennett, 2008). The transmission of the long tradition of classical ballet movements is only passed on the next generation by face-to-face ballet classes in which the student is copying the movements of the ballet master and exercises and then adapting it to his/her own unique movement. Therefore, the teachers are in most cases former dancers and their experience is passed on to the new young talented students. When rehearsing a new ballet there is often a former dancer involved who has danced the piece his/herself so the exact meaning of the choreographer is conveyed and this definitely leads to higher quality of the performance. The downside of this is that the teachers are often teaching the ballet classes based on their own experience of how they have been educated themselves. Yet, several years have passed and in the mean time a new generation has been grown-up in a more civilized society having a more developed education system. So it seems questionable if the teachers are capable of giving the best education adapted to the current generation including a sense of pedagogical background suited for the students. This is often lacking in the ballet teachers education. Moreover, there is also a matter of nationality issues since many of the teachers education is given according to the Vaganova method, which is a Russian method and also educated at the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam. This is obviously based on

Russian mentality and it seems questionable if this is applicable for the Dutch ballet students as well since it is a different culture where different values matter.

However, addressing the issue of perceiving dance as a craft, the enormous involvement of the body is not entirely covered when talking just about craftsmanship. Gardner (1993) has developed the multiple-intelligence theory in which eight categories of intelligence have been analyzed like for example “linguistic, logical-mathematic, musical, and spatial intelligence” but the most important for this research is “bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence” (pp. 216). The latter example explains the cognitive ability to control and vary with different bodily motions for functional or expressive purposes. It is another form of intelligence as usually perceived, by measuring the IQ for instance, but bodily intelligence can definitely be considered as similar. Two reasons for this statement are that it is a complex control feedback system in which different body systems and brain parts are involved and secondly, there is a great influence of body movements on the development of the cognitive abilities. However, Gardner also argues that certain abilities cannot necessarily be perceived as intelligence, only according to certain criteria: The brains must be involved in the intelligence process and if there is brain damage the certain form of intelligence will also be affected (Gardner, 1993). Secondly, the type of intelligence must be coded in certain symbol system, which is obviously shown for dance movements in terms of extensive dance notation. Third, and most important for this research, is that intelligence should manifest itself in an exceptional way. In terms of educational systems, Gardner argues that genetic factors are as important as the discipline of daily training – otherwise people wouldn’t be able to distinguish themselves from others (Gardner, 1993). Not only doing the steps right, but also implementing your own expression and artistic qualities are of main importance and explain the multiple intelligence theory of Gardner for the dance sector.

Furthermore, the dance as a craft requires that there is a total involvement and dedication of the dancer to its art form; it becomes a way of living. The talent of these young dancers combined with their daily efforts helps them to succeed in their goals in life. In other words, doing things you are excellent in will lead to the best results in the realization of your personal values, as Klammer (n.d.) describes in his forthcoming book “Doing the right thing”.

Also there is an additional aspect, which is typical for classical ballet and not comparable to top-class sport or craftsmanship and that is the effortless beauty the creative process

needs to include. The dancers have to look beautiful every day and their efforts cannot be shown facially because they always have to look nice and pretty, preferably even with a smile on their face even though they are in pain. In contrast, in top-class sport the result is of main importance and the way to reach that point is of less importance including the way the sportsman should look for the public. This is related to the hard-to-determine question of where does the sport stop, and where does the art come in?

To be more specific on dancers, it seems reasonable to refer again to my personal experiences because it is often not clearly understood what dancers do every day during their training and rehearsals. This is especially interesting because it actually describes the craftsmanship of classical ballet and gives an insight into the life of a professional dancer. Starting at the ballet academy at the age of nine is the moment that you start doing daily classical ballet classes as a matter of training. This continues throughout the entire period at the ballet academy but also during your entire professional ballet career. It is not like once you learn the technique you are done, but a daily practice which actually becomes a habit and way of life to start the day with your pliés and tendus.

So learning the craft of dancing is actually foundational, and it is developing the bodily intelligence and almost making the movements your own, so it becomes almost automatic and you aim to perform the movements without thinking.

To continue with the daily ballet training, an extraordinary ability of dancers is that they are capable of copying the movement rapidly. To be more specific, during a ballet class the teacher shows the exercise that needs to be done, then you have to remember it quickly and you start doing the movement yourself. This is an interesting feature, which is to me quite ordinary, but can be considered pretty exceptional for outsiders. During the exercises the teacher often also gives corrections, which have to be dealt with during the exercises so quick ability to adapt is also a necessity for a dancer. Furthermore, every ballet studio has one wall, which is completely covered with a mirror that helps the dancers to check and correct themselves. On the other hand, the downside is that it is sometimes quite confronting because you are standing only in a leotard with a panty so in that sense you become very critical, and sometimes even too critical on yourself as was in my case. For me it was also difficult that it was a few times mentioned to me by the teachers, that my body was not entirely suited for classical ballet, because I had too many feminine curves, and that it would be better if I lost some

weight. I still find it a concern that they said that to me so directly, because it is quite common in the dance sector that girls get anorexia, which luckily did not happen to me.

But there is more in a day than just the two-hours of ballet class to optimize the classical ballet technique. The rest of the day is filled with rehearsals of different pieces, which are being performed later on. This is actually the most interesting and creative part of the life of the dancer because during the rehearsals it is more than just copying but also making the movements your own and giving meaning to the movements in your own personal way. Often what was done is that an ex-dancer or teacher, who had danced the piece him/herself, was rehearsing the piece with us, with the help of a video to remember the exact movements. It all starts by learning each step in detail and then it becomes a matter of doing the movements over and over, so you can implement it better in your body and make it your own, which makes it easier every time you perform. And by making the movements your own I mean that it is about expressing your own emotions, which can be inspired by the music or the meaning behind the piece for example.

