

Fortune Teller and Midwife: A Reflective View on Pedagogical-Artistic Management in a Reality of Multiple Crises

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Abstract

The academic year of 2020-2021 was characterized by multiple crises, which affected the pedagogical-artistic management of the Department of Dance at the Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts – one of the leading colleges in Israel for training teachers of dance. These crises occurred on three levels: the global, the national, and the local. On a global level, the Covid-19 outbreak brought about limitations imposed upon the public, from which emerged extreme social tensions, coupled with a political chasm that led to four election cycles, and finally a controversial military operation on the national level. On a local level, additional challenges included the department's shift to a new location in the city center, integration into a new "Faculty" organizational framework, a six-week lecturers' strike, and the replacement of two of the five administrative-staff members. These extreme conditions increased the number of secondary roles as an integral part of the Head of the Department's function described as fortune-teller, ombudswoman, clerk, real-estate agent, stunt artist, and midwife. The article focuses on presenting each of these roles and the transition from VUCA 1 (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity/Chaos, Ambiguity) to VUCA 2 (Vision, Understanding, Courage, Adaptability).

Keywords: Covid-19, department of dance, multiple crises, secondary management-roles, VUCA

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to reveal and illuminate events from a "behind-the-scenes" perspective of a pedagogical-artistic management position during a period characterized by multiple crises. This is a complement and extension to studies that examined the experiences of students and educators at different levels in the educational system (e.g., Deas et al., 2021; Gershy & Shuzman, 2021; Kedraka et al., 2022; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2020). Specifically, this paper will focus on some of the challenges addressed and the secondary roles that have evolved to handle them in the teachers'-training track of the Department of Dance at the Kibbutzim College of Education, Technology and the Arts, Tel Aviv, Israel.

I will begin with five preliminary observations that briefly lay the background to the contents that will be presented later: two literature-based subjects – one regarding the term VUCA, the four components that together describe the challenging conditions for management in any organization or system; and the other focuses on secondary roles that are being part of a management position. The next two are specific aspects of the Department of Dance as an institution and its management. This part will conclude with a description of the multiple crises during the academic year 2020-2021. Together these observations describe the background for focusing on specific aspects of administration in an artistic-academic department that became evident during the aforementioned period and constitute the core of this paper. The final paragraph manifests the complementary process of growth that emerged from these crises and indicates future directions for growth and development.

1.1 Situation and Function: Two Literature-Based Observations

1.1.1 VUCA – Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity (Chaos), Ambiguity

The acronym VUCA comprises four components that together create challenging conditions in which to manage an organization or system: Volatility relates to continuous change in environmental and societal contexts of familiar surroundings; uncertainty is defined as a situation in which there is no availability of information from which to glean future processes; complexity or chaos focuses on the multiplicity of entangled and intertwined variables; ambiguity indicates that despite the available information, the all-inclusive meaning is unknown or incomprehensible (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014a). The term was first cited in American military academic publications after the collapse of the USSR,

while the emphasis within the military context was on the transition from a world based on organized military doctrines facing known enemies, to combat facing decentralized enemies, arranged in a non-hierarchic construct and mobilized by a wide range of motives (Yehekel & Kozlovsky, 2020).

A deep exploration of the four components of the term reveals a correlation between two varying perspectives: One perspective that includes the terms volatility and complexity relates to the characteristics of reality. The other perspective which includes the terms uncertainty and ambiguity relates to the cognitive-human difficulty in comprehending a reality having these types of characteristics and the challenges regarding functioning within its framework (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014b).

The term serves in the field of sociology and administration of large organizations, such as the military, education, health, economics, or government. The writers emphasize that the term serves both in describing the motives for administrative challenges and describing the outcomes (Yehekel & Kozlovsky, 2020). The conditions of VUCA describe/define the characteristics of the organizational space in which we worked, towards leading an education system of the Department of Dance in a reality of multiple crises, and they have a role in its emergence of secondary roles that will be presented later.

1.1.2 The Management Role as a Complex Function

All administrative positions include an array of perspectives or secondary roles that relate to the various functions the system is required to fulfill. Relating to administrative tension that exists in art and culture organizations, Sagiv and Yehekel (2020) defined a model in which "it takes three to tango" (p. 54). This general model includes "the dreamer", "the doer", and "the ambassador" – three functions that are ordinarily maintained by three separate individuals – the artistic director, the business manager, and the chair of the board of directors. In certain organizations, it was found that two of these functions were consolidated into one-person roles (Sagiv & Yehekel, 2020).

