

Leadership Development: Girl Child Empowerment: The Art of Indian Classical Dance

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Abstract:- India is projected to be the second largest economy by 2050 (PwC, *The World in 2050*)¹. To achieve such growth, India needs to equip every Indian with the right education and skills. Specifically, girl literacy should be at a hundred percent to make India a \$6 trillion economy in 2030². UNICEF says girls are more likely to miss out on school in India. Being in a patriarchal society with cultural disparities, physical activity among girls is very low (3% among women, ICMR-INDIAB)³ and alarming the health of future generation of girl children⁴. (Fiona Bull, WHO). Only 11 percent of women in India hold leadership roles versus 27.3 global⁵. This study's primary objective is healthy growth of girl children with physical activity and build leaders of future via culturally acceptable medium of 'Performing Art' (Indian classical dance) for holistic inclusive growth.

Keywords:- Dance, Classical Art, Leadership, Women, Girl Child, Empowerment, Health, Physical Activity, Development, Cognitive.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. India's challenge on Leadership:

Around 92% of businesses in Asia do not have able leaders to steer their organizations in the right direction⁶. With more women joining workforce, leadership talent is critical for India's growth in becoming second largest economy by 2050. Fostering leadership skills in the daily life of girl children are critical.

B. Indian Society

India, a patriarchal society who do not consider girls and women as born leaders, tend to ignore the leadership traits exhibited in everyday life by girls and women. Due to social and economic disparities, especially in women and children, malnutrition is prevalent and widespread in marginalized communities. Furthermore, cultural discrimination leads to girl students dropping out of school, health challenges (lack of physical activity due to societal restrictions), thereby India losing an opportunity to build and leverage women inclusiveness leadership talent to support GDP growth and innovation.

II. LEADERS ARE NOT BORN, THEY'RE MADE

'Leaders are not born, they are made.' - Vince Lombardi

To understand the context of leadership, this section addresses leadership styles, associated skills, competencies, and strengths needed to be successful in the chosen leadership operating style are documented (cognitive skills, executive functions and leadership qualities and traits). Please note that executive functions focus both on short-term value and long-term strength as in the case of a CEO of an organization, whereas leaders focus on immediate results. Great leaders strive to become executives driving results.

A. Leadership Styles

Successful leaders know how to lead and adjust their leadership style to the situation. Six leadership styles⁷ are commonly referred to (IMD), when describing leadership methods to motivate the teams. They are listed below and underneath operating philosophy.

1. Transformation Leadership
 - Focus on the future, change, and people.
2. Delegative Leadership
 - Delegate, no micro-management.
3. Authoritative Leadership
 - Get to know the team, follow me.
4. Transactional Leadership
 - Structure, process procedure driven.
5. Participative Leadership
 - Open, candid, and listening.
6. Servant Leadership
 - Empower, team, and ethical.

B. Cognitive Skills

Cognitive skills are the core skills the brain uses to read, think, learn, reason, attention and remember. These skills define one's capacity for knowledge build and processing of information. Cognitive psychology is the scientific study of mental processes⁸ namely, 1) attention, 2) language use, 3) memory, 4) perception, 5) problem solving, 6) creativity, and 7) reasoning.

C. Executive Functions (EF)

Executive functions are higher-level cognitive skills a person uses driving one's cognitive abilities and behaviors. This term is used heavily in business and is a leading indicator of an executive/leader's capability to carry out their tasks efficiently and effectively. Executive Functions also predict both math and reading competence throughout the school years⁹.

Executive Functions are 1) Self-Control, 2) Self-monitor, 3) Emotional Control, 4) Flexibility, 5) Task Initiation, 6) Organization, 7) Working Memory, and 8) Planning & Time Management.

D. Leadership Qualities:

Top 10 leadership essential leadership qualities are¹⁰, integrity, delegation, communication, self-awareness, gratitude, learning agility, influence, empathy, courage, and respect.

III. THE ART OF DANCE: A PLAUSIBLE SOLUTION

A. Indian Classical Dance:

Indian cultural dance goes beyond culture, fitness, and health. It helps shapes girls into leaders that are confident, courageous, fast learners, agile team builders, inclusive, trustworthy, and empathetic. Dance reduces stress, cares for the body, practices focus, and exercises the brain.

