

SPORTS DANCE AND THE PROCESS OF SOCIALIZATION

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Abstract. The paper presents the socializing role of sports dance in man's life. The influence of the activity or movement on the process of socialization of an individual and a group is multi-aspectual and plays significant role in social development of a human. Socialization through sports dance is described as one of the elements shaping character and influencing social communication, as well as affecting a man's part in co-creation of the surrounding environment.

Key words: dance, socialization, dance community, the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, activity, sport, ballroom dance

Introduction

Man is a biosocial being so his development derives from an interaction between biological and social factors. Development is possible thanks to wider interpersonal relations which form the role models essential in social life. Experiences of the society, to which he belongs, are acquired as well. The process lasts entire life and is defined as socialisation. The definition is applied on grounds of many sciences: sociological, psychological, pedagogical, anthropology, philosophy, as well as praxeology.

The need of coexistence with other people is innate. Please note that in the initial stage of life we are not able to function on our own, it can be said that we are born with capacity to being humans. However, to become fully human, we need social interactions. "Everyone becomes a human thanks to interactions with other people. We gain character, learn social functioning and learn how to control our lives. This process of entering into culture and social structure, called socialisation is vital both for the society as well as, an individual. Without it we would not know what we should appreciate and do, what to think, how to speak, where to go and how to react. We would not be humans. And, thus socialisation is the most important in an early life stage we are subjected to its processes constantly, till the end of our life. Thanks to socialisation, we are capable of coming into new life situations; without it we would become robots deprived of plasticity, as well as victims of the early life stage experiences" (Turner 1998).

Process of Socialisation

The process of socialisation is the most social element of all of the interactions that we are exposed to. Everyone has to complete it and the result influences both the individual, as well as the society which surrounds him or her.

The socialisation process of the individual is strongly affected by the physical activity. One of such activities is dance which, since the dawn of history, has been an essential element of the oldest in the human history primeval forms of social rites. Cave paintings from the Neolithic period depict dancing figures, proving that dance had been a vital part of social and spiritual life, as early as primitive people. "Moral and religious injunctions have gone hand in hand with social dance for eons" (Malnig 2009). As an element of the transition ritual it was performed on the occasion of birth, weddings, funerals, celebrations connected with changing seasons, start of working in the fields, finishing the harvest, as well as a healing method when the member of the community got ill. By participating in dance rites, the individual was introduced and privy to the customs, ceremonies, and the culture of tradition in which he or she grew up. It used to be a method of teaching and passing on traditional values and behaviours impersonating the wisdom of ancestors and warranting cultural consistency. Such routines were known and practiced among almost all world's cultures.

Socialisation through dance until today is significant in life of every man, irrespectively of age, sex or nationality. It refers not only to the interaction between the individual and the general public but also performs certain functions relative to personal life. Dance became fashionable and being a member of any dance group is seen as a trend. H. Zdebska points out that it influences social life: "sport fad present in popular culture is the result of an acceptance of sport's values (health, educational, esthetical). Sport's craze though, goes far beyond the sport's world and enters social circles" (Zdebska 2012).

Definition of Socialisation

Bibliography provides many definitions but to understand the nature of socialisation it is worth to analyse the multi-aspectual approaches to the process.

W. Okoń presents socialisation as "all activities coming from the society, especially from family, school and the social environment which intends to create a social being from an individual, i.e. to enable the individual to acquire such qualifications, such a hierarchy of needs, and achieving such a personal development to become a balanced member of the society. Or as all changes that the individual experiences being influenced by social interactions which enable the gradual process of becoming a balanced member of the society" (Okoń 1987).

However, F. Znaniński illustrates socialisation as the process of growing into culture which consists of getting to know and attaining, by the individual, the tradition and cultural role models which determine a person's behaviour; it results in the individual's resemblance to the social environment and therefore in the forming of habits, routines and characters (Znaniński 1973).

H. Muszyński states that socialisation is a process of attaining, under the social's influence, mental dispositions which constitute an individual capable of living in a civilised society (Muszyński 1977).

According to J. Szczepański, socialisation is "a part of the whole influence of the environment which introduces an entity to taking part in social life, teaches the behaviour consistent with adopted role models, teaches cultural awareness and makes the individual able to earn a living and perform certain social roles" (Szczepański 1967).

Similarly, A. Kłoskowska, states that: "passing on and acquiring established behaviours, standards, role models and specific knowledge of the surrounding reality takes place in the process of socialisation within certain social groups" (Kłoskowska 1972).