The academic administrative situation presents somewhat different emphases, but, here as well, it is incumbent upon a director, as a leader, to have a repertoire of behaviors and conducts in order to find appropriate solutions for the multiple, various tasks and demands (Quinn, 1984). Van der Hoek et al. (2021) present a description of the sub-roles of such leadership, a collection that includes a wide range of functions and explores the significance and behaviors derived from them:

- 1) The Innovator – the creative component of the position, creates a vision, is enterprising and promotes change.
- 2) The Broker – has political wisdom, secures resources, and maintains the external legitimacy of the department through the development, search, and preservation of external networks.
- 3) The Director – is involved in setting goals, organizing the secondary roles, and establishing the organization's expectations.
- 4) The Co-ordinator – maintains the existing structure, organizes schedules for activities, solves problems, and serves as a liaison between the administration and students.
- 5) The Monitor – collects and disseminates information, checks implementation, and provides a feeling of cooperation and stability.
- 6) The Facilitator – encourages the expression of opinion, and strives towards broader agreement through negotiation-based compromise.
- 7) The Mentor – is aware of personal needs, is attentive to the internal discourse, supports legitimate requests, and promotes individual development.

The writers of this article emphasize that the repertoire of behaviors described relates to principled approaches vis-à-vis addressing administrative challenges and not to personal characteristics or qualities (Van der Hoek et al., 2021, pp. 269-270).

1.2 The Department of Dance and Its Management

1.2.1 The Department of Dance as a Hybrid Organization

The Department of Dance in Kibbutzim College is an academic-pedagogic-professional structure for training students to be teachers of dance. The curriculum combines dance training for performance, composition, production, and support pursuits in the professional and community fields, as well as exposure to leading educational-pedagogical philosophies and practical teaching experience. This framework constitutes a model of what is known in professional jargon as a "hybrid organization" (Siwale et al., 2021, p. 455), a framework that is characterized by being based on conflicting values, or at least ones that are not supportive of one another, which co-exist and maintain a multifarious relationship with both internal and external aspects (Sagiv & Yehekel, 2020). Being a part of a humanistic-orientation teacher-training institution, the core of these values is intended to enable each and every participant to find his/her place and share their unique qualities in the field of dance (Kibbutzim College of Education [SMKB], n.d.). Alongside the egalitarian-

humanistic view, there are values that characterize the world of dance studies, which focus on continuous enhancement of performance ability, striving towards excellence, and seeking uniqueness and exposure, prominently to an audience. The third set of values comes from being a part of academia, which is built traditionally on comparison to external standards and providing a platform for evaluation and assessment via numerical grades. Managing this type of organization ("Head of Department"), is by nature a complex construct, a complexity which was intensified during the health-social-political and local crises conditions, the focal point of this paper.

1.2.2 Management as a Team

Management within the framework of a team was my strategic decision as Head of the Department, and as one directing towards increased cooperation in heading a complex organizational system. During the period of time presented in this document, which covers the academic year 2020-2021, the management-administrative staff comprised five women: the artistic director; the production coordinator; the production assistant – who was replaced mid-year; the academic coordinator – who was also replaced; and the director of the school, who is the writer of this paper. Yeheskel and Kozlovsky (2020) state the importance of team management and emphasize that "administration in a VUCA environment is not the song of a charismatic soloist – but the song of a choir" (p. 17). Coupled with sharing the workload, it is pretty evident that replacing two out of five functionaries during that period, on the one hand, signifies loss of significant organizational knowledge, and on the other, entailed redirecting resources towards training newcomers to the team; and at the same time, to temporality fill the missing functions, which exacerbated complications and burdens.

1.3 Accumulation of Crises

As described in the previous paragraphs, alongside the ongoing academic-pedagogical management, the dance department was required to deal with extreme challenges on three levels: the global – the public health crisis and its consequences (such as lockdowns, distant learning); the national – political chaos, to which was added the Operation "Guardian of the Walls"¹, which tore the Israeli society apart; and the local one – the campus move, the lecturer strike and the replacement of two of the five members of the management team. Table 1 presents a month-by-month schematic representation of crises during the academic year 2020-2021.