Furthermore, even more intriguing is the rehearsals in which a piece still needs to be created by the choreographer and you are really part of the creative process. It differs a lot from choreographer to choreographer how much you can create yourself, because some just tell you exactly the steps while others really ask your involvement and you are creating it together. I remember clearly when I was doing my apprenticeship at Scapino Ballet that choreographer Ed Wubbe, who is also director, was asking a lot from the dancers in creating their own movements and he was just saying, yes do that again, which made it even questionable sometimes if he could get the credits for the choreography while the dancers actually created the piece themselves. So this rehearsing period is as important and interesting as the actual performances because it shows the craft of dancing and the many hours of effort it requires to reach the actual result. Also, the rehearsals are a time in which creativeness and experiments are allowed and even encouraged because it often leads to a higher level.

Additionally, the rehearsing period is the time in which the values of the dancers are being realized. In this realm it can be concluded that ballet is not just about the practice, which has been described above, but more importantly ballet becomes praxis, meaning that it becomes an end in itself.

The dancers are not dancing for the sake of earning money, or other practicalities, but the satisfaction is in the praxis of the dancing, meaning that it is just about the ability to dance every day, which gives it all much more value, and it also a reason why ballet can be considered craftsmanship.

4. Methodology

4.1. Method

The method of this research will be qualitative since in-depth interviews are needed in order to answer the research question properly. Also, the subjective elements involving the subject are in need of extensive explanation, which means that quantitative research will be too limited. It includes personal views on how the dance world is perceived and more specifically what the difficulties are in becoming a professional dancer.

Furthermore, the research might have outcomes that cannot be predicted beforehand in the form of guiding fixed questions so the openness of in depth conversation could give insights, which will otherwise be excluded. Consequently, the fragments of the interviews will be the units of analysis and thus analyzed for the results of the research.

In order to select individuals that will be representative respondents for the research a first selection will be made on the reputation or experience of the respondent or contribution to the dance world. Furthermore, one of the criteria in selecting the respondents is that the respondent needs the capability to perceive the dance world from a distance and to observe from a helicopter view. In the process of selection of respondents these criteria will be taken into account although a limitation can be that the capability cannot be known beforehand so it will be an indication. Yet, it definitely excludes young dancers who just graduated from the ballet academies since their view will be a bit limited so the focus in selecting the respondents will be on the more experienced elderly dancers.

In other words, the selection will be purposive sampling by selecting individuals, which the research considers most representative, capable and critical in giving their opinion on the dance world in the Netherlands. While composing a representative sample certain preferences will be taken into account such as expertise in the profession, equal division of gender and age, which represents their years of experience in the dance field. Furthermore, prominent individuals will be preferred when sampling, and by asking open-ended questions during the interviews it will hopefully lead to new interesting insights. Consequently, since the research method will be in-depth interviews, the units of analysis will be the fragments of the interviews that will be compared and analyzed.

Therefore, the interview will take place at a preferred place of the respondents, which will be in most cases their work place like the ballet company, or the ballet

academy, or somewhere in a restaurant in the city. Also what is important to take into account is that the questions can be quite personal, especially when talking about their background or childhood, so a place will be chosen where the person feels most open and comfortable. Although the questions are all open-ended there is a clear guide in the form of a topic list and this will function as a priority to make sure that everything is covered, but certainly additional topics will come across, which will be, if interesting, also taken into account.

The focus of the research is mainly on classical ballet in the Netherlands. This is an important distinction because the modern dance scene is quite large as well, there being a few dance academies in The Netherlands, which are focussing mainly on modern dance such as Artez in Arnhem, Fontys in Tilburg, and Codarts in Rotterdam. However, the last mentioned is an exception in this case, because I interviewed the director of Codarts so her opinion is included because she has an interesting vision on the dance climate in the Netherlands in general. Yet, while mentioning the ballet academies in the findings of the research I am talking about the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam and the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, which are the only two academies that educate students to become a classical ballet dancer. Moreover, in terms of craftsmanship, learning the classical ballet technique can be considered as a craft which requires many years training, whereas modern dance is less strict and often modern dancers need require a good classical ballet technique as well and also have daily a classical ballet class as part of their training.

In terms of comparisons with foreign countries, this research dealt with the top classical ballet academies like the Royal Ballet School in London, Paris Opera or Vaganova ballet academy in Russia because those are the academies that deliver the best professional dancers and determine the level in the international dance sector.

4.2. List of respondents

To explain the reputation and the position of the respondents in the research, the table below gives the current position of the respondents. It is notable that all respondents started their careers as a professional dancer and have been educated at a ballet academy. A huge part of the interview includes their personal background so in the results of the research this will be an important feature to examine.

