

## THE FINALITIES OF TEACHING-LEARNING *TAP-DANCE* TO ACTORS

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**Abstract:** *In the following study we attempt a presentation of the professional (artistic) and transversal competencies that are targeted in the process of teaching-learning tap dance. These represent a personal contribution, and have been formulated both by our valorising the existing specialised literature on the subject, as well as by our twelve years of experience in the field of tap dance. Our interest in this particular subject is justified by the fact that, in general, the educational finalities represent a referential educational component in the teaching, learning and evaluation stages, as they are the foundation of outlining, realising, directing and regulating these stages. Consequently, current didactics is centred on the problem of educational finalities.*

**Keywords:** *teaching in the artistic field; tap dance teaching; the finalities of teaching-learning tap dance; professional (artistic) competences; and transversal competences;*

### 1. Introduction

*Tap dance* is a dance style which has its roots and historical-cultural preconditions in the Irish and African dances, it appeared and imposed itself as a traditional dance form in the United States of America at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Gradually, it succeeded in affirming itself on a global scale, re-activating itself in various artistic contexts. Today, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we can say with certainty that *tap dance* is compatible with contemporaneous society and that it is a complex and expressive form of art and music.

In the present study, we endeavour to capture the didactic dimension of the subject of *tap dance*, namely to formulate the educational finalities specific to this dance style's teaching-learning process to actors. Therefore, we have conducted a theoretical research, during which we have utilised the method of thematic analysis, as well as our own reflections, with the help of which we have intended to devise a theoretical and descriptive approach to the *tap dance*'s teaching-learning finalities to actors: professional and transversal competences, general and specific objectives, and learning results.

### 2. Didactics of the artistic field and that of *tap dance* - conceptual boundaries

In order to analyse *tap dance* from a didactic perspective, respectively from that of teaching, learning and evaluating tap dance, it is necessary to create a specific didactics, subordinated to the didactics of the artistic field.

The didactics of the artistic field is a theoretical and practical branch of general didactics, which studies, in a systematic manner, the teaching-learning-evaluation process specific to the artistic field. The existence of this didactics does not mean the decrease or negligence of the specificity of the various sub-domains and artistic phenomena, but the promotion of an integrative, global vision for analysing them, as well as a logical, divergent, critical, creative and highly integrative thinking.

The didactics of the artistic field places the emphasis on the cognitive, actional/procedural and affective-behavioural contents' mobility, namely on the artistic values' cognitive, procedural-practical/applicative and attitudinal-behavioural competences. All of these types of contents enable processes of acquiring knowledge and of forming artistic competences corresponding to some important ideas/themes/problems, which can eventually be transferred in time and space, be it artistic, cultural, social, or geographic.

When delimiting the object of study of artistic didactics, the need to take into consideration the specificity of the different sub-fields and artistic phenomena, as well as their subordination to a broader thematic domain serve as the departing point. Thus, the aim is to support the people engaged in acquiring a type of thinking specific to the artistic field, in reaching a profound understanding not only of the aspects they have learned, but of the individual or collective teaching process, from a cognitive and metacognitive point of view as well.

*Tap dance* didactics is a theoretical and practical disciplinary branch of the artistic didactics, which studies, in a systematic manner, the teaching-learning-evaluation process of *tap dance*. In the case of these didactics, the learning process is essential, didactics being interested in studying its specificity, theorising it, in studying the processes of acquiring cognitive, actional/procedural and specific affective-attitudinal contents as well as specific artistic competences.

Starting with the particulars of the choreographic and musical structures' contents used in tap dance, the didactics of tap dance answers the following question "Why (should they operate in a certain way?) and it offers a systematic and integrative vision on the educational activities".

When theorising the learning process, *tap dance* didactics takes into account aspects such as:

- a) the particularities of the learning process of *tap dance*, by the artistic and choreographic distinct features of this dance form;
- b) the specific of the cognitive, actional/ procedural and affective-attitudinal contents which have to be learned in a systemic manner;
- c) the methods and the learning/self-learning techniques suited for *tap dance*
- d) significant and frequent difficulties which may arise during the learning and practising process;
- e) the exigencies of *tap dance* - from the perspective of the artistic element, choreography, stage expressivity, aesthetic factor, the synergic bond between music, movement, rhythm, and creativity etc.;
- f) concrete means of achieving specific finalities;
- g) forms and means of evaluating the degree to which the specific finalities have been achieved;
- h) the formation and development of the self-appreciation, self-evaluation capacities and objective self-regulation of the artistic practices

Bidirectional relationships are established between the artistic didactics and *tap dance* didactics. These two elements support one another in their theoretical and practical-applicative development, and they contribute to the cementing the artistic interpretations and the development of artistic practices.