Table 1. A Month-by-Month Schematic Representation of Crises during the Academic Year 2020-2021

									Semester break				
Local/ department's events													
Attitude towards Dept. relocation													
Covid 19 Restrictions													
National/ public atmosphere													
Month	Mar-20	Apr-20	May-20	Jun-20	Summer break	Nov-20	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Jun-21
Year	Spring 2020					Academic year 2020-2021							

Legend //	intensity	High intensity	Medium	Light
Local - at college				
Department's events		Full lecturer's strike	Completion of missed classes	Changes in administrative staff
Attitude towards Dept. relocation		Relocation during pandemic	Preparation for relocation	Moderate objection
Global and national				
Covid-19 Restrictions		Lockdowns, distance learning	Limited school days or number of students in a group	Normal academic schedule
National		"Operation Guardian of Walls"		
Public atmosphere		Intense civil unrest	Demonstrations, public anger	Civil unrest begins

The lower part of Table 1 shows the legend: the crises categories are indicated in the left column, while the degrees of

¹ Operation Guardian of the Walls was a military operation that began on May 10, 2021, and lasted for 11 days. During this period, Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad fired heavy barrages of rockets at cities in Israel, and the IDF attacked sites in the Gaza Strip. At the same time, severe civil unrest took place, which included mutual attacks by Arab and Jewish citizens, in towns with mixed populations (Institute for National Security Studies, 2022).

severity of each of the crises are color-coded according to three levels – from the highest intensity, to medium, and to light. In the upper part, the crises are marked according to their degree of intensity over the period covered – from March 20 to June 21.

As presented in Table 1, at any given moment, from the onset of Covid-19 on March 2020 until June 2021, the administrative staff was required to conduct scheduled lessons while there were at least three simultaneous and ongoing crises. The peak of the crises occurred during the first two weeks and the last weeks of the academic year (November-December 2020, and May-June, 2021) when in addition to limitations caused by the pandemic and the public emotional atmosphere, the labour pains of moving to a new campus, and the 6 weeks lecturers' strike, the operation "Guardian of the Walls" broke out – causing uncountable burdens among the administrative staff members.

The management load that took place under the responsibility of the administrative team, and under the aforementioned VUCA conditions, grew and strengthened some of the variety of secondary management roles, and these became prominent and clear in the management routine, as presented next.

2. Method

The research questions that guided the course of observation sought to understand what were the central administrative tasks and secondary roles that emerged or stood out during the examined time period.

In order to identify and define these roles, an assortment of digital materials was sorted and categorized, including both the materials that had been collected from the office computer, as well as information from the personal home computer, from which routine activities were conducted during the lockdown period. The materials were categorized according to the following research questions.

2.1 Contents

What were the subject matters and contents addressed during the period? The sorted materials included requests, complaints, updates (information, regulations), minutes from meetings and conversations, agreements (e.g., regarding studying on Zoom), schedules and planning, reporting and documentation of activities, greetings for the holidays, permits for passing during movement restrictions, as well as examples of educational tasks and assignments given by the teachers.

2.2 Participant

Who was the transmitter and who was the recipient of messages, documents, and other materials? Students (as individuals and as a group), lecturers, department functionaries (the Dean, colleagues and other heads of department, officiators), administrative personnel in the college (President and Rector, student administration, marketing personnel, and the like), The Council for Higher Education guidelines, guidelines from the Ministry of Health, as well as information sent from the Department of Dance to the above functions.

2.3 Means of Communication

What means of communication were used to transfer the information? Including e-mails, publications, summaries from conversations, collaborative documents, data on excel spreadsheets, photos taken during classes held under the restrictions, video clips that were presented as assignments during distance learning, and lesson Zoom recordings.

3. Findings

Based on the data sorting process, a number of secondary roles were defined, ones that served as an address for the critical needs that arose during the period under review. The observation of these functions from a distance of time created links and contexts to experiences from other worlds and allowed a reference accompanied by compassion and a little humor. These roles, presented below, were divided into three main categories: the gap between expectations and solutions; manipulators and stunt artists; good news as well.

3.1 The Gap between Expectations and Solutions

3.1.1 Fortune Teller

The previously defined VUCA situation, which is uncomfortable – to say the very least – for preparing and planning even for the short-term, caused extreme difficulty on every level of the system's operation, challenged planning among all the partners on the very basic and personal level: from the students' perspective, some of whom left their rented apartments and moved back into their parents' home – raised the questions of preparing for the next school day – will classes be conducted digitally or on campus? From the lecturers' perspective, some of whom have family members "locked" at home, they needed to find solutions in order to prevent interruptions during online teaching. The lecturers' strike which lasted six weeks, was an additional factor in the uncertainty of the basic question – will there be classes tomorrow/next week/in the near future?