Name	Position in dance sector
Ted Brandsen	Artistic director of the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam
Janine Dijkmeijer	General manager of the Nederlands Dans Theater in The Hague
Caroline Harder	Director dance of Codarts, modern dance academy in Rotterdam
Ernst Meisner	Artistic director of the Junior Company of the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam
Jan Linkens	Director of the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague & artistic director of the International Dans Theater in Amsterdam
Leontien Wiering	Former director of the dance departments of the Theaterschool (Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten)
Marijn Rademaker	Principal dancer of the Dutch National Ballet in Amsterdam
Rinus Sprong	Artistic director of the Dutch Don't Dance Division in The Hague
Klaas Backx	Teacher and former policy maker of the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam
Jane Lord	Teacher and talent scout of the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam
Grigory Chicherin	Teacher of the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam
Nathalie Caris	Teacher of the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam

4.3. The interview questions

Before conducting the interviews the list of interview question will be presented, although other questions, which seem to be relevant during the interview might alter the direction of the interview somewhat. The first part of the interview deals with the personal background of the interviewee because it is important to indicate what the youth situation was for each person and the role of the parents so a connection to questions about the importance of the home situation for children at the ballet academy can be made. The next part is broader in the sense that the interviewee will be asked about the level of the current young dancers studying at the ballet academies so another perspective is pointed to and leads the conversation towards more in depth question about the difficulties of becoming a dancer in the Netherlands. An important aspect is if there are differences observable between the foreign countries and the Netherlands in the dance education system. This is relevant and interesting to investigate because all of the respondents will have a well-argued view on this since they have danced/worked abroad, have colleagues who are foreigners, or have seen many other international companies or competitions. The important final question of the interview will guide towards solutions and more specifically to the solutions to improve the Dutch dance education system, so more Dutch dancers will reach the top of the dance profession.

As an example the list of questions: (These are the questions for artistic director of the Junior Company of the Dutch National Ballet, Ernst Meisner)

- You were educated at the National Ballet Academy and the Royal Ballet School. How did you experience your youth? And why did you decide to go to London?
- What was the role of your parents in your development as a dancer?
- How important is having a home close to the ballet academy? And how was that for you?
- Did you ever experience problems in the home situation or personal circumstances that limited the development of the young dancer? As a teacher, how did you cope with that?

- What attracts you the most in working with the young professionals and why did you decide to become artistic director of the Junior Company?
- What do you think of the level of the current young dancers studying at the ballet academies in the Netherlands? Did it change over time?
- Why do you think that not so many Dutch dancers reach the top, and why does it seem to be even more difficult in the Netherlands?
- Do you see a difference between ballet academies and ballet companies in the Netherlands and abroad?
- What defines a good professional dancer? What values are involved?
- What would be the educational solution for young dancers in the Netherlands, so actually more Dutch dancers will reach the top?

4.4. Reliability, validity, and limitations

The reliability of this research is to a large part dependent on the amount of respondents available and the aim will obviously be to gather as many as possible in order to make it reliable in the first place. It will be most important to find certain patterns in the results of the interviews and see if questions might be answered the same by different respondents or if interesting contradictions attract attention. Although the research is qualitative and subjectivity is consequently unavoidable, the different perspectives could give new insights and thoughts on the research area. Therefore, when analysing the results of the research, or during the transcription of the interviews, the expectations could be adjusted and different outcomes could actually lead to an increase of the reliability of the research if new insights appear to be repeated by different respondents.

In terms of validity of the research, it can be stated that this is strong because the respondents tell their personal stories and background, and mention their concerns about how the dance sector is organized. This is close to their heart and emotions are involved so this is well observable during the interviews if it were not the truth.

Furthermore, it helps in this case that I have experienced myself what they tell me so this also makes it valid and helps them to understand me and vice versa. So the research can be considered as valid, also because the interviews are examined in one particular point in time, but less reliable since it is impossible that the respondents will give the exact same answers when it is later on repeated to test the reliability.

Furthermore, the research is based on twelve selected respondents that are prominent individuals in the dance field and have their concerns about certain developments in the dance sector. Yet, they are talking from their current position in the field whereas their personal view could be different. Therefore, a limitation of this research is that despite the selection of influential individuals in the dance sector, the limited amount of interviews will make it hard to generalize results for the entire dance sector in the Netherlands. Also, what a few respondents already admit, they have all experienced the time at the ballet academy themselves, so based on their past experiences they can still act upon those, or try to improve that, but this can also be the case in answering the questions during the interview which makes it another important limitation.

5. Research findings

In order to give a comprehensive answer to the research question the inductive interviews have been conducted in the dance sector in the Netherlands. The respondents turned out to be all people with a certain distance to the field in the sense that almost all of them were not professional dancers themselves anymore but teaching or directing at the several ballet academies and ballet companies in the Netherlands. The answers of the interviews have been analyzed and next part will address the findings of the research and consequently the research question will be answered.

5.1. Main findings

Leontien Wiering is former director of the dance departments of the Theaterschool, which is part of the Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten. She has been the leading figure in the development of the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam in the sense that she intensified the connection between the academy and the Dutch National Ballet. To be more specific, the directors agreed on a formal cooperation which means that the Dutch National Ballet works closely together with the academy and also Ted Brandsen, the director of the company, is involved in the policy of the academy, the selection of talent and the cooperation when children roles are needed in their ballet productions. She emphasised in the interview the need for better scouting even before the children audition for the ballet academy, which is partly caused by the lack of good quality classical ballet amateur schools. Also, she suggested having only one classical ballet academy in the Netherlands instead of the current situation with two, one in Amsterdam and one in The Hague. The best talent should be together and must flourish under the best possible circumstances in one building and under supervision of the best possible teachers.

Marijn Rademaker is the only one that is still an active professional dancer and currently dancing at the Dutch National Ballet as first soloist. In his case the part of his personal background was most interesting. It was notable that he was the only one that disliked his youth at the ballet academy and did not have such a nice time looking back at it. He mentioned the many hours of travelling as being extremely heavy and therefore he lived during the week at his aunt's place, which was closer to the ballet academy in The Hague. However, his aunt was quite a cold person and strict so he did not like it

there and even tried to play truant on Mondays so he could stay home at his parents' place for a little longer. Interestingly, he even mentioned that he would have preferred to stay in a guest home, with complete strangers, instead of with his aunt.

