Do degrees in circus provide the requisite graduate attributes to successfully transition to industry?

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Abstract

This study examines views of educators and graduates on how circus degree training attends to outcomes in the circus industry, in order to understand whether students are made ready for the industry.

Degree level training has emerged as an advancement of academic activity in circus. Formerly, this was mainly handled at the vocational level of professional training but now there are schools that have established programmes either offering comprehensive education at the degree level or extending existing qualifications to this level. This study applies a multi-case survey in which views of various educators and performers who have undertaken this kind of training are surveyed. The views are analysed thematically to determine the core themes on how degree-level training is viewed in the context of preparing students for the industry.

The findings of the study indicate that student preparation for the industry in circus degrees delivers on skill management and alignment; degree training also preserves and develops the development of art forms at individual and institutional levels with the hope that industry demands will also be met; management of interests and opportunities in the job market are left largely for individual students to handle; circus degrees are also focused on capturing changes or trends in industrial practices with much better efficiency than vocational training and also comparatively better than dance education.

Contents

Introduction

Circus degree programmes have continued to emerge over the past few decades, and it is increasingly necessary for students who graduate to have skills that are aligned to expectations in the industry. The circus industry has been in gradual progressive transformation in how various skills are valued and accommodated within the available structures of opportunity. Employment and career progression are the main domains of outcomes for most trainees and this also builds over their interests for artistic development or other desired contribution to circus. There is need to ensure that training occurs for the right skill categories to mitigate challenges introduced by skill mismatch and general unsuitability or incompetence of trainees when they enter the industry. Career length and career paths vary to a great extent in circus, just as there are variations in student-specific interests and opportunities. Circus schools therefore attend to fairly mixed groups of trainees and degree level training is only emerging to accommodate this complexity in the context of academic expectations and curricular designs.

Most circus schools began in the second half of the twentieth century. Many professional circus programmes, which train students for professional circus performance, are now accredited by federal governments and offer some form of academically recognised circus arts diploma. For the purpose of this research the programmes considered are those that offer formal accreditation by a university as a bachelor's degree, with 3 to 4 years of study, of which there are currently 8.

Background

Currently, few researchers have examined how circus programmes are designed and what value they have in preparing students for a life in the performing arts. FEDEC has undertaken some important inquiries for establishing relational aspects of school-based training and outcomes or expectations in the industry, and compared how graduates' views and employers' views reflect on this issue (FEDEC, 2008a; 2008b; Herman, 2009). The investigations indicate that there has been a consistent gap as employers or major industrial players view graduates as having inadequate competencies or capacities in performance. It is necessary to establish an understanding of the issue in the specific context of degree programmes because they are now setting some level of standard qualifications for trainees. Unveiling existing perceptions on whether there is adequate preparation for the industry will expand comprehension of real-world outcomes to inform circus education and decision-making in creating and operationalising curriculum in this field. Formal teaching of circus in schools only began after the 1950s and was done as vocational training. It has since developed and spread widely, but degree level training is still relatively new with a few schools being renowned for developing transferrable skills and being accredited for this. Close to a dozen institutions offer accredited vocational training (NCCA, 2018).

The degree programmes have items that cover well-established elements of circus, the art behind it, structural aspects of it (including economic or business elements as well as social elements), and a range of items that may cover occupational domains,

research and general academia. The curriculum therefore covers broad content in circus disciplines, areas of physical conditioning, specific performance techniques, techniques from domains of art or artwork development, career management, and institution-specific components for accreditation. It is expected that such endeavours deliver the required skills and competencies for the industry and that trainees get a rewarding or satisfactory experience from it. However, from the FEDEC survey and other research on various domains of training, this is not certain and not much research has looked into the case of degree level training in circus. This study therefore looks at whether the degree level training prepares students well for a profession in the circus industry.

Research Problem

Many academic domains of performing arts have been advancing to establish qualifications in higher education, and circus degrees exemplify such an endeavour. However, there are specific trends and characteristics of the areas of study, performance and research that complicate the outcomes scenario whenever these qualifications are considered in the industry context. Circus is an area of training and performance where pre-existing norms (as in vocational training or even the earliest forms of apprenticeship-based training) are not yet written off, in addition to the complexity of demand for skill, as established by the industry. Degree programmes are not just offering academic status but also establishing expectations with regard to competencies and opportunities that trainees may find in the industry. It is important to establish the extent to which these expectations are met by examining whether the degrees prepare students for a career in the circus industry.

Aim

To examine the issue of whether degrees in circus provide the requisite graduate attributes to successfully transition to industry.

Objectives

- To determine how circus programmes establish and cover needs for entering and establishing a career in the circus industry
- To determine the experiences of former graduates in developing a career over the circus degree.
- To establish core issues characterising preparation of trainees for a career in the industry.

Research Questions

- How do skills that circus schools provide students translate to industry-based outcomes?
- How dependent is the career of circus performers on these skills?
- Can overall skill impartment in training be said to be matching skill use and development in the industry?

Literature Review

Circus is a broad area of art and performance involving activities that are characterised and categorised for their complex use of motor skills, the type of performance involved, and types of art forms applied (Bessone, 2007). The major areas of circus include aerial and floor acrobatics, clowning, balancing, juggling, equestrian arts and their variations (Amsden, 2015). Circus occurs as an encompassment of diverse performances and also serves as a broader area of artistic creation, exploration and extension of human capacities, as well as an area of competitive performance (Wallon, 2013). There have been trends in this field transitioning it from the structural bounds and performance norms of traditional circus to its contemporary state where entry, skill development and performances are more liberal and open for various agents to influence and use (Kwint, 2016).

Differences in the operationalisation of technical categories between traditional and contemporary forms also occur from how the audiences' experiences are modelled and executed, most commonly along aspects of style and venue (Huey, 2015). Traditionally, circus was developed and performed within close-knit circles of people who passed it along familial generations (FEDEC, 2008b). A lot of norms they established persisted to structure performances, but new circus has emerged to alter criteria for performance, performer characterisation, and audience treatment ([ibidi]; Stephens, 2012). Just as the entire body of circus faces definitive challenges in how the art behind it is institutionalised across different aspects of society, higher education in circus is also

facing challenges for how programmes and their outcomes match existent and emerging needs of the circus industry (FEDEC, 2008b).

Interest in the career development of circus artists is grounded in key aspects of circus both as a transforming area of artistic practice and as a domain of diversified interest amidst sources of structural friction among societal supports for creative labour (Bessone, 2007; Stephens, 2012). There have also been major changes occurring in how circus is taught and practiced. Career expectations of people who want to work in the circus industry are diverse and to a large extent undetermined except for artists' specific interests, but the general composition of the creative sector highlights overall domains that shape the opportunity structure for students pursuing higher education in this field:
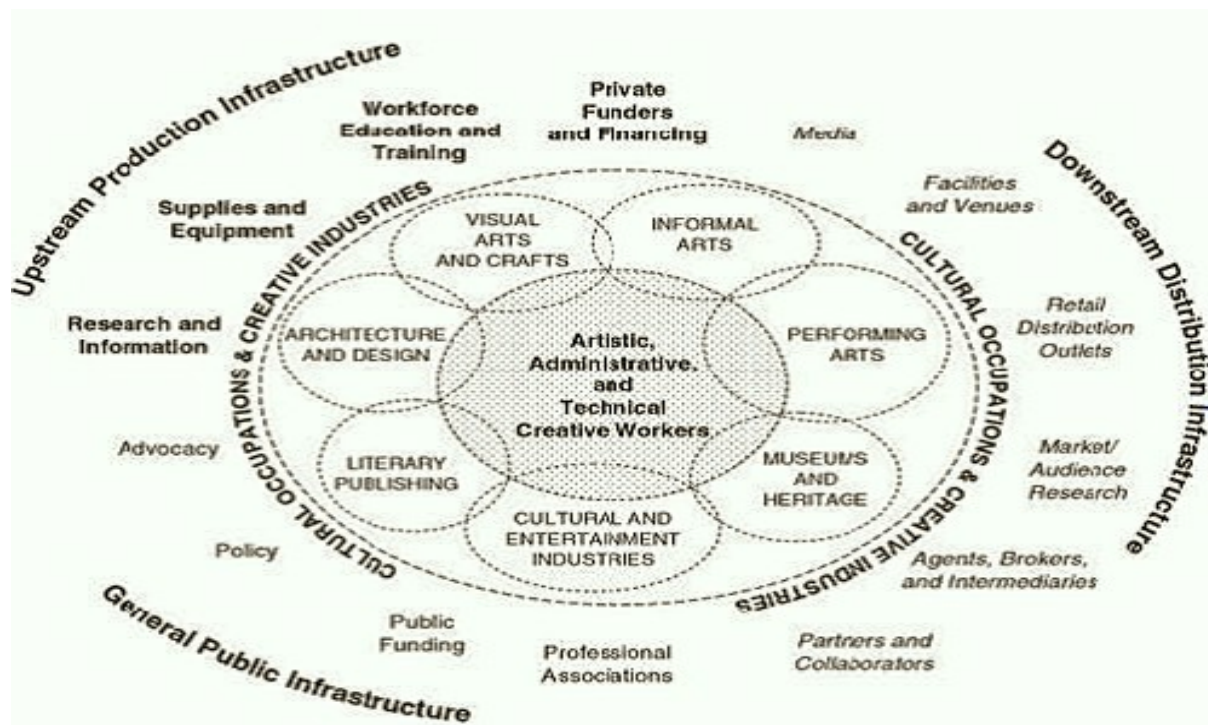
Figure 1: Depiction of the creative sector (Wyszomirski, 2008).

Circus trainees in higher education may pursue career paths that land them in any of the domains shown, but as a speciality, circus also has specific definitive skill-based performances that are used to define some artists' jobs – as exemplified in some iconic entertainment companies' recruitment models e.g. Cirque du Soleil, Cirque Éloize (Stephens, 2012).

Circus activity is identified for performance categories that range from aerial acrobatics, clowning, balancing, and juggling to (increasingly rare) animal acts (Candy, 2017). Animal acts defined the earliest form of circus, providing skills that were seen as specific to circus and their choreographed performances (Speaight, 1980). Performance was implemented with a stage setting, augmented with music and other theatrical aspects of the performers' preference, within a ring-shaped stage where performance would utilise the space (Wall, 2013). The Hippodrome, Great Yarmouth, built in 1903, is the only purpose built circus building in the UK still in operation today; it incorporates a circular ring, with built in swimming pool (photographs on following page):

Figure 2: Circus Ring - The Hippodrome, Great Yarmouth – Jack Jay, 2016

Figure 3: Transformation to pool– The Hippodrome, Great Yarmouth, Lauren Ryznar, 2018

The status that comes with traditional ties has not been eliminated in the industry (Purovarra, 2014), but degree programmes are yet to be created for the domains of skill specialisation that could match the selectivity of traditional training – for instance, flying trapeze troupes are still very common but circus schools do not offer training at dedicated degree programme level in flying trapeze (FEDEC, 2008b).