➤ Leadership Styles on and off the stage:

In group dancing, dancers are required to be inclusive, work as a team, follow a structure (physical and associated music, songs), watch, and listen to the movements of team for your next move, and empower the team to lead or follow the rhythm of dance. Dancers also should think ahead of the next steps as they are dancing on the floor, entering, exiting, or taking different positions in the act. Dancers are accustomed to wearing different types of leadership styles with confidence for the success of the program. Every team member is accountable as one mistake can ruin the program theme and outcome. Whereas in the case of solo performance, you will also bring an authoritative leadership style as you are the center of attention and finishing the job with success is solely dependent on you. Overall, girl dancers can experience all types of leadership styles and understand the pros and cons that can be applied in life and career.

➤ Cognitive Skills driving the flow:

Indian classical dance requires one to understand the language and meaning of the song driving the dance and positions, memorize the song and flow of steps, attentive, able to visualize the stage dimensions to land in the right position during the performance. All cognitive skills need to work in tandem along with body movements during the performance.

➤ Executive Functions building behaviors:

Dancing teaches you to express and control emotions where needed, while bringing discipline in self, team, planning, time, memorization, and analytical abilities. Also learn to be flexible as you will have different characters, positions, and roles in various dance performances. You tend to listen more, open for coaching, life-long learning, and mandated to extend your time to mentor junior dancers.

B. Leadership Qualities:

As you can see based on the traits, executive behaviors developed by girls learning and performing Indian classical dance are.

Highest integrity working towards the program success; delegates responsibilities to the right dancer at the right moment; great communicators via oral and body expressions with team and audience; self-aware with razor sharp focus; gratitude for thanking the opportunity to perform; agile learning with continuous learning and practice; influencing team and mentoring and coaching junior team members; empathetic by emotionally connected with team, performance, and inclusion; courageous in being authentic, stepping up for self and team; respecting culture, work ethic, gurus and other mentors.

IV. METHODOLOGY

To study the leadership coefficient and skills and competencies acquired during training and performance of Indian Classical dance, survey was conducted with focus on measuring Cognitive and Executive Functions of the girl children enrolled in Indian classical dance institutions and performing amateur programs.

Sample size: 67

Dance groups: 4 groups with 11 students per group

Survey Guidelines: Students will self-survey and for their colleagues in the group; mothers can only rate their children; instructors will rate all students as they cut-across the group to teach different lessons on dance.

Table 1: Participants demographic details

| Type | Number | Gender | Age Range |
|-------------|--------|--------|-----------|
| Student | 44 | Female | 11-16 |
| Instructors | 4 | Female | 32-45 |
| Mothers* | 19 | Female | 34-50 |

*Only 19 mothers responded to the survey

Total surveys collected: 679.

Breakdown: Students 484; instructors 176; mothers 19

Table 2: Cognitive Skills Survey Summary

| Skill Type | Time of Joining | End of Year1 | End of Year2 |
|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|--------------|
| Attention | 5 | 7 | 8 |
| Language Use | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Memory | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Perception | 3 | 4 | 7 |
| Problem Solving | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Creativity | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Reasoning | 2 | 4 | 5 |

Significant change in girl dancers’ cognitive skills by end of year 2 of their joining the program. As they start giving a greater number of performances fueled by practice, working in teams helped to increase their attention, language use, memory, perception, and creativity. While reasoning has improved but given their decision-making challenges are not in large, measurement of reasoning during the program is not under optimal conditions. Reasoning and problem solving can be used as a barometer for mentoring and coaching junior children as they are in the initial stages of their training.

As a collective average given all cognitive skills have co-linkage in real world situations, it has been evident that Indian classical dance helped girl students significantly improved their cognitive skills (over 180% in 2-year period; 3.7 time of joining to 6.7 end of year 2).

Table 3: Executive Functions Survey Summary

| Skill Type | Before dance class Joining | End of Year1 | End of Year2 |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Self-control | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| Emotional control | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| Task Initiation | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| | | | |
| Working Memory | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| | | | |
| Self-Monitor | 3 | 5 | 6 |
| Flexibility | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| Organization | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| Planning & Time Mgt. | 3 | 5 | 8 |

Task initiation, working memory, planning & time management, improved by more than 100%; significant changes in their behavior is noted in flexibility and organization. Interestingly kids in the age of 12-14 exhibited great control of themselves and emotions.

As a collective average given all executive behaviors lead to building great future leaders, 145% improvement in their leadership co-efficient since the time they joined the dance class.

V. CONCLUSION

Our study helped to conclude that, girls who are under force to be an introvert, with stage fear, contained from the freedom of expression, not attentive due to tremendous pressure exerted on them due to society able to groom themselves into strong, confident, passionate, courageous, empathetic, and agile girl leaders of power. Therefore, art of Indian culture powered by Indian classical dance can turn today’s girl and women to be the future executives and visionary leaders. India will be stronger with inclusiveness of girls in making the country worlds second largest economy.

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