While talking more on the issue of the importance of having a stable home, he tells me that he missed this feeling or at least the feeling of a safe base. In private he explains that at the time when he was about 17 years old, he had a relationship with his teacher, which was later on judged as being abusive. This was definitely related for him, the missing of the feeling of a stable base and his relationship, which gave him the feeling of confidence but also replaced for him the missing of a real father figure.

Another interesting issue he mentioned about the development of a young dancer at a ballet academy is that he thinks that even mature professional dancers can still behave very childishly. This may be because they have missed something in their youth, which is definitely true, "but also things like going out with friends, yes sometimes I really wished I was still a '*Jugendlicher*', about 16, 17 or 18 years old, who would go out and just have fun with friends".

Secondly, he considered the level of the current young dancers at the ballet academies quite bad and thought that compared to other countries the level can be improved. An interesting analysis that can be observed is that Marijn also mentioned that there is no need to have two separate ballet academies in the small country we have and that it would improve the level to have all the best teachers, students, and facilities combined. Furthermore, when going more in depth about the difficulties that young dancers seem to have to reach the top especially in the Netherlands he thinks a huge part is related to the fact that the tradition of ballet is not so long and old in the Netherlands compared to countries such as Russia and France. The tradition is not so anchored and also we are not so proud of our famous Dutch choreographers like Van Manen and Van Dantzig as would be the case in Germany for example. This also applies to the perception of the society and the status that ballet has in the society, which is the case when it comes to sport. So this could be much more enhanced and developed in the future.

Continuing on this issue of tradition, the next respondent Rinus Sprong is also quite outspoken about this issue because he considers it to be a problem as well. As artistic director of The Dutch Don't Dance Division in The Hague, he is forced to think outside of the box by for example creating productions in which amateurs and

professionals are together on stage to broaden the perspective for the society. He does mention that it is very special what we have developed in the Netherlands in terms of innovative choreographies, also because the tradition was not rooted under the regime of the court in the past. Therefore, compared to a country like France, there was a lot of freedom in creativity, which lead to extraordinary performances, for example nudity on stage, which would never have happened in other countries at that time because they were too conservative. Concluding from this interview with Rinus is that ballet dancers' primary realizing value is the societal value and more specifically their contribution to the society and the increasing attention that is drawn to ballet because of what they perform. Also they are trying to reach the broadest audience possible, even in commercial settings such as a project with DJ Armin van Buuren, but the work they do definitely enriches the perception of the society for ballet in the Netherlands.

Janine Dijkmeijer, director of The Netherlands Dance Theatre in The Hague, describes this development in the dance sector with different styles involved as being great. She mentions, "it is nowadays just a fact that dance is universal, and we are working beyond borders, which you see also in the different styles". It is currently very common that classical ballet overlaps with urban, or even with folklore; it becomes more and more a mixture of style, and according to her you can just be enthusiastic about this development. Janine compares dance and music to eating and drinking; these are our primary needs, and an expression as human beings to share, and to celebrate with each other. With regard to her background; after her career as a dancer she studied Internet and Media Design, and she also compares Internet and dance as being both a communication tool, which flows across the entire planet. Furthermore, she emphasises the intelligence of the dancers, and stresses the importance of giving the opportunity to the dancers to do the highest possible level of regular education besides their daily ballet classes at the ballet academy. To be more specific, she disagrees with the idea of letting the ballet students graduate at a young age around 17, as Christopher Powney, director of the Royal Ballet School in London argues, but instead, to take a few more years to develop themselves in their regular education also in terms of brain development.

Continuing the development of a young child it is interesting to address the arguments of Klaas Backx, who was policy maker and became teacher at the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam quite recently, because he is the perfect example of

having experienced it all by himself. His dancing career started in Tilburg where there was a small ballet academy, which he claimed was not such a good level, but when he was asked to come to Amsterdam to the ballet academy, which was at the time affiliated with the Dutch National Ballet, he felt it would be better to go abroad. Even though the director of the Dutch National Ballet Rudi van Dantzig had already offered him a position at the company for the future, they both decided it would be better to stay a bit longer in school, not just a school but the renowned famous ballet academy of the Paris Opera in France. Going there at the age of 17 also included that he had to live in a boarding school. Moreover, the level at the academy was so high that he had to work very hard and at the boarding school it was quite unpleasant, so he often called home to his parents. On the other hand, Klaas also mentions the benefits of living in a boarding school because the structure was very appealing to him; there was a strict schedule of when to have your classes, do homework and sleep. Also in terms of focus it helped the children he argues, because everything is focussed on ballet and there is not much to distract them as is the case in the academy in Amsterdam for example, as Klaas Backx argues.

Additionally, Natalie Caris, who is currently a teacher at the National Ballet Academy and former principal dancer at the Dutch National Ballet, is absolutely in favour of having boarding school, also in the Netherlands. She was educated at the National Ballet School of Canada where it was quite common to let your child live in a boarding school and she considered it a very pleasant time. Besides, she argues that it was the only way to become a classical dancer, which was her ultimate dream, so she just chose to do that and luckily it really felt like her new home. She also mentions the focus and structure it gives as being great benefits and important to notice, having a boarding school also gives the opportunity for foreigners to come and study in the Netherlands, which increases the level of the dancers in general.