Domains of Skill in Circus Across its History

There have been interesting shifts in how circus is taught as traditionally it was trained through an apprenticeship model or one-on-one coaching (Wall, 2013). The traditional approach kept codes of knowledge internal to various circuses, mainly passing them along familial ties, but did not necessarily allow for substantial progression and improvement in the breadth of the underlying art (Purovarra, 2014). Wall (2013) reviews traditional circus practices in comparison to contemporary ones, observing that; older circus was taught through apprenticeships while modern artists have more sources of knowledge, and Stephens (2012) expands on the diversity of interests that circus artists bring to the profession as well as the many intersecting dimensions of societal developments that influence them. Stephens (2015) conducts further research into the economic dimension of circus performers in light of the new economy, observing that not getting paid properly is widely embraced as a trend in the artists' careers. Francis (2016) explores contemporary circus and demonstrates that some of the most important issues for the performer and for the art itself are not on technical aspects of existent skill sets but rather on how different sections of the industry and society as a whole embrace and use circus. These include the generational trends among

performers, how the intellectual domain plays out to shape meaning of the art forms, how audience preferences shift, and how the various elements impact on the opportunity structure that societies create in circus ([ibid]; Spiegel, 2016).

The earliest forms of circus training involved learners being apprenticed in a skill area mainly for technical aspects of skilled performance and purposed for few categories of well-known performances (Kwint, 2016; Darbuch, 2014). Training in this kind of circus can be understood for elements of the circus performance, i.e., the ring, the ringmaster role, animals, clowning or support roles, and an appropriate form of fine art to augment the performance (mainly music) (Amsden, 2015; FEDEC, 2008b). Its distinction from modern circus focusing on ownership and control, the declining role of the ringmaster (a comedy presence becoming more established), or diversification to reduce accentuation of certain acts in the domains of freak shows, daredevil acts (stunts), and illusionist acts, and to instead focus on combinatory nature of modern theatrical performances with a variety of skills (Bogdan, 2009; Dear and Couzens, 2012; FEDEC, 2008b).

The very earliest circus schools were mainly known for the transfer of equestrian skills as these were widely used in circus (Huey, 2015; Durbach, 2014). Like all other forms of animal acts, the performer needed to master the handling of the animal and the execution of other moves that rely on mastery of certain physical abilities (Durbach,

2014; Bessone, 2007). The individuals, families, or enterprises who staged traditional circus performances would work out the logistics for travelling and their skill needs for tenting, managing supplies, marketing, performance and audience management (Brimfield, 2011; Whittman, 2012; Weber, Ames & Whittman, 2012). Skill development in the family-based troupe performances of the late 1700s diversified skill forms of Philip Astley's riding schools by including more animals, more types of acrobats, illusionists, other high-skill feats, and more enriched performance (Whittman, 2012).

Extensive touring has always been part of traditional circus since its widespread popularity in North America from the 19th century to early 20th century, most of which showcased tented shows involving animals, sequins, and clowns (Wall, 2013). Tours serve to capture widely dispersed demand for circus performances across populations and this was especially very crucial for traditional circus (Weber, Ames & Whittman, 2012).

Barnum and Bailey are iconic figures in the popularisation of these kinds of shows and the transcontinental railroad facilitated their trade to a great extent (Davis, 2002). They took a lot of people on board which also warranted the acquisition and development of various specialised technical skills. The Barnum and Bailey Circus transcended the founders' demise by carrying on performances to recent times (until 2017) but with progressive transformation having happened across the ages in how performances were

organised and carried out (Pettit, 2012). Skills in the aforementioned categories would therefore be imparted to a more diversified populace. Performance skills were also imported for inclusion in British circuses with companies that operated trains facilitating arrangement for some excursions for Barnum and Bailey shows. As such, the success of these shows also benefited from logistical outcomes of their capacity for organisation and the showmen exhibited impeccable leadership and management skills (Darbuch, 2014).

Parker (2011) notes that the economics and organisational capacities of the circus have remained influential for success in the field. To effectively operate a circus, or sustain performance in major roles, one may need skills for managing different aspects of production and even tours at the level of their involvement in the circus. Another area of soft skills for this circus is rooted in mastery of cultural bases for demand of various acts (Huey, 2015). The like of Barnum and Bailey's circuses showcased sensationalised acts that would evoke different emotions and controversy in ways that added to the popularity of the circuses. The evolution of performances in circus has depended a lot on the liberalisation of structures within which knowledge is transmitted in ways that make it part of a larger body of arts (Lavers, 2014; Huey, 2015).

It is clear that dominant skills in traditional circus were mainly in the performance category and largely transmitted through apprenticeships, with levels of

institutionalisation determining the skills that became well established (Bessone, 2007). The iconic performer would be well known and symbolic to the success of a circus, and they would therefore also provide the essential leadership skills for the circus. Some provided organisational skills directly by themselves or through liaisons and close acquaintances in circus or in related industry or trade (Durbach, 2014; Weber, Ames & Whittman, 2012). New circus is established on the view that old circus had too much focus on technical intensity of established skills, which are also thought to be non-diverse and too specific to the tradition of specific performances – which new circus also views as to be either impeding artistic interpretation and growth or to be the actual embodiment of limited artistry in circus (McCutcheon, 2003).

Performances and Competencies for the Evolving and New Circus

The evolving circus from the early 20th Century's extensive institutionalisation of circus skills brought changes in the role of heritage in this field. One side to the extended institutionalisation of circus training and performance reflected activities of major governments, while the other reflected those of corporate establishments and trends in entertainment. The Soviet Union was exemplarily characteristic for the former, seeking to establish circus as one major form of national art (Parker, 2011; Wall, 2013). However, extended institutionalisation of circus in other parts of the world also controlled the space allowed for its performance and even for gains that artists and performers could derive from it (Purovaara and Lakso, 2011).

Progressive institutionalisation of circus has meant that broader interests are systematically served in training (Caravan, 2011). Involvement of governmental and corporate agencies in institutionalising circus training makes competencies and interests that serve broader sections of populations to be important ([ibid]; Zanola, 2007; Stephens, 2012). It is however important to also note that the approach is not comprehensive in the context of consumption of circus performances relative to the development of the art behind them as there are also subjective influences across populations (Zanola, 2007; Bouissac, 2012; Machado, Golgher, and Diniz 2017). Nevertheless, circus is trained with performance outcomes being applied in such diverse areas as circus festivals, circus clubs, training clubs, projects in schools, parties for children and adults, community development initiatives (social circus), corporate events, and for private or personalised amusement (Caravan, 2011).

It is not just the art forms that are standardised in training but also the supportive structural elements of the performance environment – including elements of safety, socio-political consciousness attached to art forms and performances, standards for theatrical performance and production, among other foreseeable structural elements (and which are pursued as far as a given institution determines or as far as the students commit to the knowledge and skills behind them). Economic viability of circuses is also dependent on having ability to obtain requisite competencies for establishing a safe, conducive, and comfortable environment as per the standards set for the respective competencies involved (Zanola, 2007). Training is therefore bound to cover such issues

too. Broader curricular issues are also introduced at the higher levels of policy, such as through changes in the understanding of circus arts and roles played by different resources (such as animals) at the administrative levels of education and of the performance industry (Bisker, 2014; FEDEC, 2008b).

Curricular and Pedagogical Trends

From reading through literature on curricular and pedagogical elements of contemporary circus, issues are explored depending on the perspective awarded to circus or the context of its application (Langlois, 2014). There are explicit categories or criteria established in some contexts of circus training, including amateur, professional, social, and artistic circus. Social circus is a highly dominant domain in contemporary literature and provides almost all of existent academic insight on curricular and pedagogical issues in circus education (Karimi, 2015; Candy, 2017; Yliopisto, 2017; Butcher, 2017). Curricular aspects of the technical domain of performance mainly emerge from practices of vocational schools (PPS, 2017). Many of the degrees are three-year programmes and domains of skills include aerial disciplines, object manipulation, acrobatics, equilibristics, movement, physical theatre, flexibility, and strength and performance as well as supplementary work on business, marketing, rigging, prop making, costuming, history of circus and developing areas of theory (Butcher, 2017; Karimi, 2015).

The interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of circus education cannot be overlooked. There are obvious relations to such disciplines as sports science, sports

psychology, fine arts, performing arts, and much more. Areas of circus training in embodied performance are therefore also borrowing from sports science and psychology with the potential of looking into aspects of biomechanical and psychological sciences, physical education, and related domains of study (Côté and Gilbert 2009). Other performing arts also merge to provide useful insight from such domains as dance science and fine arts. Use of a hidden curriculum may also cover areas of emotional and psychological commitment in order to yield high-performance outcomes (Yliopisto, 2017; Hays, 2012). Cirque du Soleil is a renowned circus in the industry and it attends to psychological elements of training and selection when working with artists (Galante, et al, 2017). Such iconic circuses also provide ideal models for some schools on how high-performance domains of circus can be viewed and areas that can be highlighted or explored in the related curriculum (Ménard & Hallé, 2014).

Reliance on developments made in related disciplines such as sports science are important because some critical areas have been advanced adequately for circus training to borrow and apply in ways that are effective to the programmes including such areas as injury management and motivation (Galante, et al, 2017). It is expected that training programmes can at least provide the best outcomes for basic aspects of performance (such as safety and knowledge of performance standards). The notoriety of such iconic circuses as Cirque du Soleil influences trends in items that some educators perceive as to be critical.

Liodaki, Kasola, and Karalis (2015) conducted an evaluative and analytical survey of training outcomes for circus pedagogy and revealed important trends in how this pedagogy is shaping up. They showed that there is an increasing rate of concentration on pedagogical circus at 56% and also on psychomotor pedagogy at 74%. These patterns are reflections of how the training was viewed to be evolving even though a large percentage of the teachers had low skill levels and a lot of reliance on creativity was deduced. Teachers are also likely to be actively involved in areas of circus pedagogy without having very refined and explicit theoretical or abstract articulation of these areas, because they hail from different backgrounds. FEDEC has undertaken important inquiries into relational aspects of school-based training and outcomes or expectations in the industry, and compared how graduates' views and employers' views reflect on this issue (FEDEC, 2008a; 2008b; Herman, 2009). The findings of these investigations are unified on the theme that employers or major industrial players view graduates as having unrefined performance capacity, which makes them fall below the standards of performances that can sell (Herman, 2009).

Leadership and coaching is another area of strength. The coach or trainer will usually have to exhibit and transmit leadership qualities through high levels of professionalism and influence (FEDEC, 2011; Nash, Sprule and Horton, 2008; Lafortune, Aubertin, and Burtt, 2016, Whitmore, 2014). The style of coaching and leadership in higher education shapes the experiences and success odds for many students (Becker, 2009). FEDEC's study on how qualities required to be an effective coach in circus are portrayed and

managed indicated that adequate information is availed to deliver the required outcome consideration (FEDEC, 2011). The leadership element goes to explain relationships that coaches have with athletes, some of them being in need of mentorship, friendship, and general influence across career-related and life-related issues. Langlois (2014) noted that instructors are part of the "circus family" and will have an immense impact on how students connect to the family.