### **3. The finalities of teaching-learning *tap dance* to actors: professional competences, transversal skills, general objectives, specific objectives and learning results**

The aim of learning-teaching *tap dance* is the acquiring of specific artistic and transversal competencies by the people learning it, through the profound understanding of the *tap dance* phenomenon's complexity, while manifesting their artistic creativity.

The finalities of teaching-learning *tap dance* focus on the need to master this form of dance, both theoretically and practically, and it also targets the following:

1. the acquiring of theoretical knowledge and the formation of intellectual competences, associated with the *tap dance* phenomenon;
2. practical artistic competences and *tap dance* learning/self-learning process management.

The finalities of teaching-learning *tap dance* enjoy the status of a referential didactic component, which directs and guides the processes involved in teaching and learning/self-learning *tap dance*, seeing as:

- It illustrates the progressive development of the acquisitions, as well as the evolution of artistic and transversal competences;
- It ensures the necessary conditions for the entire learning/self-learning process to focus on the formative aspects of learning and on the formation of the person learning.

We have used the paradigm of learning which is centred on competences and the functional-actional paradigm of education to formulate the finalities of teaching-learning *tap dance*. Promoting functional type competences facilitates, in this context, activation, mobilisation, and the transfer of acquisitions so as to accentuate the actional dimension of learning/self-learning *tap dance*.

Our opting for formulating competences is justified by the integrative character of these acquisitions, character which allows the successful development of an activity. In the European Parliament and the Council's Recommendation from the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 2008, regarding the establishment of the European Organisation for Long-Life Learning (The Official Journal C 111 from the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2008) the following are stipulated; „Competence” is the proved capacity of using knowledge, abilities, and personal/social and/or methodological skills in work-related or educational contexts, as well as for professional and personal development. The European Organisation of Qualifications describes competence from the perspective of responsibility and autonomy. “Competence” is an individual or collective skill of selecting, mobilising, combining and efficiently using, in a given context, an integrated, multifunctional and transferable ensemble of knowledge, abilities and attitudes.

As integrated acquisitions, competences have cognitive/intellectual, affective-attitudinal and psycho-dynamic components. As such they mobilise, utilise and integrate suitable cognitive, psycho-dynamic, affective and contextual resources for purpose of successfully approaching and tackling a task. The concept of “competence” is in a close relationship with the notion of practical action, therefore, one cannot speak about competences in the absence of effective actions, which entail: selecting (professional, artistic, social) resources adequate to the situation, combining these resources, verifying their efficiency, and establishing their correctness, etc.

In the case of *tap dance* we have formulated specific professional (artistic) competences in order to facilitate the successful approach of learning situations, which are specific to this type of dance and music. In the National Law of Education nr. 1/2011, with its later amendments and completions (<http://legeaz.net/legea-educatiei-nationale-1-2011/>), in Annex 1-The List of the Definition of Terms and Expressions used in the contents of the Law, point 15 it is stipulated that: “Professional competences are a unified and dynamic assembly of knowledge and abilities. Knowledge is characterised by the following: discovering, understanding and using of the specific language, explanation and interpretation. Abilities are expressed through the following: practical application, transfer and problem solving, critical, and constructive reflection, creativity and innovation.”

We have also formulated transversal competences, which are realised longitudinally “throughout” the objects of study as well as the educational practices and specified in terms of transferable and not strictly disciplinary acquisitions. “Transversal competences represent attitudinal acquisitions and acquisition of values, which go beyond a certain study programme and express themselves through the following: autonomy and responsibility, social interaction, personal and professional development.” – National Law of Education nr. 1/2011, with its amendments and completions (<http://legeaz.net/legea-educatiei-nationale-1-2011/>),

2011/), in Annex 1– The List of the Definition of Terms and Expressions used in the contents of the Law, point 16.

For each competence we have, in operational terms, formulated a set of results of the learning process, which “represent what a person knows, understands and is capable of doing at the end of the learning process and which are defined as knowledge, abilities and competence.” –Article nr. 345, line(1) from the National Law of Education nr. 1/2011, with its amendments and completions (<http://legeaz.net/legea-educatiei-nationale-1-2011/>).