To address the issue from another perspective, it will be interesting to analyze the interview of Jane Lord, who is former principal dancer and currently talent scout and outreach for the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam. From this perspective it can be concluded that an important feature in educating more talented dancers to the top lies in the years before auditioning for the ballet academy. The role of scout at the academy was an idea of Christopher Powney, the former director of the academy, and they were good friends so that's how they came to Jane, to fill in this new job, which she

thinks can be expanded in the future much more. Her main activity is to travel across the country, visit the amateur schools and give a class or give advice about how they could improve the level of the children. She also scouts candidates who are extraordinarily talented to invite them to audition for the company. Yet, what Jane discovered while coaching is that the level is very diverse among the different amateur schools and that is a shame because it leads to a lower level when the children enter the ballet academy. Moreover, Klaas Backx argues that in the Netherlands anybody is allowed to call themselves an amateur ballet teacher, whereas in France, for example, the teachers need to obtain a state diploma, so it is much more regulated, leading to a higher level of the children in the amateur ballet schools, so a higher level when entering the ballet academy.

Something striking, because it was often not even mentioned in the interviews, is the issue of health for the dancers and the facilities that the ballet academy should be given for this, as argued by Caroline Harder, director of Codarts, academy for modern dance in Rotterdam. She seems to be standing alone in this debate on health for dancers because many of the respondents don't perceive this as primary goal for the academies and focus more on the development of the talent of the dancers, and less so on the development of the person as a whole and the well-being of the dancer. The main reason for this concern can be derived from Caroline's personal background because she did not experience her time at the ballet academy as a pleasant one when she looks back at it, and later on she did have mental issues which were related to that time. Therefore, one of her goals is nowadays as a director, to improve all the issues that were a struggle for her in the past, and moreover her mission is to create a healthy and vibrant dancing climate in the Netherlands. She is not in favour of a boarding school in the Netherlands for young dancers, because she has heard so many bad experiences with children in those situations and does not fit with her vision of creating a healthy environment.

To contrast, one of the less healthy academies in the world is the Vaganova academy in Russia, which is very strict but can be considered as delivering the best technical classical ballet dancers of the world. One of my former teachers Grigory Chicherin was educated at this academy and taught there as well after he stopped dancing. Interestingly, the entire culture within the academy is so focussed on showing off and showing to its students that they are being educated at the best academy of the world, and that their method and technique is simply the best. Also, it is quite a

prestigious job in Russia to be a professional dancer. So this status you obtain in the country is rather different from how it is in the Netherlands, and also the salary that is given to professional dancers is high, even at a young age.

Another interesting remark of Chicherin about the level of the dancers at the academy was that sometimes you see quite soon that children are not going to make it, so I ask him “do you think they should leave the school even earlier?” He finds it almost inappropriate to answer but admits that the academy needs to exist and in order to do so the talented people in the class need to be with someone in the class, which is also to improve the talented dancers.

Another initiative, which was launched a few years ago, is the Junior Company of the Dutch National Ballet. This group of twelve young talented dancers was established to bridge the gap between graduating at the ballet academy and the working field. Often the dancers were not entirely ready to join a company after graduating or were suddenly standing at the back row in a company without any chances to dance, so in order to continue their development, the Junior Company became the solution. Under direction of Ernst Meisner, who is a former dancer of the Royal Ballet in London and Dutch National Ballet, this format became an international success, which also helps the dancers to continue their career at a renowned company elsewhere. When interviewing him he seems to be well aware of the level of the Dutch dancers that is still lagging behind but also mentions that in England the same problems seem to be happening in finding enough British young talented dancers for the ballet academies. Also, his major concern about the Netherlands is that the infrastructure should be improved tremendously, especially how the ballet academy in Amsterdam is organized with different buildings across the city, meaning a lot of travelling for the children and teachers and inefficient structures.

To continue about the building issue, it is important to analyze because it has been something that was often mentioned by the different respondents. Especially the teachers of the National Ballet Academy, Klaas Backx, Nathalie Caris, and Grigory Chicherin were addressing this as a major problem. Moreover, also Ted Brandsen, director of the Dutch National Ballet stresses this as a problem although he mentions it is a project that has taken already about ten years with endless discussions around the table but no concrete implementations so far. Yet, all of them agree that one building would only enhance and improve the level of the young talented dancers because less

time and effort is wasted on the travelling, and all the facilities will be combined so the dancers can develop under the best possible conditions. However, it is important to mention in this realm that having everything in one building is not the ultimate solution. Additionally, it is also in terms of focus for the children a great improvement because if it is well structured, everything in the building including the atmosphere will be related to ballet. Yet, it is more an obvious problem for the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam, but the academy in The Hague, The Royal Conservatoire, does have one building of regular education and ballet classes but is dealing with similar issues concerning the development of Dutch top dancers. In the analysis part later on, there will be more on this issue.

An influential person in the dance sector in the Netherlands is the director of the Dutch National Ballet, Ted Brandsen. A few years ago the company arranged a formal affiliation with the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam to strengthen their cooperation but also improve the talent of the potential dancers of tomorrow. When interviewing him, an interesting perspective was mentioned, that according to him a conscious choice was never made to establish a strong classical ballet professional education in the Netherlands, until recently. Yet, the pioneers like Nel Roos who set up the ballet academy did emphasise this but for some reason it has been fading away over the years. Moreover, Ted Brandsen argues as well that in the past, about twenty years ago, the level of Dutch dancers was better and more Dutch dancers were dancing in the Dutch National Ballet. Besides he thinks that there is nowadays a tendency in the Netherlands to aim for quick results, like ordering ready-made food or finding your partner on the Internet, and everybody seems to be in need of immediate results, which are very unlikely for classical ballet. It is a long and demanding investment, and not everybody is going to end it successfully, which is in complete contradiction to the current time. Also it is how you position yourself, and what status classical ballet has in our current society, which can be considered rather problematic, or as choreographer Hans van Manen used to say; “we are the stepchildren of the arts”.

