LEARNING FOR CHOREOGRAPHIC CREATION IN CHILDREN'S CLASSROOM[1]

Chantal Boucsin[2]

The originality of our procedures lies in our basic postulate: the child has got naturally, and since his or her earliest childhood, an enormous potential of creativity, that she or he is ready to make use of immediately, only if he or she was not conditioned by a type of learning here he or she is an «obedient follower» (Terence & Bastin)..

When the child appears, his or her nervous system becomes step by step the relation system driving to the capability and the feeling of «to be», to have desires or needs, to extend to others which means socialisation, to blossom which means to achieve the satisfaction of the needs; in other words the relation system which allows the building of a personality a personal and social identity.

Since his or her earliest childhood the child is a «discoverer» of new experiences bringing to him or her a very great number of emotions and a sense of developing curiosity towards him – or herself and their own environment.

Since the awakening psychomotor we notice the different ways used by the little child for reaching on one part the awakening to him – or herself and on the other part the awakening to the material and social world.

If the awakening to the self is realised by the way of approaching the notion of «space» («life-space» and «thought space»), the way of approaching the notion of «time» («life-time» and «thought-time»), the way of submission to events (discrimination between what is, or is not, a dependency on self, the curiosity and the amazement, the way of the space-time and subject-object relations' requirement: the arousing to the world takes place gradually by the emergence of space organisation (localisation, marks) and time structuring (chronology) proceedings,

the observation of the process (analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction operations).

The psychomotor development is related therefore to the child's awakening creativity, the child's spontaneous expression process, the child's affective and emotional reality of space and time.

The affective-motor creativity already exists, inside of the child' self, and he or she is ready to use it immediately.

The access to the world of dancing and certainly of dancing creation lies then simply in the individual development of consciousness and self-control learning.

Really the traditional teaching of dancing keeps the learning of the choreographic creation for students having already achieved successfully a complete technical and practical course in the discipline of dance.

The students in those cases were conditioned during a very long period to copy as faithfully as possible the teacher's interpretation.

They learned therefore gradually «to forget» their own interpretation of the emotions coming generally from the impact of the music on their inmost self.

Anyway discovering movements is the first step in beginning to choreograph a dance and discovery of appropriate movement is accomplished through improvisation.

Taking children as budding choreographers you must therefore perfect their improvisation skills. But following our basic postulate, we have a lot of wonderful possibilities to make them reach a good level of improvisation comprises which the development of their own ability of concentration to establish the best connection between their mind and body.

This kind of creator has a hand in selecting the motivation or at least parts of motivation for movement and often relies on the use of memories and past experiences as a stimulus for action.

Improvisations can be initiated by a umber of different sources of stimuli which can be visual, auditory, tactile or kinaesthetic (Ellfeldt, 1967).

We use the technique of mental imagery very often because it's a technique carrying dancers to the significant meeting point of the psychomotor abilities and the concentration on their visual, auditory and kinaesthetic sensations.

The mental imagery is always a good way. It is effective in a period of creation but also during a period of training (visualisation, feelings of the previous performance) or in a period of show. It allows the become dancers to take self-confident in each moment, it is an energetic charge, it's balancing the levels of excitement and latency.

Those sessions of mental imagery drive therefore the dancers on, controlling effectively their own expectation level taking the best place possible in their relationship to the audience and to themselves.

To achieve such goals needs a certain state of mind that is part way between the conscious and the unconscious mind; it is a state in which daydreaming and reveries take place (Rugg, 1963).

But concentration on mental imagery needs a very deep relaxation (Bry, 1978).

The relaxation before a session of mental imagery allows the dancers to reduce all the somatic and cognitive tensions which are distractive by calming them and permit them therefore to concentrate maximally on the integration of their own sensorial modalities (not only «see» but also «feel» all the kinaesthetic sensations related to the general idea of the choreography, not only «hear» but also «feel» all the sounds of the accompaniment, …).

A very good technique of relaxation is to concentrate on your breathing.

The technique of «guided imagery» (Rossman & Tresler, 1983) is a relaxation system which is very effective for suggesting more creativity reaching the specific state of mind necessary for choreographic creations.

It is practised by encouraging the subjects to take several slow and very deep breaths, breathing from the abdomen. With each exhalation the subjects are told to imagine themselves taking in energy from the universe and then to sense that their body is becoming more relaxed. Finally (Samuels and Bennett, 1973) the subjects are encouraged to imagine that the inside of their own body is growing brighter and ore radiant from the centre outward.