Table no. 1

*The system of professional (artistic), transversal competences and of learning results that concern teaching-learning tap dance to actors*

Professional/Artistic Competences	Finalities/Results of learning <i>tap dance</i>
<p><b>1.</b> Management of information relating to the roots (origins) and to the stagnant, regressive, and evolutive stages of <i>tap dance</i>, starting at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and ending with what <i>tap dance</i> represents for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.</p>	<p><b>1.1.</b> The actor goes through a process of informing himself regarding <i>tap dance</i> by going through both written and cyber documents on the subject, selecting and systematically valorising information.</p> <p><b>1.2.</b> The actor realises a short historical account of the tap dance phenomenon, from its origins to its modern condition.</p> <p><b>1.3.</b> The actor explains the stagnant, regressive, and evolutive stages in the evolution of the tap-dance phenomenon.</p> <p><b>1.4.</b> The actor realises a multidimensional analysis of the cultural, political, social, and economic context of the <i>tap dance</i> dynamics.</p> <p><b>1.5.</b> The actor identifies the system of factors favouring and halting the dynamics of the <i>tap dance</i> phenomenon, by taking their interdependence and mutual influence into account.</p> <p><b>1.6.</b> The actor brings forward arguments that support the present status of <i>tap dance</i> as a complex and expressive art form, while keeping in mind its connection to other forms of dance.</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Using active and critical reflection in what concerns the theatre phenomenon in its ensemble, so as to identify solutions to increase its attractiveness, and for stimulating and cultural consumption among the public as well as shaping the consumer culture</p>	<p><b>2.1.</b> The actor reflects actively and with a critical attitude on the status of theatre and that of the artist in today’s modern society.</p> <p><b>2.2.</b> The actor reflects actively and with a critical attitude on the present and future evolution of the theatrical phenomenon as a cultural element, on both a national and international level.</p> <p><b>2.3.</b> The actor analyses the contemporary theatrical phenomenon by means of cultural indicators (the peculiarities of the various countries and their cultural systems, their technological development, national cultural strategies, types of audience).</p> <p><b>2.4.</b> The actor explains the need for identifying means of increasing the attractiveness of the theatrical phenomenon, so as to stimulate its consumption among the public.</p> <p><b>2.5.</b> The actor defines the causal relationship between going to the theatre and the culture of going to the theatre</p> <p><b>2.6.A</b> The actor defends the artistic potential of <i>tap dance</i> in hopes of bringing theatre a step closer to modernity and of increasing its attractiveness.</p>
<p><b>3.</b> Ensuring there is artistic syncretism between <i>tap dance</i> elements and professional theatre in what concerns the musical and the contemporary dance,</p>	<p><b>3.1.</b> The actor practices and correctly executes the steps specific to <i>tap dance</i>, which correspond to the following levels: 1(essential and optional), 2(essential and optional), 3 and 4, and he does this according to a set of rules and principles.</p> <p><b>3.2.</b> The actor develops new artistic abilities and attitudes based on the mutual influence between reflection, action, communication, and feeling in practicing <i>tap dance</i>.</p> <p><b>3.3.</b> The actor works/envisions creatively and gains basic artistic</p>