Last, also Jan Linkens, director of the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, mentions this issue of tradition in the Netherlands as being not so deeply rooted. According to him, “ballet is not in the DNA of the Netherlands”. Furthermore, he explains that the companies have considered the low level of the Dutch dancers as a problem starting in the late seventies and he points out that it is also the task of the ballet

companies to try to improve the level by cooperating more closely with the ballet academies. It is an investment in both ways, on the one hand should we as an academy be open to the idea of working together with the company, but on the other hand, we must also be open that our students are capable of joining a ballet company, leading to a higher level for the Dutch young dancers. It relates to the first quote in the introduction by Ninnette Valois, who was director of the Royal Ballet School, where she said “A school is the bedrock for any company”, which shows this importance of cooperating.

The next part will not only describe the different interesting insights of the results of the interview but will function as an analysis of the research findings and addresses the adaptation of the findings in the dance sector and what possible solutions could be found for why not so many Dutch dancers are reaching the top, which came up in the interviews.

5.2. Analysis

In order to give a comprehensive and valid answer to the research questions the relevant fragments of the interviews have been analyzed and are compared among the different respondents. Several findings were observable of which some were more notable than others although they give together a good and interesting view on how the young dancers and its education system are observed by the respondents.

The main finding of the research is the fact that almost all of the foreign ballet academies have a boarding school close to, or in the academy which allows the children to stay in residence close to their school. It costs less time and effort instead of travelling to home and moreover, as mentioned by many of the respondents, it helps more to focus completely on their ambition of becoming a professional dancer. A few of the respondents have been in boarding school themselves or have heard good stories about this situation, and also it seems to be more common abroad than in the Netherlands. However, one of the interviewee, Caroline Harder, the director of Codarts in Rotterdam, was not in favour of the idea of a boarding school because she finds it unhealthy for the young child to get distracted from their stable basis at home with their parents. To be more specific on that and include the idea of *oikos*, as discussed in the theoretical framework, what indirectly happens is that the boarding school becomes the second home of the children or even replaces their home as they used to have at their parents' place. It can be argued if this is a healthy situation and it differs for each individual but

what can be said is that the idea of a boarding school seems to work abroad and moreover improves the performances of the young talent at the ballet academy because it gives more focus and use of efficient time.

Secondly, another important finding of the research that has been mentioned by all respondents is the problem that we do not have one single building, in which the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam is situated. The situation as it is currently, is that the students are divided among three different buildings across the city. The lower classes, until the age of approximately 14, are situated in Oud-Zuid of Amsterdam and only the primary school groups – age 9 to 11 years old – have their regular school classes and ballet classes in one building. From the moment the children enter the secondary school they have to go for their regular school classes to a regular secondary school in the mornings and have to go to the centre of Amsterdam to take their ballet classes, which are in the afternoon. Many respondents complain about this fragmented division of the different buildings and would like to have it all combined in one building, not only for practical reasons but also to create the best possible creative environment in which the young talents can learn from the older students and vice versa. This wish for one building has been a discussion point for about ten years including several initiatives but there are no concrete plans or real implementations.

Yet, important to mention is that the ballet academy in The Hague, The Royal Conservatory, does have the regular school classes and ballet classes in one building, but at the moment this academy is not really flourishing because there is a lack of vision and direction which leads to less quality in their performances in general.

So it seems that also the idea of having one building will not be the magic tool to make it all perfect but at least it will give an enormous boost and improvement for the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam and much less effort for the students to travel from one place to another.

Additionally, mentioned by a few respondents, was that our country is so small that two different ballet academies is simply too much. They consider it to be of higher value if all the best talents were together, and also all the best teachers so the level will be improving as well. It is only something that is more a wish of some people than something that is actually realizable because there are too many practical concerns.

Third, quite a few respondents have considered the mentality of Dutch people as being problematic. Some called it the '*zesjescultuur*' which means that it is common in

the Netherlands that people are already satisfied with their performances when it is at an average level and do not have the aim or the intention to try and do better to reach for the top level. Furthermore, there is a tendency in the Netherlands to 'act normal, that is already crazy enough – *doe normaal, dan doe je al gek genoeg* – so to be better than someone else and do something extraordinary is not always valued by other people. This can become an issue for young dancers who are deciding whether to audition for the ballet academy but it can also be considered as a reason why we do not have as many examples of famous Dutch ballet dancers who are admired by everyone. Besides, a remarking note was that a few respondents also mentioned the Dutch body type as being a reason why not so many Dutch dancers are reaching the top at the ballet companies. The tall, strong body with enormous bones is compared to for example French or Italian people who are much more slightly build. It is debatable whether to what extent this could have an influence because some other respondents considered this as being complete nonsense.

Concerning the Dutch culture Klaas Backx, Ted Brandsen, and Jan Linkens all affirm that it is very common in The Netherlands that people do not really make a decision to go for something completely. Instead there is a tendency to do both great in ballet but also make sure that the children are doing great in their regular education, often pushed by the parents. This can become problematic because it is a constant division of focus, which can lead to the fact that children are actually not choosing and remain average on both paths, as argued by Klaas Backx.