Our approach is definitely global and fits with a learning deliberately tuned towards personal development and specifically towards the construction of identity. It is the investigation of the fundamental relation existing between the dancer's body and the environmental fields that carries us to a significant meeting point of psychomotricity and education.

This is the exploratory process of the child's psychomotor experiences that improves him – or herself gradually with a more and more precise and suitable motor vocabulary making of him or her a real actor of his or her creation.

Our procedures aim at the satisfaction of the dancers' needs (the simplest to the most sophisticated) needs of security, contact, self esteem, identification, self affirmation and self achievement.

On that way we must appeal to a set of intrinsic motivations driving the pupil to an always wider expression of his or her own creativity.

Applied to dance, motivation is the capacity for dancers to persist in the face of boredom, fatigue, pain and the desire to do other things.

At a more practical level, motivation means dancers putting 100% of their time, efforts, energy and focus into their preparations.

But not all dancers are motivated by the same things. You cannot therefore use one generic motivational technique to motivate everyone.

Rather you must identify the motivational needs of your dancers and work to motivate them accordingly.

Identifying and satisfying the individual needs of your dancers affect them at two levels:

– The motivation, as said before, influences participation and performance,

— Dance... is extremely hard work and if you don't take joy in it too, if you're not excited and inspired by it, it's not for you» (Roben, 1977).

Highly motivated dancers are typically enthusiastic about class and rehearsal and have a keen interest in learning new ways to improve.

These dancers also have specific and clearly defined goals.

Self confidence and self esteem are the most important psychological factors that influence dance performance and can be defined as how strongly dancers believe they can learn and execute a skill or perform a certain role.

It is not only technical and artistic skills that lead a dancer to the best performance. It's important to instil in dancers the belief in their ability to perform those skills.

Self confidence produces positive thinking, such as «I'm going to dance my best tonight».

Self esteem produces relaxation, positive emotions including happiness, joy and excitement.

Then the goal of developing self confidence and self esteem is for the dancers to become their own best ally.

Self confidence and self esteem produce concentration including technique and artistry and last but not least a tremendous satisfaction from his or her dance.

Our methods apply therefore to create and develop above all an authentic and strong feeling of competence, self esteem and auto-determination (Deci & Ryan).
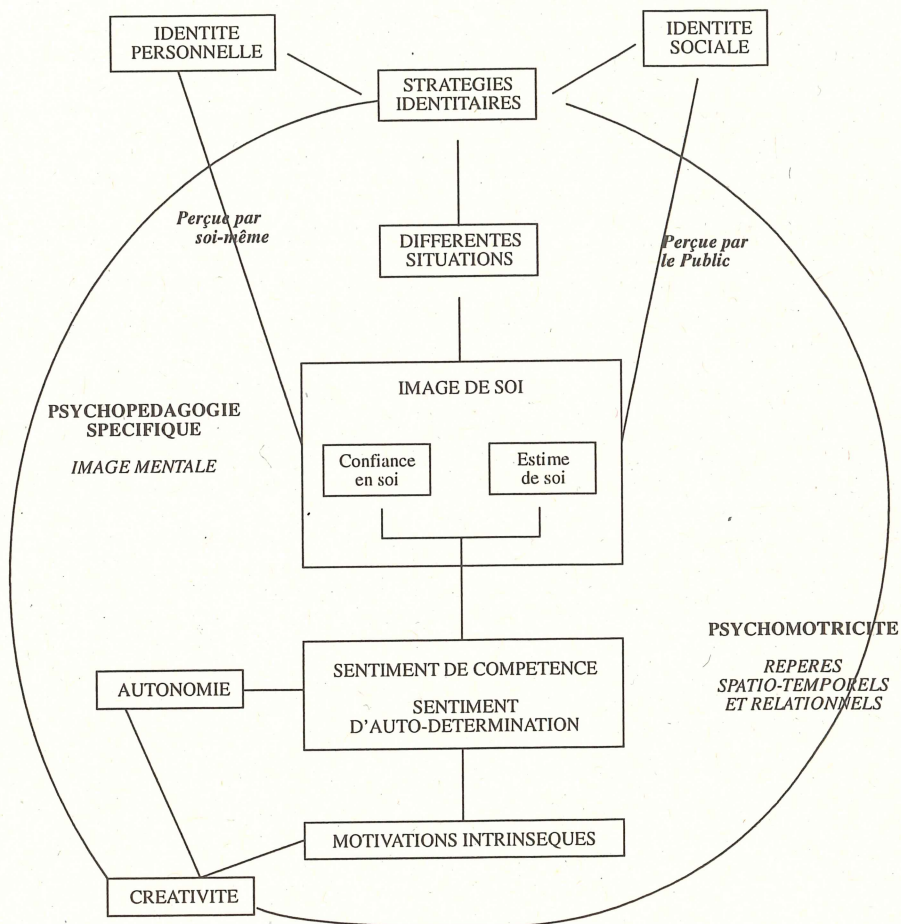
The child dancer learns to express his or her desires and creative force at the same time that he or she is learning the basic, technical, artistic and other contents of the different disciplines surrounding the object of learning.