Although everyone was aware of the circumstances, it was apparent from written communications, requests, claims, and

appeals to the Department of Dance administration that there was a clear expectation (mainly from the students, but from the staff members as well) – that we, as the people at the head of the system and who have a direct connection with the college's faculty administration – will know - Where we are headed and when we will return to full teaching capacity? Will we be able to have the end-of-the-year performance in front of a live audience? And above all – when the pandemic will be over and when we can get back to our routine?

It is crystal clear that not one person on the planet could have provided a satisfactory reply to these questions; however, they were expecting answers from us. The role of "fortune teller" was found to be a role never to be fulfilled, in which the gap between expectations and the possibility of providing solutions to the angst and the thirst for information became more and more evident.

3.1.2 Ombudswoman

Lack of satisfaction and feeling of missed opportunity regarding dance studies was – at least in the beginning – shared by the entire community – students and lecturers alike. Together with the expectation that we would be able to predict "what was next", as presented above; despite the shared understanding that there was no "guilty party"; we, the administration staff, found ourselves serving as the main target for emotional upheaval and challenged by the disruption of the day-to-day routine.

Frustration and distress affected two aspects of the academic experience - the first aspect related to keeping the face-to-face classes on campus, whenever possible. Despite the joy of active dancing and social interaction, an atmosphere of fear was present: fear of meeting others on the campus, fear of using public transportation, or of endangering at-risk family members; and later – possibly a habit of avoidance of leaving the house in general – all became a major impediment from getting together. The second aspect related to distance learning – both sides found it difficult to manage the long sessions in front of the screen. The students' perspective brought about some objections to turning on cameras. In addition, the situation caused financial exertions due to a lack of income, as most students' jobs, such as dance teaching, waiting tables, private tutoring, babysitting, etc., were canceled.

From the students' point of view, their feeling of frustration was compounded and intensified by the lecturers' strike, which reduced the learning experience even more. And even though the lion's share of the complaints was aimed towards the college administration or the National Committee for College Lecturers, and even if it was repeatedly stated that "you (the department administration) are not to blame" – it was made clear to us by the students that it was incumbent upon us to find more suitable solutions.

From the teaching staff's point of view, coping mechanisms emerged - and with them, frustration – from encountering challenges of technology – an entire world of skills that would usually not even be accessible for those whose time is spent in a dance studio; and with the technology, pivotal questions about how do I fulfill this mandate I have taken upon myself? I will present here only two examples: How is a "Contact Improvisation" class conducted when physical contact and proximity are forbidden; or how to teach a "Flying Low" technique when both the lecturer and the students are practicing in the living room or kitchen floor of their home, in such foreign conditions for the basic needs of the field of dance? The general experience, both for students and teachers alike, was significantly reduced in comparison to the dance experience for which we all signed up. I will elaborate on the adaptation process and some of the solutions in the last, optimistic paragraph.

3.2 *Manipulators and Stunt Artists*

3.2.1 Clerk

The role of "clerk" is a nickname given to the intense facet of an ongoing provision in organizing an academic system and mediation of information for students and lecturers. While in a routine academic year, a fairly permanent schedule is prepared in advance for all the classes in the School of Dance, here we were challenged with ever-changing conditions: Covid-19 – complete/partial/no lockdown; student hardships – health questions and repercussions from the war; teaching dynamics – strike/full schedule/make-up classes; and the constantly changed requirements for format – Zoom/10-student limit in class/regular schedule. This matrix demanded constant weekly updating, sometimes even more frequently, during a period of over a year and a half. In this administrative aspect, the lack of an experienced and skilled department secretary, one who knows the system in depth and who has a broad horizon for exercising discretion, was particularly felt. The role of the "clerk" was seen as being defined through continuous activity and was most present and evident throughout the period.

3.2.2 Real-Estate Agent

The "real-estate agent" role relates to the need for maneuvering and scheduling dance classes in various locations – physical spaces (real estate), in which classes could be conducted according to the distance requirements of the Ministry of Health and according to the academic schedule. These locations included dance studios in the new arts campus, and

later, in the "old" campus which we left a few months ago; outdoor spaces (for example, on the square on Rothschild Blvd., a main street in Tel Aviv, when the new campus was not ready to accommodate us yet; or other spaces that were only 100 meters from home, in accordance with the strict health limitations); home spaces, in which every participant had to accommodate their physical space to a dance studio while learning on Zoom; and the virtual-digital space that included individual and independent tasks, either asynchronous or videos to be submitted. Photos 1-4 illustrate examples from lessons from the various spaces:



Figure 1. Third-year ballet class led by Talia Paz, in the square on Rothschild Blvd., Tel Aviv; November, 2021 (Photo by Department of Dance)

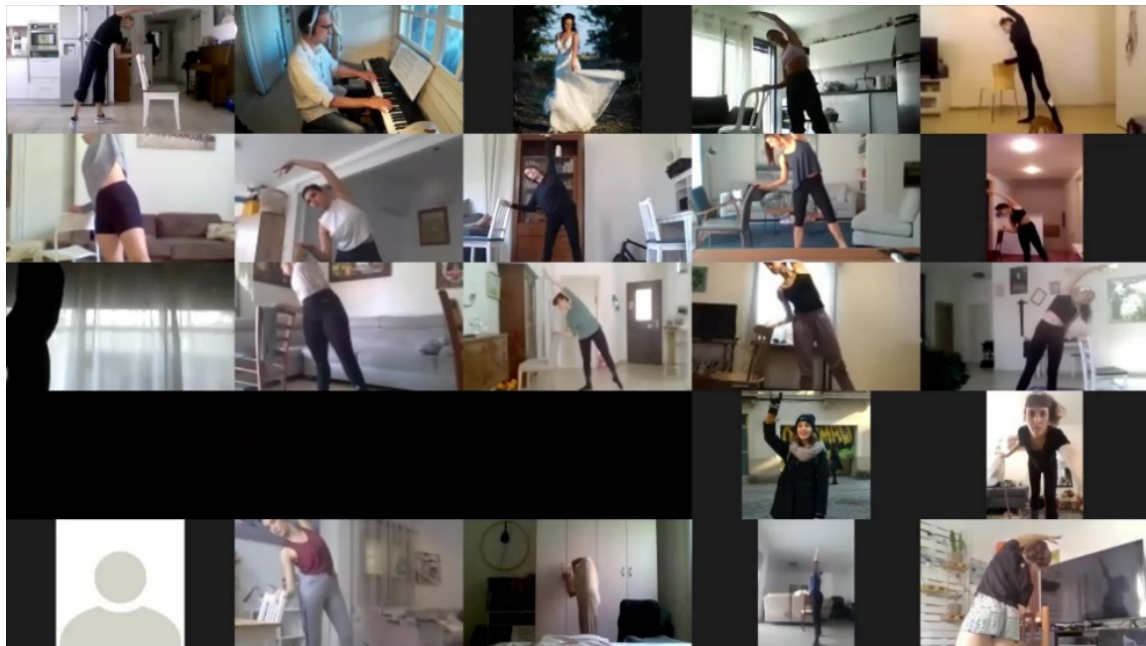


Figure 2. Second-year ballet class in their at-home space on Zoom, led by Marjolein Gottesman and piano accompaniment by Alex Kalman (Screenshot, M. Gottesman)



Figure 3. Examples from second-year composition class led by Yael Venezia in Yaakov Garden, Tel Aviv; November, 2021 (Photos courtesy of second-year students)



Figure 4. First-year preparatory class led by Dr. Tali Ronen in Yarkon Park, Tel Aviv; November, 2021 (Photo by Tali Ronen)

The role of the "real-estate agent" complements the "clerk", by placing an emphasis on the location and physical conditions of the lessons. It is noteworthy that the initiative and choice of "venue" often came from the teachers, and focused on a place that allowed for – and perhaps evoked – inspiration for the anticipated activities. The administrative staff was required to make sure that the location adhered to the updated regulations and to inform all relevant parties.

3.2.3 The Stunt Artist

The challenge of the "stunt artist" complemented the "real-estate agent" and highlighted the desire to enable the lecturers to be at their best within the new and challenging teaching situations and the attempt to find the preferred teaching framework for each one when active teaching was allowed on campus. This is in light of the limitations regarding the number of students per group, the desire to maintain an organic social group, and the refrain from combining different groups of students. Thus, as administrators we maneuvered between the various possibilities, in accordance with the needs of the lecturers: dividing one class into two separate halls, while the teacher went back and forth between them; the class was split into two: the first half of the group studied for half of the lesson, and the second half of the class studied during the second half of the lesson; or once every two weeks one half of the class had a full-length lesson. The experience was one of striving to exhaust every organizational possibility to enable optimal teaching.

3.3 The Good News

The impossible conditions for almost everyone involved – students, teachers, the administrative staff – gave birth to a number of initiatives and promoted the growth of channels that otherwise, apparently would not have been born, or would have come to life gradually and unassumingly. This is the role of the "midwife" spread over three levels, as presented next.