<p>from the perspective of scenic art, as well as that of the amplification of the artistic message and impact.</p>	<p>experiences by the synergetic combination between music, movement, rhythm, and artistic creativity, so as to intensify the scenic expressiveness.</p> <p><b>3.4.</b>The actor makes the best of the elements of choreographic language that are specific to the expressive territory in which theatre interacts with dance and music, as well as with the non-verbal, kinaesthetic, and verbal communication codes, in a syncretic manner.</p> <p><b>3.5.</b> The actor promotes cultural and artistic practices that stimulate creativity and artistic improvisation regarding <i>tap dance</i>, in the context of professional contemporary theatre shows.</p> <p><b>3.6.</b> The actor manages to diversify, develop, and extend the cultural and artistic practices by highlighting <i>tap dance</i> in the world of professional contemporary theatre, thus contributing to the stimulation of the public's appetite for culture and to the shaping of this consumer culture.</p> <p><b>3.7.</b> The actor gains cognitive contents (notions, knowledge, representations, principles, rules) relating to <i>tap dance</i> and to specific artistic practices, developing his cognitive component of artistic values in a systemic direction.</p> <p><b>3.8.</b> The actor gains active/procedural contents (movements, actions, techniques, procedures) relating to tap dance and to specific artistic practices, developing his procedural-practical/applicative cognitive component of artistic values in a systemic direction.</p> <p><b>3.9.</b> The actor gains affective-attitudinal contents (movements, actions, techniques, procedures) relating to <i>tap dance</i> and to specific artistic practices, developing his attitudinal-behavioural component of artistic values, in a systemic manner.</p>
<p><b>Transversal Competences</b></p>	<p><b>Results/Finalities of learning <i>tap dance</i></b></p>
<p><b>4.</b> Assuming a role and performing tasks either individually or as part of a team, in conditions of professional independence, and efficiently managing one's career.</p>	<p><b>4.1.</b> The actor analyses from the perspective of constructive criticism, supervises and explains the difficulties and advancements in the field of theatre, by means of an approach both systemic and interactive.</p> <p><b>4.2.</b> The actor responsibly undertakes an active part in working on individual tasks or team projects, developing his artistic judgement.</p> <p><b>4.3.</b> The actor actively and creatively participates in the interpreting of parts and in the execution of individual or team assignments, improving his performance and artistic practices.</p> <p><b>4.4.</b> The actor develops and promotes professional practices and strategies that are specific to the field of theatre, which is of a humanist-spiritual orientation; he does this responsibly, by respecting the ethical values and principles, as well as those of the professional deontology.</p> <p><b>4.5.</b>The actor utilises efficient learning strategies, methods and techniques throughout his life, for the purpose of continuous professional and personal (self-)improvement, (self-)development, and (self-)regulation of professional activity.</p> <p><b>4.6.</b> The graduate realises reflexive, analytical, and critical analyses, self-evaluations and constant improvements to his own professional activities and to the evolution of his career; and all this in order to ensure an efficient career management.</p> <p><b>4.6.</b> The actor comes up with research subjects pertaining to movement expressivity, and especially to the study of choreography, in order to continually improve the artistic practices.</p>
<p><b>5.</b> Efficient communication and</p>	<p><b>5.1.</b> In order to stimulate, consolidate, and make the relationships with other artists more efficient, the actor engages in active and interactive</p>

<p>cooperation in teams that have multiple specialisations and are essential for the carrying out of projects and programmes in the field of performing arts.</p>	<p>listening.</p> <p><b>5.2.</b> The actor is capable of becoming involved in processes of artistic communication, during which there is an exchange of messages, meanings, emotions, and other such things that relate to the artistic experience.</p> <p><b>5.3.</b> The actor is capable of becoming involved in processes of intercultural communication, during which there is an exchange of messages, meanings, emotions, and other such things that relate to the artistic experience.</p> <p><b>5.4.</b> The actor identifies roles and responsibilities in teams that have multiple specialisations and are essential for the carrying out of projects and programmes in the field of performing arts.</p> <p><b>5.5.</b> The actor applies strategies and techniques of professional bonding, communication and cooperation in teams that have multiple specialisations and are essential for the carrying out of projects and programmes in the field of performing arts.</p> <p><b>5.6.</b> The actor cooperates efficiently in interdisciplinary professional teams, together with the cultural events' producers, towards obtaining artistic and cultural activities of a high quality.</p>
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Through pedagogical derivation we have gone from the professional and transversal competences to the finalities that have a lower grade of generality, namely to the educational objectives/aims. Which we have classified into general and specific.

Educational aims/objectives are sentences characterised by finality, which anticipate the finalities of learning that are expected as a result of the actors' involvement in the teaching-learning process of *tap dance* learning. The general educational objectives/aims that we have formulated name the results of learning in terms of competences, while the specific educational objectives/aims name the results in terms of behaviours that are specific to *tap dance*. Between the two types of objectives there is a relationship of teleological causality; therefore, the general educational objectives (with a higher degree of generality) are realised by means of the specific educational objectives (with a lower degree of generality).