Fourth, related to the just mentioned issue, is the question I asked about what they think of the level of the current young dancers that are studying at the several ballet academies in the Netherlands. It was interesting because many diverse answers were given. Some, like for example Marijn Rademaker, were quite negative about the level and thought it was not as it was supposed to be whereas others considered the level to be very good and improving every year. I remember from my own time at the ballet academy that we were always complaining and thought we were not good enough, compared to the level abroad. Other respondents, like Ted Brandsen mentions that the level is quite precarious and Ernst Meisner said it has become much better over the past few years, but we are not yet where we want it to be. So this tendency is quite common in the Netherlands and could be a reason why some of the respondents might have lost the objectivity in perceiving this level, but for sure it is quite remarkable that the

answers were so varied. Yet, all respondents agree that it is a wish that the level were higher in the Netherlands so that there would be as a consequence more Dutch top dancers in the several dance companies.

Last, often during the interview there was reference to the past, with sayings such as things were better in the past, or the level of the Dutch dancers was better twenty years ago, like Ted Brandsen mentioned. Also, the concerns on the improvement of facilities of the ballet academy seems something which is a problem for so many years but still did not yield as concrete plans. This is interesting because it also shows that the classical ballet sector is quite old-fashioned, or sort of standing still in terms of development or innovation. This is literally seen on stage when classical ballet production such as *The Nutcracker* and *Swanlake* are performed of which the choreography is already a hundred years old but also in the ongoing discussion about relatively small improvements. Financial constraints might be the main concern why these decisions do not proceed but it will help the dance climate in the Netherlands tremendously and is beneficial for the talent of the next generations. However, something which Jane Lord addresses concerning the ballet technique itself is that compared to the past, improvements did definitely occur; “So I think in general in the dance world the whole education has improved in that sense, there is much more awareness in how you can motivate children in a healthy way”, as mentioned by Jane Lord. Furthermore, when asking about the respondents’ backgrounds there were quite a few that started quite late at the ballet academy or did not even do a proper education at a ballet academy so started only when they were 18 years old. Also, almost all respondents emphasised that it would have been impossible for them if they had become a professional dancer nowadays because it is just much more difficult and there is tremendous improvement in terms of capabilities that the dancers need to master. So actually the craftsmanship of classical ballet did continue as an ongoing improving higher level.

6. Conclusion

While reading the entire research it can be noticed that in fact the Thesis has become a journey in which a certain development has led to new insights that would otherwise have been left out. Also, for me personally this thesis can be considered a healing process in which such a rigid change of values at a relatively young age helped me realize many new values but also gave me the opportunity to reflect upon these experiences at my ballet academy. It is not without a reason that the personal case has been included, because what better example can you find if you have been experiencing it all by yourself and moreover the reflection helps to get a deeper understanding of the entire subject of the Thesis and automatically leads to more intense conversations during the interviews with the respondents. So, it can be considered a reflective thesis, in which the research functions as a way of identification and characterization of the dance sector and analysis of this sector and is also an even edifying attempt. It gives insights and clarification on the life of young dancers and also their perspective, but on the other hand also what they can experience if their dancer's life turns out to be not fulfilling enough, as it was in my personal case.

Besides, during many conversations with my professor A. Klammer we endlessly discussed the personal concerns about the change of values and how a dream of becoming a ballerina fell apart because of my burnout. We discussed how this could have happened in the first place and concluded that in my dancers life essential elements must have been missing. We discovered together that the change of values and the consequence of a new path in realizing these values was an interesting moment in my life and led to the idea of writing my personal case in this Thesis. It is also a motivation why this topic has been chosen, which was at first more related to the idea of missing a stable home situation because of the long distance to the ballet academy, but it turned out that there are many more aspects involved and the life of a young dancer is even more complex than expected. One conclusion that can be drawn is that the life that a young dancer is living in order to realize his/her dream is way too mature for such a young age, and entails so much, besides growing up, but also the early development of values and the struggles if everything else in life is put aside just for the focus on ballet.

Furthermore, concerning the values and referring to the conceptual framework, it can be concluded that the value-based approach has been more helpful in analyzing the

research than the standard economic view. None of the respondents even mentioned economic values or theories about the demand and supply side, or human capital. Yet, it the economic perspective is definitely an issue to take into account but more as foundation of the system and something, which is functioning on the background. Whereas the cultural economic perspective, in which the value-based approach is included, is definitely an interesting perspective that works well in examining the research and by analyzing my personal case. What can be learned for the future is that the characterizing of the values actually improves the conversations and understanding of what it means to have a dancers' life. Furthermore, because the dancers are so dedicated to their passion, their realization of values play an important role in their life so has turned out to be an interesting perspective, which could be a great addition to the conversations about classical ballet. And also in the education of the ballet academies it would be an improvement to emphasise the values and facilitate the needs to realize them in the most beautiful way.

So to answer the research question: *Why is it so difficult in the Netherlands to become a professional dancer even though the Dutch dance companies are internationally so highly recommended?*. What can definitely be concluded is that the explicit answer to this question is not found, although it can be stated that many different factors are involved to give a proper answer. The main issue seems to be that compared to the foreign countries we have not the optimal facilities to offer to the young dancers to develop their talent. It is an issue, which has been addressed by all the respondents, and is not something that seems to be able to improve quickly, because it is a long ongoing discussion. To be more specific in terms of facilities, it is both the wish to have all the facilities in one building, which is in particular a problem for the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam, but also the concern that we do not have a boarding school in the Netherlands at the moment. It is questionable whether a boarding school is a solution for the young talents because there is a sacrifice to make, in terms of giving up your stable home situation and time with your parents. Then the boarding school needs to become your new second home, or at least the feeling of it, and it becomes very difficult if it is not like that, and it will be only a negative outcome.