Obviously the effectiveness of concentration and the mind-body connection to reach the level of improvisation necessary to choreograph are improved by learning to pay attention in dance technique classes.

When this happening is found, the future choreographer can pull his mind back and attempt to identify the body feelings, sensations and tensions experienced while doing particular movements.

Slowly and by this way the students choreographer are completing and inwardly motivating their experience.

The theoretical and practical, technical and artistic learning do not look anymore for him or her as the unique and essential knowledge for having an access to learn the discipline of choreography but improving satisfaction of their needs in terms of choreographic creations with all the physical, psychological, mental and developmental implications that there are supposing.

IDENTITE
PERSONNELLE

IDENTITE
SOCIALE

STRATEGIES
IDENTITAIRES

*Perçu par
soi-même*

*Perçue par
le Public*

DIFFERENTES
SITUATIONS

**PSYCHOPEDAGOGIE
SPECIFIQUE**

IMAGE MENTALE

IMAGE DE SOI

Confiance
en soi

Estime
de soi

PSYCHOMOTRICITE

*REPERES
SPATIO-TEMPORELS
ET RELATIONNELS*

SENTIMENT DE COMPETENCE

SENTIMENT
D'AUTO-DETERMINATION

AUTONOMIE

MOTIVATIONS INTRINSEQUES

CREATIVITE

99

Bibliography

BANDURA, A. (1982) Self-efficacy: Towards a Unifying Theory of Behavioral Change, Psychology Review, 84, 191-215.

BLOM, L., CHAPLIN, L.T. (1982), The Intimate Act of Choreography, Pittsburgh; University of Pittsburgh Press.

BRUCHON-SCHWEITZER (1990) Une Psychologie du Corps, Paris, P.U.F.

BRY, A. (1978), Visualisation: Directing the Movies of your Mind, New-York: Barnes and Noble.

CAMILLIERI, C. et al (1990) Stratégies Identitaires, Paris, P.U.F.

CLARKE, A. (1991) Psychology and Education & Personality Development and Learning, London, 7th publishing Open University.

CORRAZE, J. (1968) Schéma Corporel et Images du Corps, Toulouse, Privat.

CORRAZE, J. (1980) Images Spéculaires du Corps, Toulouse, Privat

DENIS, M. (1989) Image et Cognition, P.U.F., Paris.

DECI ET RYAN (1980) Self-determination Theory: When Mind mediates Behavior, Journal of Mind Behavior.

DESCAMPS, M.A. (1989) Le langage du Corps et la Communication Corporelle, Paris, P.U.F.

ELLFELT, L. (1967) A primer for Choreographers, Palo Alto, CA: National press.

EPSTEIN, M.L. (1980) The Relationship of Mental Imagery and Mental Rehearsal to Performance of a Motor Task, Journal of Sport Psychology, 2, 211-220.

FISCHER, S. & CLEVELAND, S.E. (1980) Body Image and Personality, new York, Dover Publication Inc.

FISCHER, S. (1986) Development and Structure of Body Image, London, L. Erbaum Publisher

GOFFMAN, E. (1959) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, new York, Double Day.

HARRE, R. The Social Construction of Emotions, Oxford, Basil Blackwell.

HAWKINS, A. (1964) Creating through Dance, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

HAY, L. with Linda Carwin Tomshin (1991) The Power is within You, U.S. Publication, Hay House Inc., Santa Monica, California, USA.

HECKER, J.E. and KACZOR, L.M. (1988) Application of Imagery Theory to Sport Psychology: Some Preliminary Findings, Journal of Sport Psychology, 10, 363-373.

ROSSMAN, M. and BRESLER, D. (1983) Guided Imagery: An Intensive Training Program for Clinicians (Seminar Workbook), Pacific Palissades, C.A.: Institute for Advancement of Human Behavior.

RUGG, H. (1963) Imagination, New York: Harper and Row.

SAMUELS, M.D. and BENNETT, H. (1973) The Well Body Book, New York: Random House Bookworks.

TAP, P. (1979) Relations Interpersonnelles et Genèse de l'Identité, Toulouse, Université.