3.3.1 Management Level

- **Development of a new academic track:** Due to the lack of cultural activity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, an initiative emerged to open an academic track tailored for active dancers in professional companies, who had taken on a forced leave of absence from their professional routine. The new track was opened with 18 students (out of 40 who showed interest) from five professional dance companies. As an academic system, we were required to be flexible and accommodate the already existing academic structure and create new organizational solutions to coordinate the needs of these unique groups of people, who were still obliged to their companies. As the world of culture gradually regained its activity, organizational challenges increased and tension grew between the two – sometimes contradicting – obligations of these students. But that organizational move opened a door to an innovative track that enabled young dancers to complete their academic degree and teaching certification parallel to their professional commitment.
- **Upgrading technology and combining face-to-face learning and distance learning:** Equipping the dance studios – as well as all the classrooms in the college – with cameras and microphones that enable distance learning and face-to-face learning, which allows students who were sick, or unable to attend class to be included in the curriculum. In addition, technology has opened communication channels and discourse with choreographers around the world who were digital "guests" of the Department of Dance.

3.3.2 Teaching Staff

Expanding, developing, and enhancing teaching methods: Under normal conditions, dance classes take place in a shared teaching-learning environment, where the teacher's physical demonstration and/or direct guidance, are the main instruction tool. As a result of the disconnection from such a shared environment, and the implausibility of the requirement from students to visually follow up the teacher's demonstration (which would require students to focus their gaze on the computer and limit their movement) – teachers were forced to rely more on verbal guidance, to develop and/or improve a designated teaching language. In some of the courses, especially those focused on familiar, pre-coded dance genres (e.g., classical ballet, Cunningham technique) – the verbal-conceptual basis was honed; On other, more contemporary or personalized dance courses (like Release, Flying Low), such challenging teaching experience gave rise to unique images, metaphors, and expressions, leading to a construction of a significant and adapted novel teaching language. In my opinion, this challenge brought about a noteworthy development and enhancement of every teacher's methodology.

3.3.3 Student Body

Demonstrating social involvement and responsibility: Coupled with the barrage of complaints and expressions of frustration regarding the loss of precious dance time or its disruption, students demonstrated concern and caring towards social issues that became obvious during the year (See Table 1 above). Some were involved in various demonstration events, supporting Arab-Jewish collaborations during and as a result of "Operation Guardian Walls", and were involved mainly in what affected them directly: they showed support for their teachers during the lecturers' strike in protest of poor financial conditions (Kadari, 2020). An example can be observed in Figure 5, on the sign (written in Hebrew) spread out behind the dancers.



Figure 5. Third-year ballet class led by Talia Paz on Rothschild Blvd, Tel Aviv; November, 2021. The sign in the background expresses the students' support for improving the working conditions of the striking lecturers. (Photograph by Department of Dance)

4. Discussion

The concept VUCA that was defined at the beginning of this paper paved a clear path for analyzing and understanding the sense of hardship, intense work, and extreme administrative challenges throughout the period in discussion.

As part of the manifestation of the described difficulties, the subordinate roles within the role of the head of the department

grew and sharpened. The humorous nicknames used, allow a slightly different view from the one in which these secondary roles were defined in the literature (Van der Hoek et al., 2021), but these also bring to expression the complexity embodied in the managerial role, all the more so in times with extreme characteristics.

Nevertheless, the period served as an opportunity to reconsider what had previously existed and for significant renewal of learning and teaching processes in the School of Dance, and a transition from administration through VUCA 1.0 to growth and development in the spirit of VUCA 2.0. This variation on the concept published in the American business magazine, "Forbes" (George, 2017), reformed the acronym to the following meaning: Vision, Understanding, Courage, Adaptability. This spirit of renewal and breaking through frameworks was also expressed in the UNESCO report about the processes higher education institutions went through during the pandemic: "We certainly are moving into the unknown, but disruption often leads to the previously unimaginable" (UNESCO, 2020, p. 1).

This is how we operated throughout the period: guided on the one hand by the fundamental vision that was directed towards training dancers, and high-quality teachers, and on the other - the understanding of the complex reality that we were faced with, which required courage for a new beginning and ability to adapt to ever-changing conditions.

So much for the reviewed period, in which there was an extreme concentration of crises. But there is no time to rest: the complex social mechanisms in Israeli society, the sensitive security situation, the challenges of global warming, and living alongside the variants of Covid-19 – all these will continue to challenge the management level and call for constant innovation and novel methods of operation.

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Note

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