Furthermore, issues like the Dutch mentality that students are not as eager and motivated as others and that the Dutch body type is not so fragile and delicate as in other countries, which is in both cases something unsolvable because it would suggest it

is just who we are. And if we take it to the extreme we would argue that Dutch people are not built or meant to become professional dancers so that might be the answer to the few Dutch top dancers we currently have. Important to mention in this argument is that none of the respondents addressed this as their main answer to the research question but more as an addition, by arguing that the Dutch mentality and body type could also have an influence on the performances in general in the dance sector in the Netherlands.

Besides, there were also a lot of complaints about the level of the current generation of young dancers that are now studying at the ballet academies in the Netherlands. But at the same time half of the respondents were rather positive about the developments for the future because they did see a progression but many wished that the level had been higher in general in the Netherlands.

Last, the tradition of classical ballet seems to be not so deeply rooted as in other countries, such as in England or France where the first ballet academies were situated. This has an effect on the perception and awareness in the society of the existence of classical ballet because it is not so deeply based in the Dutch culture, but also in terms of financial capabilities there is much more money involved, often government subsidy, in those other countries. The main reason can be found in the development that after the Second World War we were very open to influences from abroad, which made our dance culture rather rich, but also caused our own traditions to slowly diminish. Yet, we have astonishing Dutch choreographers like Hans van Manen, Rudi van Dantzig, and Toer van Schayk, which are internationally renowned, while the Dutch dancers are less well-known and often not mentioned as being part of the Dutch ballet tradition.

So after answering the research question and showing all the different perspectives, what can be advised for the Dutch dance sector in the Netherlands so more Dutch dancers will actually reach the top?

First, it is obvious that the facilities need to be improved and the regular school education and ballet classes should be offered in one building. It will increase the focus of the students and furthermore it relieves the stress of travelling and saves a lot of energy and time. So I agree with the respondents that the facilities need to be optimal and that they definitely need to be improved at the National Ballet Academy in Amsterdam, and make it a school of excellence in which all ancillary matters are well-organized so the student can focus, concentrate, and develop on what they can do best.

I am not sure if I am in favour of a boarding school, which is mentioned as well by some respondents, because I consider it too much of a risk that they are totally distracted from daily life and just live in a bubble, and losing a sense of reality. Yet, if it can really function as a second home, including the homely feeling for the children, it is definitely something to consider in the Netherlands.

Secondly, my advice would be that the dance sector could take more advantage of the top-class sport in terms of support for the dancers. This is both in mental and in physical supports definitely something that can be improved tremendously, and needs to be a priority in the organization of the ballet academies. And if you see how well organized the support is in the top-class sport, while dancers are delivering the same high standard efforts as sportsmen, it is unbelievable that this is lacking in the dance sector. Furthermore, the body is the main and only instrument of the dancers, so it is in the benefit of everyone that the dancers are healthy and functioning under good conditions. Reducing the risk of injuries is also an important aspect that dancers need to deal with, also the mental struggles it can give if they do have to recover from an injury.

A third piece of advice would be to emphasise the craftsmanship of classical ballet and dance in general much more in the Netherlands. It is both the awareness of the dancers themselves that what they perform on a daily basis can really be considered a craft, which is delicate and requires full control of the body. But more importantly, showing it more often to the audience, and offering a view behind the scenes can also help, so the craftsmanship will be expanded. By not only showing the ultimate result of the performance itself but also the creative process which happens beforehand, it might lead to higher valuation of the art form and creates a better perception of classical ballet in the society because it shows the sacrifices, hard work and efforts that the dancers have to make every day. Besides, a downside of classical ballet is that it requires looking effortless and especially on point shoes the ballerinas should look as if they are floating over the stage like angels. So showing the process and the craftsmanship beforehand will create a more realistic perception, which will be valued by the society nowadays.

I am also often questioning myself would it have been better for me to have a boarding school? Would that really be an improvement in the talent development of the young dancers? And what if I continued my dancing career, and what exactly made me stop dancing, what values were unrealized when I was still at the ballet academy? And what did I miss in the education at the ballet academy?

I am actually thinking that some of these questions are questions which will remain unanswered for a while because they are part of the discoveries and major questions in life, and because my life as a dancer has been so intense for so many years, it will take a few more years to figure them all out. What I can answer, which is more concrete, is that I felt in general that the social values were missing in the education in the ballet academy. I have mentioned it before, but part of growing up is just playing with friends, and later on, going out, meet new friends, and this was definitely something that was missing for me because there was simply no time. I think the loneliness that a child experiences is something which is really underestimated and should be taken into account and be dealt with, in the form of mental support or any other support that suits the child best. Also, to elaborate on the mental support, it is a huge lack that this is not fully embedded in the academy because there is so much asked from the children, and maybe even more so than in top-class sport where it is all well-organized and just normal to have a mental coach or someone you can go to easily. I find this unbelievable so it would definitely be an advice for the ballet academy and even for the ballet companies to take this seriously and make it part of the program.

As a final remark I would like to mention that despite all the pain, efforts, and long days, I would not have wanted to have missed my time at the ballet academy because it made me who I am nowadays as a grown-up woman and I have a lot of respect for the young dancers that are currently studying at the ballet academies. Furthermore, I would like to emphasise that even if you decide to change your career path it is not a waste of time, because you will always be a dancer. So it is not about becoming the dancer of tomorrow, or being the dancer of the past but creating the feeling of being a dancer your entire life in everything you would like to achieve.

7. Bibliography

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