K. Przeclawski depicts socialisation as "the process of changes of an individual who is influenced by the socio-cultural environment which entails the development of character in the socially desirable direction" (Przeclawski 1971).

To sum up, socialisation is a complex, multilateral process of learning, acquiring knowledge, abilities, values and standards thanks to which a human, as a biological entity, becomes a social being, a member of a particular society and a representative of a specific culture.

Socialisation in dance

Dance forms positive personality traits: patience, persistence, courage, and endurance to hardship and fatigue. Thanks to them a man acquires abilities such as cooperation, self-acceptance and acceptance of others, as well as the potential to search and fight his capability barriers. Working in a dance group teaches trust and cooperation which enables experiencing what is community and allows the participant to perform various roles in interpersonal relations. It forms an ability to communicate, teaches obeying the rules, and enables mutual learning. Therefore, it gives a chance of fighting your own shyness, enforces faith in own abilities and enhances the commitment and motivation. Partner dance forces dancers into gaining experience in speaking, listening and being listened to, creates numerous occasions for exchanging information, teaches disputing and reaching compromise, shared taking and completing a variety of tasks, resolving problems and conflicts based on a compromise and the other person's comfort. Dance couples which spend many hours training often come into conflicts. Usually, this is the result of various move interpretations, or just lack of comfort in a certain sequence. Clashes as well refer to formal issues connected with the choice of coaches, with training, camp and tournament trips, with deciding on the number of individual classes and their financing. However, dancers are aware of the fact that cooperation is the only thing that will enable them achieving success, because they have a common goal. When it comes to dance groups, the situation is similar. Irrespective of the group's advance, the atmosphere is free, unfettered and the participants are fully engaged. They sense when they work well and they know what hinders their progress. That is why the members do not feel embarrassed when it comes to criticising and they learn to speak honestly because they know that the group will benefit from it. The group is aware of the task which they have to complete, since they have a common goal. The participants have to listen to each other and each comment should be analysed. Obviously, dissents are frequent although, the group is obliged to accept this and be bound to working on proper changes based on a compromise and acceptance of needs of other people. What is more Nieminen writes: "The attitudes of other group members as well as group norms appear to play a significant role in modifying the attitudes of ethnic groups, and this is assumed to also hold true for other kinds of groups" (Nieminen 1998).

The Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows that belonging to the community is undoubtedly vital for every man. On top of the hierarchy there are of course physiological needs, next is safety, and then belonging, active participation in the group life and fighting the loneliness. Participation in life of a chosen community does not only soothe frustrated mental needs and reduces the feeling of solitude but also, by playing certain roles, allows forming activity, independence, and responsibility for coexistence with other people. It helps defining own identity

because the role models and standards of the group to which the individual belongs reduce problems and hardships connected with self-determination.

Many people are withdrawn and struggle with complexes which prevent them from comfortable behaviour in a group. Dance gives opportunity to break these barriers, helps getting in and keeping verbal and non-verbal communication as well as fighting unnecessary stress connected with the image of yourself. During dance classes it is often to change partners. It allows very close contact with different people. Sharing limited space becomes the source of co-experiencing and integrity. Excluding the solo dance, the most essential is to synchronise many bodies into the whole. Embarrassment towards opposite sex is minimised. There is no problem for the girl to hold hands with scarcely known boy, what in the early youth is usually very intimidating. It can be said that dance is a remedy for shyness and loneliness because it connects people in a natural way, when, taking into account other circumstances it would be difficult or simply impossible. The attractiveness of dance influences the intensification of group processes by tightening the bonds and building the atmosphere which fosters cooperation.

People educated in dance environment reach their sexual awareness earlier than others. Dance teaches controlling your gestures and body language on purpose, forces a habit of flirtatious moves. Generally, it teaches the skilful use of the body applying all of its advantages. Nieminen states that: "Although girls receive less encouragement than boys to engage in sport, which is seen as a highly male-centred activity, in dance the situation may be just the opposite. Dance is a highly organized and scheduled activity unlike many sporting activities, such as jogging, skiing and cycling. Dance, especially art dance, is closely related to aesthetics which in turn are related to femininity and youth" (Nieminen 1998). Girls visually become women at a very early stage by wearing high heels, skimpy and uncovering body dresses with pads for breast imitation. Since young age dancers wear a heavy make-up, apply false eyelashes, nails, and hairpieces. This is all done to emphasise their femininity, but also because it has already become common. Many a father or mother does not approve his child looks in make-up – such a heavy one – nevertheless, no-one will change it. The environment made a habit and it became standard nowadays.