The areas of leadership, coaching, and influence can also provide for the role of social issues in circus training. Social circus is an increasing area of activity where issues of community development, empowerment of the disadvantaged, other domains of social justice, and social influence of creative labour are embraced. Gender issues are also explored for how competencies and skills are favoured for masculine versus feminine traits and how this may relate to artistic versus athletic outcomes. FEDEC (2008b) explored demographics of students as well as educators in the circus industry, revealing that it had a 70% male domination (FEDECb). Langlois (2014) also noted that school audition processes did not account for lower inclusion of female artists.

Comparative Insight from Dance Education

Considering some comparative research in dance education, circus as an area of study is not firmly academically established and this may be due to the need to capture more in terms of the trends and patterns that are occurring across the related arts, as dance is also very much oriented toward social outcome (Oliver, 2009). Many researchers in the field of dance education understand that the curriculum should be designed to

encompass a holistic approach to learning in creative fields (McCutchen, 2006, Kassing, 2010; Smith-Autard, 2002).

McCutchen (2006) believed that as dance is a creative endeavour, all aspects of curriculum should reflect that. Smith-Autard (2002) advocated for a holistic approach in order to remove the disconnection of learning experienced by students who undertook traditional assignments in relation to the creative practice. This in turn would support student dance technique whilst at the same time making them a well-rounded person. This is in line with Kassing (2010) who wanted a dance curriculum that would prepare students for multiple dance careers (teacher, performer, choreographer, etc.) in order to prepare them for the industry, and for life after when they transition to another career. To do that Kassing (2010) felt it necessary for the students to see the connection between what they are learning (how practical informs theory, and vice versa) and how it can be applied to their future career. She argued that by engaging in "authentic learning experiences" (Kassing, 2010), the students would have the opportunity to apply what they learn, directly into their practice.

These concepts of holistic and interconnected learning are equally transferable to circus and should be taken into account when designing and delivering degree programmes. Dance is also interdisciplinary by its nature (Aoki, 2015), which is sometimes perceived as a weakness for how it has progressed (Davenport, 2017).

Circus degrees, whilst in their infancy, can diversify away from narrower emphases (i.e. just technique) to create a truly interdisciplinary approach to training students for the industry (Sadan, 2016).

It is a clear trend that circus training has been evolving and is still facing various issues in how it aligns training outcomes to the industry. New circus has picked up from an area of complex activity and the domains of skill that can be developed are incredibly diverse, with developing views on how artistry can be enhanced in this field. A circus performer can also emerge from formal and informal domains of training. Many countries have professionalising schools, some of which are accredited through federal ministries, for example the National Circus School in Canada. Those that offer degrees are also on the rise (FEDEC, 2008a). Curriculum in such institutions is devised to both meet governmental standards and to establish artistic and physical skills that are perceived as necessary for a student to pursue a circus career as a performing artist [ibid]. A full list of courses available can be found in Appendix A.

Methodology

This chapter describes the considerations and selections made for the research methodology, including the research paradigm, research design, research methods, data collection, and analytical techniques applied. It sets off by reiterating the research purpose, including questions, and objectives. The subsections for the research paradigm, design, methods, and data collection are then presented. The chapter concludes by providing considerations made for validity, reliability, and ethics.

Purpose

The methodological objective is to facilitate an investigation into the extent to which circus degrees foresee and attend to the demands of the industry in the way students are prepared for a career in performance. The methodology purposes to provide a means for gathering information about the degree programmes and outcomes that are seen to be elicited for the students' post-training experiences in the industry. It provides access to data sources that give comprehensive information based upon how training relates to outcomes and experiences of students in the industry. The basis of the fundamental relationship between circus training and performance outcomes or experiences is laid in part by findings of previous research by FEDEC (2008) which identified considerable levels of discordance between training done in circus degrees and industry expectations for students or their overall experiences in starting out as professionals. FEDEC identifies the core aim of its deliberation on the issue as to have been: "*to define and specify the ambitions and common borders between teaching and professional integration.*" (FEDEC, 2008a).

An increasingly diverse industry with a segmented structure of opportunity that young and newer artists are faced with provided the underpinning rationale for this inquiry. Initial establishment of the circus skill sets required across various markets was then used to devise a detailed and adaptable skill set, exhibiting varied expectations across different branches of the industry.

As for the demands placed by the market, and in the traditional sense; show makers mainly "buy" circus in the form of acts (Huey, 2015). Training students to deliver a specific act can qualify them for differing roles in a show. Most shows accommodate between 10 and 12 acts, each of which can last up to 6 or 7 minutes. The artists can adopt their technique and act to the shows overall framework, with such considerations as to whether their act needs to have a certain tempo to aid the flow of the whole show.

Degree programmes do not necessarily accommodate all technical requirements for a high-performance environment but the blend of techniques that they use is an important determinant of the programmes' breadth and depth in covering employers' needs. Additionally, trainees will derive diverse experiences from the employment environment with regard to how their various needs emerge to fit, or fail to fit, this environment and the opportunities that they encounter. This is an unresolved area that essentially begs the question: "*Do degrees in circus provide the requisite graduate attributes to successfully transition to industry?* "

There is also a consideration for performance management and skill refinement issues within this question, which have to be attended to in order to guarantee employment as they also remain highly subjective across different market sections, companies, and domain of circus – self-employment also introducing a more divergent aspect of this dynamic.

Circus degrees attempt to provide a blend of technical skill development and education on a variety of elements in performance management and development of art forms. The central area of interest of this research is to explore the extent to which gaps in these expectations (industry versus training) are bridged. Butler-Kisber (2010) explains that the answers to research questions will emerge from the answers to sub-questions, in conjunction with the explanation of their answers given by the researcher.

Research Questions

The study aims to determine whether circus schools' degree courses adequately prepare their students for a career performing in the circus industry, and to do so, it answers the questions of:

- How do skills that circus schools provide students translate to industry-based outcomes?

- How dependent is the career of circus performers on these skills?

- Can overall skill impartment in training be said to be matching skill use and development in the industry?

Research Paradigm

The current study adopts a phenomenological interpretivist paradigm where views provided by participants are situated in their subjective comprehension of actual experiences in the worlds of training and industry-based performances. Zhao (2012) notes that phenomenological interpretivism is a blueprint for qualitative research. It aligns to an inductive approach in research whereby the research process develops ideas that may culminate into a domain of theoretical insight or formulation rather than being committed entirely to the testing of a prior theoretical position. Interpretivism provides for methods in which social actors deliver the ultimate insight by which a given inquiry is operationalised. There is a lot of contemporary research exploring issues in similar categories as the current one by utilising this paradigm, including: Sweet (2009), Barker (2013), Lapin (2013), Schuemann (2014), Nutter (2015), Bessone (2015), Heath (2016), Anthony (2017).

An interpretivist philosophy speculates that reality is subjective and that it varies depending on whom perceiving it – implying that it is interpretively constructed in the context of the person that perceives it. (Anthony, 2017; Thanh and Thanh, 2015). In such a case, social actors contribute versions of reality to occurrences [ibid]. The interpretivist researcher may therefore approach research as a process in which social actors influence outcomes.

The role of social actors can be assumed to be supreme in how they confer meaning to the issues that are being researched. The researcher is one such actor and dispenses oneself to the research process, accepting and rejecting tools and various inputs, and also making subjective judgements on the meaningfulness of the research process or its outcomes (Nutter, 2015; Zhao 2012). Research that involves human participants introduces the social actors and the forms of reality that are examined are not separate from their various dispositions and levels of subjectivity (Anthony, 2017; Thanh and Thanh, 2015). The interpretivist will therefore promote the idea of reality occurring to humans because they have capacity for interpreting or contextualizing occurrences to their worlds (Chowdhury, 2014).

In an interpretivist research paradigm, it is believed that awareness will not be achieved for conditions that cannot be interpreted and contextualised to one's meaning system or one's world. Such views are widely applied in social sciences because research that looks into the social aspects of life deals with a lot of subjective elements across culture, personality, and in other sources of differences (Thanh and Thanh, 2015). It is also applicable to institutional research as there are many varying and interpretable aspects of human relational exchanges of meaning, as in art and performance-based interactions. There are also issues of varying cultures, preferences, ideologies, and contextual traits that institutional research seeks to examine and explain (Judgder, 2016). They play a role in the decisions that important players make, including decisions by administrators, students, employers and regulators, among other

stakeholders. Value-based assessments are therefore possible to accommodate in such research given the varying nature of interests across the stakeholder base, and even within each category of stakeholders (Chowdhury, 2014). Interpretivist researchers may for instance consider the various elements of communication or engagement for the ways people formulate an understanding of such engagement or communication based on the varying nature of the elements that drive it (Chowdhury, 2014).

Research Design

An exploratory phenomenological design is applied in this study; such a design uses the experiences of people as a backing for the examination and outcomes of research (Carmencita, 2017). In applying a similar design, Khan, Asher, Ahmad, Iqbal, and Khan (2016) view their approach as to be of essence to prospective exploration of human experiences through the descriptions of participants. The participants address an issue from the perspective of their direct experiences and a phenomenological research interprets their perspectives to deliver useful outcomes. Merriam (2009) notes that phenomenological research helps to expand or facilitate creation of meaning based on meanings that are drawn from raw experiences and thus derives a lot of its power from this capacity.

Explanatory designs augment such an approach by providing the means by which research can extend knowledge in the areas that are not well established or understood, including the generation of new perspectives in research on an under-researched issue. It is also broad enough for a design framework in the extent to which

it may be customised to apply to diverse implementations, especially when dealing with occurrences or experiences from different institutions or organizations (Turner, Cardinal and Burton 2015). It can answer the questions of "what", "where", "why", "when", and "how". The alternative design categories are descriptive and explanatory designs that are not applied here.

Descriptive design usually focuses on establishing a profile or characteristic nature of an issue but the current study is not adopting it because an exploratory design allows for a broader and more in-depth approach. Explanatory designs yield explanatory links, and as such; they are more viable for research that pursues such links. Descriptive designs could be best applied for an issue or phenomenon that is very concrete and within bounds of criteria that establish ways for profiling it. This suits research on issues that are well researched and research that has some precise predefined application. The phenomenon of degree-level training is broad by its nature and schools can even have distinct philosophies to back up their approach to curricular design and training. Explanatory design is therefore more suited for the current study.

Multi-Case Strategy

The study looks at cases of degree programmes from notable schools whose training is widely accepted or accredited at the national and international levels. Multi-case strategies have the advantage of being rigorous, as well as highly and broadly informative (Gustafsson, 2017). The use of case studies suits such circumstances where there are representative sections of the environment or population from which

sufficient information and data can be obtained to reflect the reality behind core issues under research. Case studies also help to in the navigation of conceptual complexity for studies that examine widely scoped issues (Gear, Eppel, and Koziol-Mclain 2008). They help to narrow down to the important real-world scenarios that are of importance to a study hence simplifying the design. (Zaborek, 2009).