Table no. 2. *The system of specific educational objectives/aims that relate to teaching-learning tap dance to actors*

<p><b>General educational objectives</b></p>
<p><b>1.</b> Diversifying, developing, and extending cultural and artistic practices through the use of <i>tap dance</i> in professional contemporary theatre, so as to stimulate cultural consumption among the public and shape the consumer culture</p>
<p><b>2.</b> Developing the artistic culture by internalising new values, as a form of manifesting artistic abilities and attitudes based on the blending of reflection, action, communication and feeling, in the context of practising <i>tap dance</i></p>
<p><b>3.</b> Shaping artistic consciousness through <i>tap dance</i> related acquisitions and specific artistic practices, which can be highlighted in professional theatre</p>
<p><b>Specific educational objectives</b></p>
<p><b>4.</b> Learning and practising the steps specific to tap dance, which correspond to the following levels 1 (essential and optional), 2 (essential and optional), 3 and 4, according to specific principles and rules</p>
<p><b>5.</b> Acquiring of basic artistic experiences through synergy between music, movement, rhythm and artistic creativity, in order to intensify the stage expressivity</p>
<p><b>6.</b> Developing one's capability of expression and artistic communication by syncretically valorising the elements of choreographic language specific to the expressive field in which theatre interacts with dance and music as well as with non-verbal, kinaesthetic and verbal communication codes</p>
<p><b>7.</b> Promoting cultural and artistic practices that stimulate creativity and artistic improvisation in practicing <i>tap dance</i> in the context of professional contemporary theatre shows</p>

8. Diversifying, developing and extending artistic and cultural practices through the use of <i>tap dance</i> in professional contemporary theatre, in order to stimulate cultural consumption among the public and shape consumer culture
9. Developing new abilities and artistic attitudes based on the mutual influence between reflection, action, communication and feeling in practising <i>tap dance</i>
10. Developing of the cognitive component of artistic values, based on the cognitive contents (notions, knowledge, representations, principles, rules) relating to <i>tap dance</i> and to specific artistic practices, in a systemic manner
11. Developing of the procedural-practical/applicative component of artistic values, based on actional/procedural contents (movements, actions, techniques, procedures) relating to <i>tap dance</i> and to specific artistic practices, in a systemic manner
12. Developing of the attitudinal-behavioural component of artistic values, based on affective-attitudinal contents (movements, actions, techniques, procedures) relating to <i>tap dance</i> and to specific artistic practices, in a systemic manner

### 3. Conclusions

All types of finalities specific to the process of teaching-learning *tap dance* that we have formulated present a unified vision on this process, which is based on the methodological option of ensuring active learning/ learning through practice. In the process of formulating these finalities, we took into consideration the following referential aspects:

- Competences entail the existence of a number of abilities, which are reliant, in turn, on certain practical and intellectual processes, which is why they are realised in a considerably large amount of time.
- Educational objectives that are centred on competences place the emphasis on forming and practising practical and intellectual processes, and accentuate the formative character of the teaching-learning process.
- Educational objectives that are centred on specific behaviours place emphasis on the change in behaviour that is intended, for the sake of forming and practising practical and intellectual activities.
- The finalities/results of learning pertain to what a person that has completed a learning process is knowledgeable about, understands, and is capable of doing. These are defined as abilities, knowledge, and competences. Thus, the professional (artistic), and the transversal competences, as well as the general and specific educational objectives, which we have formulated, have to do with attaining the results of learning, as illustrated in figure no. 1:

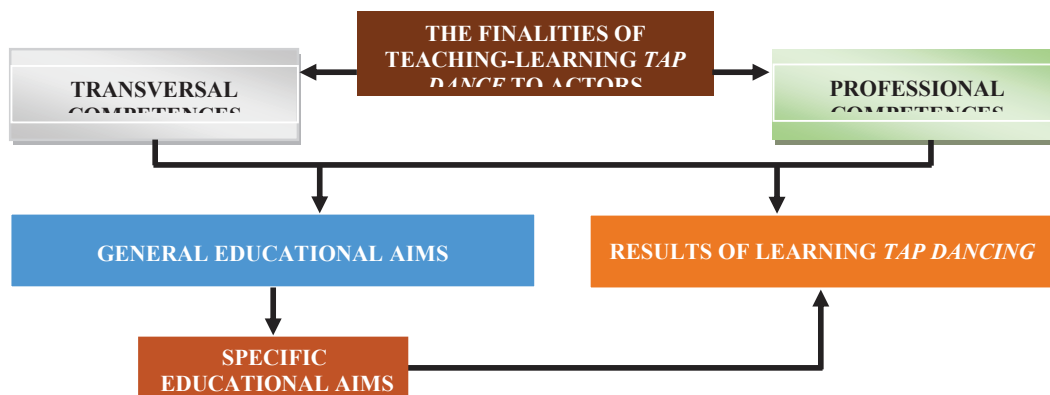


Figure no. 1. *Graphic model for illustrating the functional relationships between the professional (artistic) and transversal competences, general and specific educational objectives, and the results of learning*

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