Dance classes participants mature faster and become more responsible than their peers. "The adolescent dancer in a fast paced growth spurt is coping with rapid changes in his/her world" (Daniels 2000). They value time, they are aware that it is not worth being late for training because they miss precious minutes and they will exercise worse than the rest. Everyone wants to get better and better and they can achieve it only by self-improvement. Everyone yearns for making progress but this is possible only in cooperation with the rest of the group. All are equally important and each is an integral component, essential to achieving, intended primarily, results. Time is a resource and they have to take the most of it. What is more, young dancers become independent quicker, owing to numerous trips to tournaments, trainings and camps. Dance instils persistence and regularity. Trainings and trips show that to achieve something an enormous effort is needed, as well as loads of energy in various areas. Reaching your goal, e.g. getting a higher dancing class, winning the tournament or a successful public appearing, as well as just (or even) mastering new steps or coach's praise boost your self-esteem. Dance teaches how to succeed and deal with failures.

The requirements that the dance community sets up cause that its members quickly become cultural, determined and ambitious people. The ones who go to dance classes meet not only peers but also people at a different age divided accordingly to their advance and not the birth date. As a result, they make friends with people often younger or older than them. It influences the interpersonal abilities in a positive way and opens them up to contacts with others. It allows getting in touch and close relationships with people with whom in different

circumstances it would be unlikely. Undoubtedly, dance develops essential features of cultural coexistence in a social group, such as courtesy and politeness to other people training with them. There is a *savoir vivre* on the dance floor and all of the community members have to obey its rules. Strict institutional rules have to be obeyed also by the judges, coaches, and even the tournament announcer or social actors, unquestionably meaning parents.

Socialisation through dance is nothing else but shaping vital traits of our characters by dance. Apart from teaching us communication, cooperation, overcoming the barriers and respect towards authorities it primarily brings joy and happiness. Dance classes prove that cooperation does not exclude competitiveness and the other way round. Ballroom dancers work on the couple success, during the tournaments colleagues from the club are rivals. But when the joint performance presenting the club takes place, during opening days, tournaments organised by mutual coach, or other events from which the community can benefit, then they constitute a team. The most important is the cohesion of the group and this is established only by joining forces which influence the participants in terms of being part of the group. It is said that the team is something more than just a sum of separate contestants and that the cohesion of the team is equally important as its members' talents. Lack of consistency in the team can cause that the team composed of stars will achieve poor results. "The roles that people play are based on what they expect of themselves as group members and what they believe others expect of them" (Schmais 1998). The same relates to soloists of modern and contemporary dance. Everyone likes to be the best and unfortunately gets satisfaction from the fact that someone is worse. At tournaments and competitions the rivalry and reaching next dance classes are chief – that is to say – the superiority over peers who represent lower level. It gives them an elite (also for financial reasons) affiliation.

Since childhood we are taught that competition edifies: who paints the prettiest painting, who will get the best exam result, who will get into better school, studies, get better job and so on, till the end of life. Dance as a sport motivates to compete with other contestants, and as far as it is a healthy competition it becomes incredibly enriching. Z. Dziubiński writes: "a man, especially young, has a tendency to testing and confronting his abilities with others. Sport just gives such an opportunity, for competitiveness is an attribute of sport's practice. A well organised competitiveness serves the man's development and fosters his balanced growth" (Dziubiński 2012). Unfortunately, the rivalry among dancers, when informal, particular game rules are being established, becomes an intrigue and dishonest manner in a closed circle. Such behaviours are natural everywhere but they are the margin of a sport and social life. Dance insistently implements cooperation idea into the competing community.

Conclusions

Dance as a sport discipline is connected with socialising tendencies because sport itself is one of the most interesting social phenomena (Lipiec 2012). Every year new dance schools are established. They educate new generations and give opportunities of self-fulfilment through movement. The multiplicity of offered classes gives possibility of putting the interests into the right track. Enrolling to dance classes is a conscious entering and co-creation of the group, according to its established rules and standards (Lipiec 2012). By its structure and culture and by introducing into the dance classes' system and influence on the participants of this system on an individual the hermetic dance environment shapes character. By functioning in the system, a man also creates it, shapes it and transforms with it. He is subjected to a variety of social influences which are more or less significant for his or her life and development.

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Cite this article as: Banio A. Sports Dance and the Process of Socialization. Central European Journal of Sport Sciences and Medicine. 2015; 9 (1): 85–90.