The application of cases can also facilitate efficient use and management of resources in research. For instance, it facilitates management of data complexity as the cases offer effective nodes for modelling the issue in the real world in place of more complex simulations or models that could be costlier and unpredictable (Miles, 2015; Gear, Eppel, and Koziol-Mclain 2008). Cases also contribute core research elements as representations for data points and provide an interface for the researcher to gain exposure to the real-world scenarios (Miles, 2015). Multi-case approaches therefore pursue the robustness of outcomes and even offer opportunities for data triangulation in comparison of trends across various cases in order to enhance research validity.

For the preliminary case study selection, this study considered the spectrum of formal training at the degree level across the globe but then settled for cases that are reputed for credits that are widely recognised and are transferrable across major institutions. Such a process involved establishing an understanding of the programme content for claims that are also made therein as representative of expectations for outcomes that

trainees will have in the real world. Having worked in this field, the selections were therefore also informed by experience as well as by researching and exploring documentation on the programmes, how various expectations are profiled, and on-going work on the underlying curriculum.

Potential researcher bias for having been closely involved in this field is averted by relying on emerging knowledge from researching and exploring documentation on the programmes, how various expectations are profiled, and on-going work on the underlying curriculum as well as conducting non-affiliated case selection where the cases have no relation to the researchers' training and career-based developments and participants were previously unknown to the researcher. Continued communication with various people that have interest or experience with the issue also enhanced preparation as it also points to potential areas of interest – including educators and performers in the researcher's contacts.

The important or ideal cases emerge from all the detailed preparation and the researcher also gets an opportunity for preliminary ad-hoc investigation into the data environment to enhance accessibility of cases to be applied in the study or to understand suitability of some means of accessing data (Miles, 2015 Gear, Eppel, and Koziol-Mclain 2008).

For this study, it was found that a lot of useful institutional data was archived and a lot of archived accounts of educators would be useful with a minimum of one actual interview. This consideration was especially made as access issues emerged in contacting key educators with extensive knowledge on curricular outcomes in the industry (as well as working with degree-offering institutions). In addition to using archived data by educators in open access mode, one educator and five performers were accessible for a live interview. This collection enhanced diversity of input for examining the issue and covered all the fundamental perspectives that were needed in this research.

Data Collection

Two forms of useful data were found to be available in: (a) educators that were accessible from the schools offering degrees, and former students, as well as; (b) direct narrations availed in the form of recordings available for public use by various educators (mainly videos and reports made by trainers and other educators). For the group of participants targeted for interviews, the researcher made acquaintance with them and explained the context of the study prior to the interview. Establishing common ground is critical for enhancing relevance of issues in the context of such a process (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher had two key groups to work with: circus schools and circus performers. All participants needed to be able to respond in English. The researcher therefore contacted all the schools that offer Degree level training to express an interest in having their participation in the study by email.

There was need to gather data from educators and performers who have been part of the programmes. The researcher utilised contacts from the circus schools to make contact with performers. The sample therefore included people that had both professional knowledge on the issue and experience with circus operations, but were not previously known by the researcher. Informed consent was sought from all participants at this point, explaining the purpose and use of the study, through a signed letter of consent (sample - Appendix B). This also informed participants of how their data would be stored, their ability to withdraw from the study at any time, and that anonymity would be ensured.

Semi-structured interviews involve the use of guiding questions to facilitate the exploration of an issue. Having undertaken a pilot interview the researcher posed questions (examples: Appendix 3&4) to prompt an exploration of issues regarding training in the context of industry outcomes. In the process, the respondent provided their perspective and this would guide further prompts. The researcher would then pose more questions depending on how the conversation flowed to ensure that all the targeted areas were covered. In such interactions, the respondents have more flexibility and can guide the flow of content. The interviews were conducted over Skype, recorded audio-visually, before being transcribed. The files were stored in password protected cloud storage, before being deleted upon transcription, as noted in the information given to participants in their letter of consent and as per the ethics application made to the University.

For the collection of archived data, a strategic content search was applied to bring up accounts that educators offered on the course outcomes and the form of training involved. The specific schools that are known to offer the courses were used to customise the search and were augmented with such terms as "career', "job", "career path", "curriculum", "skill requirements", "employment", "performance industry", "creative industry", "career in circus" in addition to the search-engine-specific filters. This narrowed down the content to provide a final sample of 12 resources (Appendix 5) that were reviewed and processed to provide a pool of text-based data, together with the transcribed interview content.

Analysis

The main aim of the analysis was to code the data and extract themes that organised the core ideas or views explaining whether circus degree programmes prepare students for the industry. A good way for establishing patterns in data and establishing comprehensible expressions or descriptions that attends to such an objective is through thematic analysis. (MacMillan, Forte, and Grant, 2014). This technique occurs in several phases, some of which set off much earlier, as soon as data preparation begins. The earliest stages involve developing familiarity with data and issues raised therein. (Celepkolu and Boyer, 2018).

As data is collected and formally compiled, the researcher makes effort to capture all data points that are available in the selected medium or media. The objectives of analysis are based on important areas of inquiry which all centre on the issue of preparedness that circus degrees generate for students to enter the industry. This includes covering all questions and capturing elements of emphasis or proposed directions that respondents apply to add meaningfulness to the data. A lot of these preliminary steps are also managed in the selection and use of certain forms of representations, for instance, researchers often select to ultimately transcribe all data into text; whereby non-textual or indirect expressions can be described and paraphrased to align all data to the selected medium reference. (MacMillan, Forte, and Grant, 2014; Javadi and Kourosh, 2016). This applies to all data that is used. The current study obtained data in recordings, including the interviews that the researcher conducts

and open-access availed by educators and performers online which is centred on references made to the degree programmes and industry-related preparedness. For semi-structured interviews, it is possible to transcribe all responses into text for how the interviews flow from the beginning to the end and capture all the feedback that is obtained from participants. As an inductive form of research, interview data can be based on variant questions that are generally in the context of the topic and objectives of the inquiry [ibid]; and all data that is generated is documented accordingly. In the current study, all such feedback was transcribed word-for-word to provide the raw data. Thematic analysis is then conducted based on the selected unit of analysis.

Bias in thematic analysis can be overcome by enhancing a critical approach to data in such analysis, whereby; the analysis sticks to a comprehensive detailing of its specific aims to eliminate ambiguity and also establish and confirm the context of patterns seen in data (Gray, 2014). In the current study, a critical approach to analysis was achieved by awarding focus on a rich context (for both logical faults and merits) exposed across data with regard to all expressions that participants make to explain educational outcomes in circus. Comparisons are made across educator and trainee views in order to also establish themes that are well corroborated in raw data expressions (Smith and Noble, 2014). Transcribing the data also went a long way to enhance the researchers' contextual awareness of the issues raised therein (Gray, 2014, Hammersley and Maxwell, 1996). It established familiarity, and enhanced capacity for more consistency in the process of identifying and outlining patterns that emerged as

codes, subthemes, and major themes. By appreciating and understanding how the themes developed through the aforementioned process the researcher is able to demonstrate the validity of the findings, although other other researchers may interpret the data differently (Smith and Noble, 2014).

Level and Unit of Analysis

The purpose of coding data is to derive a structured and meaningful representation of it within the context of the objectives for the analysis (Huff, Zoltowski, Oakes, and Adams, 2013). Thematic analytical procedures seek to manage a body of text in respective segments that make direct reference to issues of importance in a way that also makes patterns clearer to the progression of the inquiry. A unit of analysis provides the base level representations available in the form(s) of data used in research, and within the context of its objectives. Selecting a given unit of analysis also addresses the issue of scope in analysis and for the inquiry as well as the level at which such analysis is done (Porta and Keating, 2008).

The scope of analysis will often be dictated by such factors as nature of data sources and the extent to which they are expected to avail insight with regard to the issue under inquiry as well as the understanding of components of the inquiry in how they have been operationalised to this stage of research. Data sources for interviews are the people that can give insight on the issue being examined and the unit of analysis can be selected based on core representations that can be made from such views, including

institutional affiliation, affiliation to specific experiences or other related contextual components of their participation (Jugder, 2016).

The level of analysis is also selected for the level of assessment or measurement that interviewees' representations can guarantee (Celepkolu and Boyer, 2018; Javadi and Kourosh, 2016). Research will often look into a given issue in the context of some specific viable assessments, e.g., for how interviewees' responses can reflect targeted variable relationships and this will be based on how well these responses are formed (Barker, 2013). The source of data (interviewee in this case) can therefore bear determinant factors that warrant certain levels of representation for their views in the complex or cascade of core issues under inquiry. Participants' experiences and the scope of their practice or knowledge may determine how far these representations may go when such an approach is adopted (Nutter, 2015).

In the context of circus training, there are stakeholders at various levels of contribution; including various members of staff, the students themselves, and people involved in management and design of curricular items as well as the management of student outcomes. This last category is best suited for a higher level of analysis as is required for an inquiry of this nature (the current study). People in this category include experienced school administrators and trainers.

The unit of analysis is based on the level and scope of analysis. It is selected for representations that are viable and useful for generating insight on the issue. The unit of analysis also reflects the nature of data points that were targeted (Celepkolu and Boyer, 2018). For instance, interviewing members of a given institution or profession can provide opportunities for using their work, profession or professional affiliation as a unit of analysis, or for selecting such other elements as their institutional affiliation, particular areas of specialisation, the specific professional organisational functions, their operational environment or its specific components, and much more (Kawser, 2014). The selections are dictated by the context of the inquiry.

For the current study key people involved in teaching, curriculum implementation, the design or implementation of various programmes, and general management of students and key educational resources are interviewed. They have knowledge of performance expectation of the circus industry as they have also performed in it and have rich experiences with career development and transitions in the industry. The context that they avail for their institutions' programmes is the targeted key part of this analysis. Since the data is mainly reflecting information on these programmes, the unit of analysis is the "degree programme" i.e., undergraduate degree in circus or circus arts. The whole data set can therefore be examined for references to the degree program and how it relates to student preparedness for the industry.

Selecting the degree program as the unit of analysis ensures that the uniqueness of programmes contribute to the emergence of informative patterns that are to help in articulating the themes from the analysis. Murphy and Flowers (2017) and CARDP (2011) are exemplary in demonstrating application of "programme" as a viable unit of analysis, whereby; reference made to the program can provide extensive insight via input on numerous components of the programme that are established in data.

The contributions that interviewees make towards representing issues relative to the circus degree programme are diverse, enriched, and intuitive to this unit of analysis because it provides all relational elements between these issues and their own work, knowledge or initiatives, and they understand the programme having direct causal links to the students' experiences with regard to the preparedness that is gained for entering the industry. The program is also represented directly both in their assessment of such issues as skill development and application, the students' personal development, whether they are able to comprehend changes occurring in the industry and respond to these or not, among other aspects of such preparedness.

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Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis proceeded through[1]:

- Initial reiterative reviews of data for re-familiarisation, and for taking notes on general issues identified therein. Eight reiterative reviews were performed in this step.

