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**Creator:** Preece, K. L.

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# ON THE VALUE OF CANDOCO'S TEACHER TRAINING INTENSIVE

By [Candoco Dance Company \(http://www.candoco.co.uk/author/candoco/\)](http://www.candoco.co.uk/author/candoco/), 25 September 2013

*Kelly Preece is a Higher Education Lecturer at the Universities of Northampton and Leeds. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and an Executive Board Member for DanceHE (formerly Scodhe). She is actively engaged in research about emerging dance pedagogies. More information about her teaching practice is available on her website at [www.kellylouisepreעה.wordpress.com](http://www.kellylouisepreעה.wordpress.com) (<http://kellylouisepreעה.wordpress.com>). You can also follow her on twitter [@Preece\\_Kelly](https://twitter.com/Preece_Kelly) ([https://twitter.com/Preece\\_Kelly](https://twitter.com/Preece_Kelly)).*



In September 2009 I began my first academic post at the University of Leeds. As part of my induction I was required to attend training sessions that covered many aspects of teaching in Higher Education. One such session focused on Equality and Diversity, and involved discussions of the ways in which we could ensure our teaching was accessible to students with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties. When asked about my own potential preparations, I attempted to explain that the way in which my discipline is traditionally taught is inherently

*inaccessible*. This realisation set off a train of thought about my own dance teaching practice and how it should reflect my social and political beliefs about inclusivity. A short Google search later, I was booked on to the Candoco Teacher Training Intensive in February 2010.

When I arrived on the first day of the intensive I wasn't sure what to expect – despite the fact that I had seen Candoco's work, read about their practices, and even done some work with students in special needs education. If anything I thought we might be taught specific exercises, and perhaps a choreographic and pedagogic strategy for working with wheelchairs. What I experienced was an introduction to an emerging teaching practice about how all dance should be taught. Taking part in an inclusive technique class was a revelation – largely because it wasn't that different from my previous experience of technique. The opportunity to work with the Candoco youth dancers was invaluable – they really know what they're doing, and are direct, open and honest with their feedback.

Shortly after I finished the intensive I began working with an inclusive dance group in Leeds who were interested that I had done the Candoco training course. I happily attended for several sessions, eager to 'try out' what I had learnt with Candoco. It quickly became clear to me that my presence wasn't needed – there was enough choreographic

thinking and leadership in the group itself without my input. I was somewhat disappointed that I couldn't put my Candoco training in to practice. However when I began to think about it, I realised that I already was. My training with Candoco wasn't just applicable to working with inclusive groups – it was permeating the development of my teaching practice much more generally.

What stays with me about the Candoco philosophy is an attention to individual experience. It engenders thoughtfulness about 'how' and 'why' we use different teaching methodologies in dance – and how we might challenge traditional teaching structures in the discipline. For me, Candoco's approach is important pedagogically whether or not you work with inclusive groups.