- Identification of codes with the application of the unit of analysis whereby; phrases and sections of the data that made direct reference to aspects of training programmes and how they implicate on student outcomes (with regard to preparedness for the industry) were identified to provide codes – a total of 105 codes were ultimately generated.

- Review of the codes in order to identify patterns that inform the generation of subthemes. In this case the codes were iteratively reviewed and those with related or connected ideas grouped together, the emerging groupings being reviewed further to provide clear subthemes.

- A final review of subthemes to identify the major themes for further discussion

Subthemes

Jugder (2016) notes that having generated adequate codes from all the available data allows focus to be drawn to patterns of meaning, which leads to generation of subthemes. These are detailed as follows (summarised in Appendix 7).

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[1] (Diagram in Appendix 6 - summary of proess)

Course design targets to broaden capacities in the management aspects of performance

Circus degree training tends to anticipate broader skill requirements in the industry. Students are trained in diverse forms of circus skills as well as broader elements of performance, which draw focus towards breadth of training more than it does for depth of skills developed in such training. There are ordinary factors of diversity in student capabilities and interest that provide a wide range of needs to be met if any standard qualifications are to be designed. The schools take in students who have widely varying levels of achievement – some being high-performing individuals while others have mild or low exposure to the circus performance environment. Training at the degree level has its perspective on needs for specialisation in circus as a discipline, hence transitioning the student from a level of general interest in circus (either as a performer, hobbyist, artist, or enthusiast) to the academic level of informed involvement. This is different from vocational schooling in circus whereby training is centred over original student interests much more, and there is less expansion of the context in which the art and performance or their production is situated. Respondent A states:

> "Initially we had a vocational course [...] and none of us felt that it was long enough [where] we could say that your discipline or your standard isn't good enough [...] but when it became a degree it was harder to do that. [...]. On the positive side [we were] very keen on developing "a thinking performer", that is; a performer who is aware of what they are doing, why they are doing it, how they are doing, and why the context. This is to give a broader deeper education rather than just training."
>
> (pg 4, line 19)[2]

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[2] References respond to Interview Transcripts document sent to programme secretary.

Occupational trade-offs for students are mainly addressed through components for self-directed projects

Students who enrol in degree level training also present or develop their independent career interests which are not always captured in items of skill accreditation (at a universal or generally broad level of skilling). Some want to advance a perceived talent, commitment, passion, indulgence, or level of creativity. The degree courses establish an initial criteria for inclusion based on broad academic outcomes and specific components of the courses capture domains of talent-based standards of performance, artistic creation, and intellectuality. Standards of performance are evidenced in embodied involvement of the student in previous performance, artistic creation being an incredible area of consideration, while intellectuality being standardised through competency items that various curriculums capture. Curricular elements (including competencies, expectations, needs, objectives, and experiences) are designed for forms of content that are available at the level of professional training. The need to include any element is first assessed in the context of standard practice shown by other institutional players within a selected domain – some schools having a history in standardizing technical aspects of skill development (mainly performance-based training that is characteristic of vocational and traditional circus). Participant D who is a former graduate in circus states:

> "A degree shows you competencies based on some standard that they established, ah.., the school established for that level, those skills that they define for us. But in the practical's you perform something or do things that may be taught or not and you are guided for such issues as safety and tolerance. You can say that you bring talent to the settings but they also standardise a lot of stuff for their own reasons for accreditation or whatever they are looking at. The main thing for an athlete or

performer who is already deep into circus as a career is packing up that level of accreditation given to you as a degree, then you proceed to do whatever you want with it." (Pg 41, line 5)

The experiential outcomes of being in circus, training in it and consuming circus influence career outcomes

Student personable experiences in circus are diversified along the set of circus performances, events, and relations that emerge from a learning environment. The degree programmes are preparing students to attend to the art in question, some selecting priority for specific elements of performance, typological categories of art forms, or unique combinatory forms as can be defined by students and tutors in the learning environment. Interests arise for various arts and performances and students also learn to adopt a fairly interdisciplinary view of circus. Audience management is one area that degree level training covers as a combination of disciplinary items in a theatrical scenery or production setting. There are specific outcomes defined for each circus skill in domains as aerial, acrobatics, object manipulation, etc., for measurable items that are thought to generate sources of experiences for audiences through the experiences of the performers. Contemporary circus also selects to diversify perspectives on audience experience, and this provides broader options for trainees to focus on custom experiences. A lot of contemporary circus art is viewed by performers as combining art forms in the context of progressive or diversified experience whereby the artist or performer can also emerge from the experiential dimension of circus or shape their careers and interests based on the experiences gained from it. Participant E states:

"I had been performing stunts for a while, and I thought getting a degree would be great, so I settled for circus. I enjoyed the way it expanded my understanding of the context in which things occur in a typical circus performance. It's more for the collaborative effect that performers deliver in skills and behaviour, and the artistic contribution of things that people bring to it. Usually, there would be a lot of talents and unique abilities that were tested and fitted into the puzzle and you fitted somewhere, then you proceeded to facilitate a performance or artistic composition. Enjoying a given aspect of any of these makes you really want to also pursue it in the industry. If you're lucky to go to a very fun school, your experiences and expectations are just better, and that may propel you with motivation to capture certain job opportunities or at least develop towards establishing your place in the industry."   (pg 47, line 13)

From the perspective of circus trainers, being an experienced performer enables them to commit to certain critical aspects of student wellness in education

Contemporary circus training continues to attract a lot of young people and young adults whose focus is mainly on developing and demonstrating amazing skills. Trainers find the high levels of motivation for understanding and operationalising art forms to be great but to be also placing a demand for commitment and dedication to student wellness. The high levels of commitment can easily hamper student outcomes for wellness if overlooked as many of the students focus primarily on progress. Former trainee, participant C states:

> "I'd spend close to four hours of my training day on the trapeze. My legs actually became numb from being in a catch lock for so long. They were numb for about four months at one point. No feeling in my quads at all."   (pg30, line 9)

The commitment that educators are able to direct towards wellness of the performer is a competence that accrues to them through long-term involvement with circus as they observe the seriousness of various outcomes for themselves and others. The industry also absorbs and retains performers and artists that have capacity for a certain level of

self-care, some companies going even further than this to demand for extreme resilience or the ability to also monitor, understand and take care of others in the circus environment. Most people acquire good levels of social skills in circus training because of the collaborative nature of circus. A lot of the activities are performed by more than one person and the production environment is enriched by collaborative social activity.

Student love for specific art forms is ever-present but not always beneficial to career progression even as circus degrees attend mainly to diverse interests

Students who undertake degree level training in circus will often exhibit preference for some art forms over the others for personal reasons. Such preference could be poorly formulated or unaccommodated in curriculum as is the case where preference for an art form does not reflect real world training capacities, or lack of resourcefulness to aid student involvement in such art. Educators see this as being a major issue in decision-making at the level of the student and to also have some potential for affecting career design and progression. It represents the misalignment of personal abilities to a category or type of art or performance and it is one source of unpreparedness for the industry. The degree programmes sample over a broad range of interests, and students need to gain knowledge and accreditation in their specific domain of interest is not always viable. Instead, the degree programmes attempt to cover all the necessary domains of art and performance as well as broaden student involvement in learning structural support elements of circus in the environment where it thrives. Student selections and interests are therefore not always accommodated as participant C states:

> "We were given a choice six weeks in to choose our specialist disciplines. We could change at a later date but it was discouraged. The teachers could also decline your suggested disciplines if they thought it was

unrealistic. Other than that there was little personal choice."

<div align="right">(pg 32, line 6)</div>

Degree level training tends to balance off priorities awarded to the performance context in traditional circus with those available for elevating the performer and the art

For the performer, there is emphasis on developing awareness of the process of being involved in the art and the circus environment. The art is then to be elevated and managed by the performer. This moves away from the norm of traditional circus whereby norms of performance were pre-established to the extent of predetermining standards for spectacle and specifying audience experiences. The trainees would therefore adhere to the priorities defined in such a context. Contemporary education at the degree level of training leaves room for the technical quality of known circus activities to be improved through art, and in the way the trainees and performers use them, as discussed by participant A.

> "[The school] was very keen on developing what we call a thinking performer so a performer who is aware of what they are doing, why are doing how they are doing it, so why the context to give a rather broader education rather than just training. It is partly to do with the origins of [our school] which was always about the combination of theatre or dance with circus. And we have had to say that [...] we are kind of an art school that uses circus to do other things [...] within the context of a thinking performer." (pg 5, line 16)

Institutional resource capacities are expanded in training students at the degree level, hence also creating considerable career-based connections for students as they go through training

Circus trainees who join degree programmes usually already possess some valuable capabilities, talents, and other critical elements of their human capital. They bring these to the schools in the hope of advancing their careers and knowledge while also

advancing the interests of the schools in this endeavour. Many schools understand the value of the institutional resource capacities that are extended by the conglomeration of capacities by learners in the same environment. The levels of commitment that the students bring to the schools' missions are incredible and a family-like environment often thrives. It makes collaborative learning and mutual support easier, which improves the pace and strategy of training. The people who join circus bring high-performance attitudes and commitment and institutional resource capacities are therefore also expanded in training students at the degree level. One former trainee, participant B states:

> "People at that school are incredibly driven to be the best both technically and artistically, and as a result there is an incredible motivating force that pushes you to be better than you ever thought you could be. It also sets you up to work in the circus industry quite well. I came out with contacts and knowledge of what was available to me and how to get it."   (pg 25, line 15)

Educators find it necessary to create career-based connections for students who attend the schools. Educators also recognise the fact that their institutions' capacity to connect students to the world of real occupations and performances in circus depends on good relationships and on a growing mutuality in developing the art. The need to open them up to the reality of the occupational structure in circus and availability of immense opportunities for human capital development in training is recognised as influencing outcomes in the industry.

Understanding of market changes related to occupational structures informs design of senior-level curriculum in circus degrees

The circus degrees attempt to respond to the dynamism of the labour market by guiding students to take more control of their occupational outcomes. The industry has always depicted inadequacies in employment opportunities that performers desire, hence the desirability of major circuses that may use extremities for competency selection – as is the case for Cirque du Soleil; and students are better off having a more diversified portfolio of opportunities. The quality of entertainment provided in circus is undoubtedly high for the spectacle, refinement, and awe that is often guaranteed but the jobs are not guaranteed to reward in a way that matches the quality of human capital expended towards the occupation of a circus performer. By having a broad awareness of the context of performance, both for eventfulness or timeliness of it and for the long-term progression of the career as well as progression of the art, the trainees can take more control of their fate in the industry. One educator, participant A states:

> "We also want to keep the rigour of the profession, and it is grounded in a job – still thinking about a job. In some respects it can be argued that the job that we are training people for doesn't yet exist. I got that from the circus school where I trained; "Don't just make work for the existing theatre but also for the theatre of the future". [...] and they can always scale back, it's easier to do the variety of entertainment commercial work and you can come at it with a more aware and intelligent hit, then play with the existing market and push the boundaries of it in a way."
>
> (pg 6 line 11)

In as much such views serve to attain objectives of programmes, they could also distort many novice performers' understanding of career progression. Some circus degrees help to alleviate some of this in the balance attained for technical versus performance

management (and artistic development) capacities whereby students get serendipitous opportunities to resolve their own interests by looking further into the fit for their skill development to the market trends.

Capacity for parting skills in managing unemployment risk also depends on school reputation

Circus schools that offer degree level training engage with a lot of career-related outcomes both for enrolees and graduates. People who enrol for the circus degrees come with a history of occupational outcomes that also reflect in their existing skill levels and quality of performance. The educators find themselves engaging the students over issues of use for competencies that are exhibited in very refined states (both within the training environment and in other viable environments). This sometimes leads to the development of an institutional culture of managing employment risks for students given the educators' understanding of common potential outcomes for the trainees. Schools that have such educators are well reputed for enhancing capacity of the learners to manage unemployment risks. This is often backed by formal training on the issue as participant B states:

> "[...] last year we had a 'managing your career' class in this block that was run by a contracts lawyer who worked a lot for Cirque du Soleil. We were given different projects throughout the year that involved researching different places where we might like to work and what it would be like to work there. As well as what is standard and not standard in different working environments." (pg 24, line 16)

The economics of creative labour is an elusive area that circus degrees attempt to manage hence their comparatively better industry-based outcomes than dance

By making conscious effort to manage the economics of creative labour and involve students to weigh in on the key issues, circus degrees manage a very illusive area that is not well exposed in such domains as dance. The forms of creative labour that are applied in these fields are demanding for a very much-embodied performance, both for technical and artistic elements of performances or other use of skills. Circus trainees will often have a lot to do, expend actual physical energy and exhibit motivation, but unlike the high-performance athletes of well-funded sports, the circus performers can lose the value of their creative labour along the course of an unsuccessful career.

Higher education therefore helps to create awareness of the nature of creative labour in the context of industry-based outcomes. Performers develop an expanded understanding of the overarching institutional elements of circus and how their input is accommodated therein. Management of the performance environment and the context of the performer's involvement is not separated very much from the criticality of the actual performance or art. The performer is also very much an embodiment of the art, and in the context of commercial elements; a product or part of the product that is developed. This level of proximity for the performer to the structural elements of the industry and the art exposes them to critical needs for expansive awareness in order to remain objective in how they develop a career in circus. Participant F states:

> "A lot of the areas that they cover are great to help you manage yourself in the industry. There is a lot at stake when you start to brand yourself or

build your own enterprise. When most people enter circus, they are focused a lot on the experience and using their commitment to the fullest, because it is fun. As you succeed or progress in it, you may feel the growth and you realize these many things that you can optimise. It becomes more of a question for how extensive your knowledge is, and you may just not have a lot of time to learn some things, so having learnt them in a degree can be great."   (pg 50, line 13)

Diversity of opportunities for growth in the industry is tapped in degree courses to match advancements in the industry and in related areas of economies

Young artists and performers are particularly effective in augmenting industry-based career opportunities with freelance input, innovative commercialisation (including technology-based), and hobbyist use of circus for personal development. Circus degrees are diversifying the learners' perspectives with regard to development of the circus industry because market exposure of their creative labour is intertwined with a range of supportive trends as in such domains as technology, communication, marketing and business intelligence. The terms of employment for most are gig-based or driven by the artist's own determination for issues of convenience and levels of competence or forms of aspiration in a given domain. Participant A states:

"We say; do duos and do solos and keep very fluid. In our experience [...] you have maybe your solo piece, then you work with one person on that. It's short projects, sometimes longer contracts, self-employed. It's a short gig but at least it's a way to the profession."   (pg 10, line 12)

Circus degrees also enhance artists' capacity for discerning trends in the economic elements of circus and allow younger artists to understand theatrical value of different art forms that resolve issues of quality in their knowledge and operationalisation of art forms. Those who have a strong orientation towards establishing more occupational autonomy often explore these elements and apply them to a larger extent.

There are some shifting demand dynamics for circus skills that degree programmes may not always capture

Educators are also dealing with a complex of demand dynamics for some domains of circus skills for how they can be improved to capture audience preferences, trends in circus companies, and influencer activity; which is impacting on the marketability of competencies generated by degrees. There are markets that are emerging for performances and competencies that are not necessarily emphasized in degree training. One major cause of the problem is focus on breadth of training in degrees rather than on technical specialty. Focus on technicality of skill requires that the particular skill become the area of study, as is the case for vocational and apprenticeship forms of training, the advantage of technically oriented training is that there is a lot of time for exploring the skill and trends associated with it in the industry. However, heavy dependency is developed on the support of other performers in such a situation, whereby; the technical performer's capacity is reflected as an operation bounded by skill-based roles for the extent to which these roles are identifiably unique in a performance. As the separation of skills blurs out, the performer will need more awareness and the sole focus on skill technicality will therefore become a constraint. Degree level training tends to work on this constraint but it also does not capture important trends whose revelation comes with technical specialty. As a result, graduates may encounter major shifts in usefulness of skills in the industry and will require long-term learning to remain employable, but the degree also enhances capacity to switch skills and more freedom for personal drive. Participant C states:

"I moved to (the city) in my early 20's to study on the degree program […]
I then travelled with multiple organisations across Europe and Brazil to
continue my training whilst working. The training never stops. […] Part of
[degree] training would be analysis on the floor. And mixing up your
disciplines helped keep you fresh, so once my body couldn't handle the
trapeze I might switch to the cradle, or to adagio or to juggling.
[However] it lacked depth. There was a broad fitness program but nothing
personal. The accepted standards of circus skills were just too low. If I
hadn't put in the extra hours working with [my tutor's] company outside
of [the school], I would lack the minimum necessary skills to succeed in
the industry."   (pg 29, line 3)

**Time and resource constraints are largely impactful on training, skill management, and
skill application but independent research is an area of high potential**

The nature of training at the level of a bachelor's degree is that limited blocks of time

are allocated to a set of established areas of competence, and there are many of these

areas in such a degree, which participant found to be detrimental. Participant D stated:

"One of the biggest problems in my degree structure was that the school
didn't offer enough technical classes in your specific discipline itself - in
years 1 and 2 you would get 3 hours of your chosen discipline a week,
then 5 hours in 3rd year. So it was really hard to make progress and
improve your skill level, I had to make time to come in and train myself.."
                                                                        (pg 40, line 14)

Accomplishment in any specific domain of skill development relies on contextual or

immediate aspects of the engagement in that particular domain, including the use of

resources presented by trainees, trainers, the institution, and the content availed in the

art and state of performances in such a domain. It is therefore typical to see

accentuated activity involving allocation of responsibility just as much as there can be

for learner-teacher engagement. As a result Independent research is an area of high

potential in circus degrees.

A degree in circus provides substantial opportunities for independent research, which also helps students to explore areas of their own interest in preparation for a career in the industry. Combining academic and practical research also helps them to test viability of circus acts to their own competence to their own uniqueness as performers and artists. Students are expected to document their analytical approach to an area of performance or to one or more art forms. Other than researching thematic or narrative elements of circus, students can also look into interdisciplinary aspects of circus for issues of design, structural aspects of the circus physical environment (including rigging, lighting, sound, and much more). When students are researching an area of their own active involvement, there are opportunities for background experiences or specialties to shape their research. Participant F states:

> "I came from an acrobatics background and so I was more interested in adagio's acrobalance roles for my graduation project. I looked into the communication aspects of it as these largely shape the theme of a performance. This was significant for the way it enhanced my competence in this area and how I apply it to my work. I have been keen to track how a performance develops additional uniqueness every time based on communication aspects of it, which also include body movements, signalling, some various subliminal aspects, and much more. From an artistic viewpoint, the approach is fairly progressive and broad enough for me to help develop the art and also build myself up as an artist." (pg 49, line 23)

Development of theoretical knowledge in circus is substantial in degree level training

Theory is understood to cover learning that is less hands-on or more useful for cognitive outcomes that learners can use independent of physical aspects of the performance to influence these aspects or manage them better. Educators perceive more balance for theory and practical elements while learners tend to think of most

training as practical. This is mainly due to the trainees' limited intellectuality on the context of the art itself, but as they interact further with academic aspects of circus, they distinguish theory more accurately. This progresses a lot with developments made on the art forms or proactive involvement of graduates in key elements of the industry. Graduates who want practical competitiveness in technical skills to use immediately or in the short run within the industry tend to find the theory as having been retrogressive to their endeavour. The view changes as career growth is attained and the theoretical knowledge becomes more expendable towards the artist's endeavour. They also understand how it is impacting both on performance competencies and trainees' adaptability to the industry. Participant F thought:

> "The question is, if you had 9K to spend on a course in a year's training would you structure it like the school does? Probably not. Whilst the theory classes were helpful, you know, things like classes on writing a business plan and how to apply for funding, they weren't always the best use of our time and things were missing from our course to integrate technique and artistry which would have been way more helpful than another class on pedagogy or history of circus. I'd focus on more specialist classes and more theatre, and only keep the theory which gets you ready for being a performer."   (pg 55, line 4)

Discussion of Major Themes

Skill Management and Alignment

Circus degrees achieve a lot in terms of training students for skill management but skill alignment is an area of weaknesses as to how most trainees are prepared for the industry. Competencies in skill management are developed for how students are made aware of the context of the skills and development of the art behind them. Compared to vocational style of training, this approach increases the breadth of skills rather than their depth, which is a major drawback. Skill misalignment is exhibited in failure to match skill details to the level of detail in the job that a trainee goes for. This can stem from incongruence among training or curricular objectives and employment objectives.

Whereas a curricular objective may be engraved in a perceived need for advancing an art form, a job can involve operationalisation of the art with commercial or economic priorities being advanced first. Jobs may therefore demand for a more pragmatic skill advancement, as is even the case for intensive performance requirements, put forward by major circus companies to tilt focus in the direction of spectre and entertainment outcomes. Artists who may have focused on expanding their involvement in interpretational elements of the art forms will therefore have to move towards domains of performance that have abundance of opportunities for adaptive artistic development.

Degree programmes are effective in developing capacities for skill management by providing trainees with tools for managing physical capability constraints, tracking skill growth, understanding work ethic in the context of the art and performance, matching skill and artistic development to the bounds of design that structural elements of the performance environment avail, and being generally efficient and more contextually aware of this environment. In comparison to vocational training, particular art forms are not overemphasised for the technical aspects of their performance but more for the development of devices for managing and using them. Dynamics affecting skill development in the industry are addressed through individual needs, interests, and capacity for skill diversification. The degree programmes run on modules that are designed to manifest competency development ranging from the principles of movement and composition to broader areas of theory and practice of various circus skills. It is expected that an artist that is entering the industry will find ways to channel the progress they make in training into an actual career, outcomes that are viable for such development mainly being embodied in acts. Trainees who achieve a balanced view of acts being demanded by the industry and the development of their artistic focus get a better feel of skill alignment.

The skill diversity that contributes performer autonomy in a circus degree is targeted in a lot of degree programmes, and the trainee can use talents to develop skills that are valuable and unique. For skills that are in high demand, there are multifaceted structural factors, such as skills requiring both job-specific and environment-specific

qualifications as well as well-developed individual-specific commitment to the work process. A graduate who adapts well to the industry will understand how workplace needs that are not necessarily aligned can be handled without being overwhelmed by mental costs of shifting from one need to another.

The culture of workplaces is notably important for graduates to master in order to remain adaptive and employable. Circuses depend a lot on the capacity of artists or performers to fit in the context of the job environment and still remain to achieve the levels of performance that are expected of them. Skill gaps are best solved in work-based training and other supportive elements of internal workforce development. Workplaces that are less attractive for employees however make part of this issue unresolvable with the need for employers to read more into employees' needs.

Degree training preserves the development of art forms at individual and institutional/industrial levels

Development of art forms is one major pursuit in degree level training. First, trainees are supported to become aware of the state and context of art form establishment, and then they are engaged in reproducing the art and facilitated to extend it. The state of art form establishment is explored mainly for the forms of acts viewed as transferrable manifestations of the art. A lot of understanding of jobs is also based on identification of acts and situating them in an occupational context. Contemporary circus seeks to make the realisation of acts more fluid but most acts have a persistent identity for how they are singled out as potential jobs. As the trainees perform in any category of acts,

they can theme the act in any context deemed viable for building a concrete performance. Competencies for applying one's thought process and physical abilities to yield creative labour come out as numerous, some also being extensively broad and interdisciplinary. They are mainly handled in selections allowed for the trainees to optimise their choices as they move towards extending the art.

There are criteria that schools set for determining viability for artistic extension in a student, and some of them are applied in student selection while others are applied to create options for course majors. Besides the level of knowledge for tools and techniques that are fundamental to circus, personal physical abilities are used to assess levels of experiential insight that a trainee may exhibit with regards to circus acts and performances. The auditions done for entry into degree courses tend to require that the enrolee either have a good level of physical skill or show strong interest for skill development and artistic extension. It ensures that students add value to the training environment where collaborative activity is fundamental to success and progress. However, the spectrum of competency levels is also very wide, making it difficult for schools to replicate or be more effective in approximating the actual work requirements for the circus industry.

Integration of audience studies in some programmes empowers performers to understand dynamics of taste in consumption of circus and thus be more capable of

driving artistic development. However, this is limited and some programmes award very low priority to it. It is mainly captured in elements of theatre and the extent to which programmes guide students to comprehensively manage them. A lot of theatre elements have extensive breadth requiring actual practical work to cover substantial ground in them. For instance, audience management with regard to tracking preferences and responding to changes in audience characteristics requires hands-on research and practice. Most trainees only handle such areas for the domain of theory or in the resource bounds selections that mes allow them to make. There are options where programmes also tap into progressive deconstruction of social and historical labour norms of creative labour, but this is rarely explored in undergraduate training. Only the theoretical aspects are covered on such an issue.

A general increase in access to circus is understood to be happening among consumers, and graduates continue to be exposed to a diversifying market. It makes them focus more on getting authentic and challenging experiences among other common needs for entertainment. Performance that targets specific audiences characterise a substantial section of the industry and jobs therein. Some trainees may be interested in jobs within such sections without guarantee that they will have an understanding of career paths that lead to them. Degree programmes do not provide tools for trainees to gain a view into such an issue, and instead; the trainee will adapt to unfolding circumstances and constraints of the job market and develop knowledge on career progression through direct experiences. Graduates who had an accomplished mentor

are better placed to be more accurate with their selections. They are thus capable of gaining early insight into the trends happening in audiences.

Challenges with management of interests and opportunities at a personal level

Graduates of circus degree programmes are widely affected by inadequacies for personal management of interests and understanding of opportunities on a more personal level. There is a tendency to be stuck in a view of the circus as being broadly accommodative to all areas of training, especially in terms of employment roles. Students therefore fail to work on matching skill forms to the market environment, individual and collaborative skills being important to dissecting such an issue. Some students require cohorts or groups that make their skills more viable, especially when an area of talent is to be managed or optimized. Self-selecting is therefore poorly understood for the magnitude of impact it may have to the students' career outcomes.

Degree programmes mainly remain largely dynamic both in skill set selection and in their approach to the opportunity structure but at a cost of visibility for students' who do not adopt a critical outlook to them. Student preference for an art form does not always reflect real world training capacities, or lack of resourcefulness to aid student involvement in such art. Educators see this as a major issue in decision-making at the level of the student and to also have some potential for affecting career design and progression. It represents the misalignment of personal abilities to a category or type of art or performance and it is one source of unpreparedness for the industry.

The degree programmes sample a broad range of interests, and students' need to gain knowledge and accreditation in their specific domain of interest is not always viable. It is also an issue of the reorganisation capacities that learners are awarded in their learning environments. Some educators make conscious effort to facilitate reorganisation for optimal outcomes of groups or individuals occupationally. They find it necessary to create career-based connections for students that attend the schools. Such educators also recognise the fact that their institutions' capacity to connect students to the world of real occupations and performances in circus depends on good relationships and on a growing mutuality in developing the art. The need to open them up to the reality of the working structure in circus and availability of immense opportunities for human capital development in training is recognised to influence outcomes in the industry. However, for most educators, this is a limited area of their interest and in reality, the job market is more dynamic.

Changes in social and industrial standards for acts is not addressed well in training

There are trends in how various circus acts sustain economic viability or general fit for career development circus, and formal training does not capture this comprehensively enough to drive careers in the direction of the market. A lot of deeper analytical viewpoints are assigned to technical skills that could be leading to less room being left for analysing shifts at societal and industrial levels. Students in circus degrees rarely adopt a macro-environmental outlook to these kinds of issues, and the work that does look towards them is mainly theoretical. Failure to expand knowledge on trends makes

them develop a worldview restrictive to the immediate environment of performance (mainly for event-based views or for outlooks on on-going performance).

When an economic dimension is pursued, the graduates are operating in the same space with investors, production and broadcasting companies, and others who may be more capable of gaining and managing knowledge on macro-environmental and macroeconomic factors. They have up-to-date knowledge on skill issues in labour but they may apply it on a need-based organisational approach rather than at the profession level, for improving artist outcomes. This leaves a lot of responsibility for appropriate skilling to schools and trainees.

Core Areas of Progressive Curricular Change

Areas of progressive change emerge from the particular art forms themselves, institutional realignments, social realignment of preferences, as well as from technological and structural changes. There are several markets that are emerging for newer performances and students need competencies that are not yet established well in degree training. Educators are gradually coming to terms with the high stakes in the industry with regard to skill refinement, and they are increasing attendance to technical specialties in order to reinforce the quality of training. Focus on technicality of skill requires that that particular skill is allowed to grow as an area of intense study and practice, an approach used by vocational and apprenticeship forms of training. This has an advantage of resource dedication as trainees can select to expand focus on a skill dimension and possibly seek to apply directly in the industry context. However, in

circus there is often heavy dependency among performers' and technical performer's capacity is to be advanced in relation to the dependencies assigned to it. Separation of skills can cause blurring out for performers that have shallow technical grounding; hence the need for more refined focus on skill technicality.

Conclusions

Recommendations

Circus degree programmes need to attend to several problematic areas that impair graduates' preparation for the industry. One major area is that of skill alignment; affected by inadequacies in how the programmes attempt to achieve balance between technical skills and competencies in disciplinary structural needs. These needs are largely institutional and educators can relate them to domains of artistic expression and theoretical elements of circus education. Despite the emphasis on academically standardised forms of art and performance, student performers' or student artists' needs for career growth is constructed in a much broader context with real-world experiences that cannot be strictly standardised to these needs. The trainees express aspirations that include both needs for professional accreditation and desire to utilise talents and interests that were strongly constructed long before they sought to join degree programmes. The performance attempts and artistic expressions that circus artists and talented circus enthusiasts make transcend many elements of competency standardisation that elevated training to degree qualifications with regard to levels of commitment that can be derived from them. For instance, some of the students who go for the degree are already well-accomplished performers with refined capacity for managing the technical skills in their area of interest. They achieve skill breadth and diversification in degree programmes but strictly within bounds of curricular efficiencies. The degree curriculums therefore need to capture student interests more accurately by attending to student aspirations in a more proactive manner.

It is also recommended that student interest in specific art forms be managed for progressive elements of the domain of art that the programmes attend to in advancing such art forms. Curricular design struggles with structural elements of art form implementation, as competencies are not seamlessly integrated into extremes of performance as successful artists depict in the performance arenas. A domain of quality specification is exhibited in the areas of performance theming with regard to how art forms materialise to attend to basic conceptual ideas as can be provided by the artists as well as by the norms of theatrical performance – with common approaches in how circus arts and fine arts are blended. Graduates who have proceeded to use their competencies in the industry for real-world performances realise that the programmes were inadequate in aspirations expressed for artistic progression because of the extent of embodiment experienced in performing the various forms of art. The graduates want a more a more specific approach in how the programmes address industrial trends for needs that employers and audiences express with regards to outcomes of art and entertainment. A lot of the program-based intervention for competency development is inadequate in such a case. Some graduates find employers to be aware of standards that are far above proclamations made in degree level qualifications.

Limitations

The study is limited by its size as a single study conducted only within available resources (including time resources) and a small number of participants, so it is not necessarily generalizable (Gray, 2014). As a phenomenological form of research that explored views on the issue at hand, its scope was also limited to the level of detail in

such views. More experience and extended contact with participants could also improve their levels of comfort and enhance the understanding derived from engaging them on a deeper level. This requires more resources, including time resources. There are also limited literature resources upon which to draw upon in comparison to this study, with only FEDEC having investigated the issue, also on only one occasion. The study is therefore limited by resource constraints and is only conducted at the level of rigour suitable for a single study occurring in one phase and lacks criticality, which may call into question the validity of the results.

Indications for Further Research

There are opportunities for further research to look into graduates' career development with regard to how degree level competencies transform in a performer or artist's career. Circus activities are very much dependent on embodiment of art forms and performers often develop with the art to the extent that they are able, or facilitated to, expend energy and time to these forms, within the bounds of the degree programmes.

Enrolment into degree programmes depends a lot on student capacity for involvement in training, which most programmes underplay in how they advance student abilities. Students remain reliant on capacity for competency embodiment, and any forms of artistic expression or performance that is relayed as a form of competency-based achievement is inseparable from such embodiment. Degree programmes therefore need to account for the level of contribution they add to graduates' career development – both in terms of the art forms and in terms of technical analyses of skill dispensation to

targeted niches of the market. There is therefore a range of opportunities in areas of career development for competency-based contribution to graduates' success, understanding of art form development in the context of these competencies, and on whether institutions of higher education are even ready to deal with such matters.

Another area for consideration is that of the directors of shows, the people who buy the acts: what is it they want in a performer? As no schools feed directly into a particular show or company it would seem rational to ask the industry, both traditional and contemporary, what it is they require of artists as this would allow schools to design curriculum which directly fits the requirements of the industry. Degree programmes currently attempt to contextualise the management of art forms to foreseeable futures, which may help students who mainly go after contemporary circus, however there is still a lot of activity in traditional forms of circus, with a lot of employment opportunities in circus also being situated in this domain. Levels of emphasis placed on contemporary and foreseeable future circus do not necessarily resolve the challenges related to employment as graduates also encounter interests in traditional circus among employers and major players in the industry.

Summary

Conclusively, the study examined the issue of whether circus degrees prepare students based on the views of educators and graduates. The issue is of importance because circus degrees are now established as a common path in how artists and performers develop their careers. They are different from vocational training where trainees focus

mainly on technical mastery of select skills. The study applied a survey strategy under paradigm of interpretive phenomenology and established the core views in thematic analysis of the participants' input. It considered how skills that circus schools provide students translate to industry-based outcomes, how dependent the career of circus performers on these skills, and how overall skill impartment in training be said to be matching skill use and development in the industry.

It is found that student preparation for the industry in circus degrees delivers on skill management and alignment, degree training preserves and develops the development of art forms at individual and institutional levels with the hope that industry demands will also be met, management of interests and opportunities in the job market is left largely for individual students to handle, circus degrees are also focused on capturing changes or trends in industrial practices, and that there are core areas of progressive curricular change, integrating trends in the industry and in educational demands.

The divide between what circus schools believe the industry wants in a performer and what the industry requires in an artist has progressed greatly since the original FEDEC (2008) study, but a gap remains.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Schools And Their Degree Courses in Circus

ACaPA | Fontys - Academy of Circus and Performance Art

Bachelors Degree of Circus and Performance Art

Akademiet For Utaemmet Kreativitet - Academy for Modern Circus (AFUK-AMoC)

Bachelors Degree of Higher Artistic Education in Circus Arts

Circomedia

Bachelor of Arts Degree in Contemporary Circus and Physical Theatre

Codarts Rotterdam - Circus Arts

Bachelor of Circus Arts

Dans Och Cirkushögskolan/Stockholms Konstnärliga Högskola

Degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in Circus

Ecole Supérieure des Arts du Cirque

Bachelor of Circus Arts

National Centre For Circus Arts – NCCA

Bachelor of Circus Arts

National Institute of Circus Arts
Bachelor of Circus Arts

Appendix 2: Sample letter of Consent

What is this research about? In 2008 FEDEC (Fédération européenne des écoles de cirque professionnelles Federation) carried out a study to identify what type of training is needed for young professionals in the circus industry to succeed. One of the things the study identified was a disparity between what students learnt on a degree course and what skills were deemed to be required by performers in order to succeed (as suggested by employers).

Ten years later MSc Dance science & Education student at the University of Edinburgh (Lauren Ryznar) is investigating whether current circus degrees took FEDEC's findings on board, in order to evaluate if they adequately prepare students for a career performing in the circus industry, what the strengths of the courses are and to make recommendations for the improvement of future degree programmes.

Due to your unique view point Lauren Ryznar would like to interview you via video call on Skype, to be arranged at a mutually convenient time. The duration of the interview will not be longer than 30 – 40 minutes. With your permission she would like to also record the video conversation on Quicktime, a screen-recording app.

All data collected will be made anonymous and all identifying names will be removed and will be stored on an encrypted laptop. The research will be stored for the purpose of the dissertation and may also be used potential publication or conference presentation. If published or presented at a conference, all participants will be contacted again for further consent. The only people with access to the data are Lauren Ryznar and her dissertation supervisor, Wendy Timmons. If requested, after submission of the dissertation, Lauren Ryznar will share the findings with participants.

Should you need to withdraw from the research at any time, please let Lauren Ryznar know via email. It is understandable that some things cannot be foreseen and all participants can withdraw at any point during the research. If English is not your first language and you would like a copy of this document in your first language please contact Lauren Ryznar. Should you have any questions about the research or research or interview process please contact Lauren Ryznar.

Lauren Ryznar's contact details are: lauren.ryznar@gmail.com or Skype: lauren.ryznar

If you need further clarification about the research process please contact my supervisor at the University of Edinburgh, Wendy Timmons: wendy.timmons@ed.ac.uk or , +44 131 6516596

By signing this form you are giving informed consent as part of the research process.

Participant Signature: Date: Researcher Signature: Date:

Appendix 3: Example Questions For Interviewing Graduated Student's

What is your current job?

Where have you previously worked?

What disciplines do you do at a high level?

What disciplines do you do at a more general ability level?

How old were you when you started circus?

What was your training pathway?

What did that entail or encompass?

How many hours a day did you train?

What did you train?

How long for (years)?

Who were your teachers/what was their background?

No in a cohort in your year?

No of dropouts if any?

No of applicants and the audition process you undertook to enter the course?

Most common graduate pathways from your cohort?

What was the theory/practical split (if any)?

How were the component units for the degree/course selected?

How much individual student choice was there in unit selection?

What do you think the particular strengths of your degree programmes were?

What were the weaknesses?

How do you think the course could better support or build artists?

Do you think having a degree is helpful in working in the circus industry?

What is your perception of the training of elite performers?

Appendix 4: Example Questions For Interviewing School Representitives

How long has the degree course been running?

No in a cohort per year

No of dropouts if any?

No of applicants and the audition process

Most common graduate pathways

How do you select teachers to deliver the degree

What is the theory/practical split

How were the component units for the degree selected?

Did you use the findings of FEDEC s study to help structure it?

If the course was in existence before the 2 FEDEC studies did it impact upon the make up of the degree course?

How much individual student choice is there in unit selection?

What do you think the particular strengths of your degree programmes are? Are there any changes you would like to make to the programme due to constraints out with your control?

Looking more generally at circus education how would you like to see it progress?

How do you think it could better support or build artists?

Is there anything further you would like to add or any questions you think I should have asked today?

Appendix 5: Sources of Archival Data

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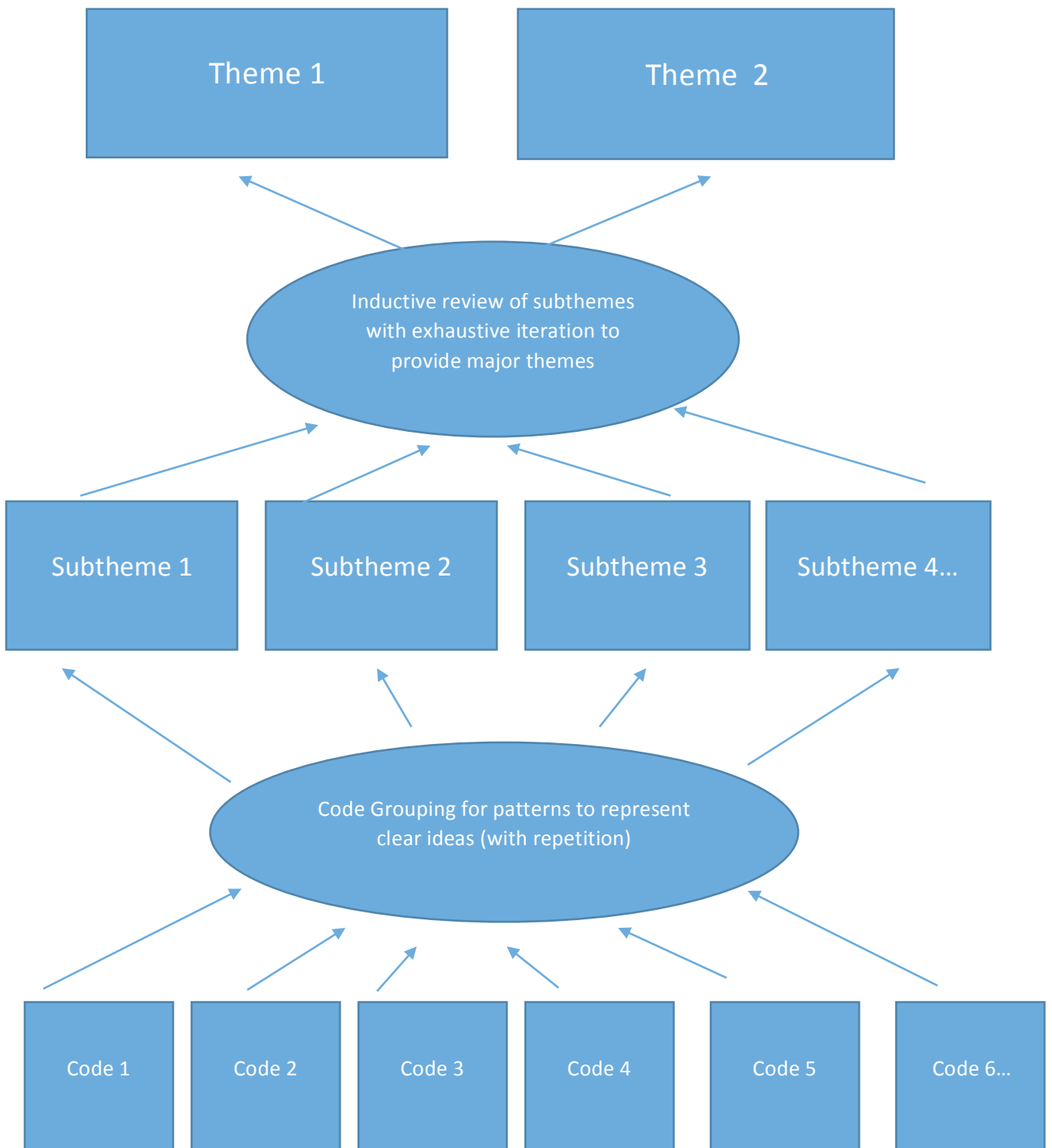
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Appendix 6: Understanding the Process of Thematic Analysiis in the Study

Appendix 7: Summary of Subthemes

Course design targets to broaden capacities in the management aspects of performance

Occupational trade-offs for students are mainly addressed through components for self-directed projects

The experiential outcomes of being in circus, training in it, and consuming circus influence career outcomes

From the perspective of circus trainers, being an experienced performers enables them to commit to certain critical aspects of student wellness in education

Student love for specific art forms is ever-present but not always beneficial to career progression even as circus degrees attend mainly to diverse interests

Degree level training tends to balance off priorities awarded to the performance context in traditional circus with those available for elevating the performer and the art

Institutional resource capacities are expanded in training students at the degree level, hence also creating considerable career-based connections for students as they go through training

Understanding of market changes related to occupational structures informs design of senior-level curriculum in circus degrees

Capacity for parting skills in managing unemployment risk also depends on school reputation

The economics of creative labour is an elusive area that circus degrees attempt to manage, hence their comparatively better industry-based outcomes than dance

Diversity of opportunities for growth in the industry is tapped in degree courses to match advancements in the industry and in related areas of economies

There are some shifting demand dynamics for circus skills that degree programmes may not always capture

Time and resource constraints are largely impactful on training, skill management, and skill application but independent research is an area of high potential

Development of theoretical knowledge in circus is substantial in degree level training