

## **STUDY ON OPTIMIZING THE DANCESPORT BASIC TRAINING IN CHILDREN AGED 6 - 9 YEARS**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of the study is to verify the effectiveness of a training program that achieves the optimal transition from the initiation stage in dancesport to the initial specialization stage for the 6-9-year-old children. The study was conducted over a period of 4 months, respectively from September to December 2019, with a group of 22 children, 11 girls and 11 boys, who practiced the dancesport in the "Pas în doi" Sports Club of Bucharest, with the aim of participating in the first "Hobby" class competitions. Three fitness-evaluation tests were given: assessment of posture and artistic execution, coordination and motor memory (test 1), technically correct execution of the cha-cha steps, proper posture of torso and arms, rhythmicity and motor musicality - marks regarding the rhythm, tempo and body expressiveness (test 2); spatiotemporal orientation, balance and speed of execution (test 3). Several directions were developed regarding the approach of the training in a complex way, at the level of the initiation groups, emphasizing the favorable manner to pass from the initiation stage to the initial specialization stage aiming at the participation in the first Hobby competitions. The study contributed to the optimization of sports training along this very important period, in which the basic means of other disciplines are still preserved, but the specific body technique and the artistic expression of music and sport dances are also addressed. Rigorous systematization of the training, in the sense of a correct planning of the work sequences and methodical steps, as well as the use of a high number of means, influenced optimally the transition to the initial specialization stage.

**Key words:** *training, technical preparation, assessment, means, kid dancers*

### **1. Introduction**

Dancing is a complex physical exercise. It develops, besides the basic motor skills and qualities (Cosma, Ungureanu, & Safta, 2014), the rhythmicity, musicality, orientation in space, imagination, posture and artistic performance (Moraru, 2017; Grigore, & Grimaschi, 2015; Zabrocka, Dancewicz, & Supinska, 2015) as well as some mental and social qualities of behavior and communication (Nastase, 2012).

Dancesport is particularly important for the education of the children aged 6-9, as it considerably improves the segmental coordination, balance and orientation in space (Ababei & Hagimă, 2017).

As competitive sport, dancing has two disciplines: Standard and Latin

(Guarino, 2015). The music used in dancesport must be clear, pleasant and attractive, with accessible rhythm and tempo (Robson, 2004). In competitions, the music chosen for each type of dance belonging to one or the other discipline must necessarily respect the proper tempo corresponding to the respective dance (Moelants, 2003).

The technical training is constituted by the assembly of means, measures and techniques used to consolidate and improve the technical skills specific to the dances of the two sections (Franklin, 2013; Osadtsiv et al., 2015; Zahiu, Manos & Drăghici, 2020).

Although artistic training has an important role, the dancesport specific training does not use enough exercises in this sense. That is why it is necessary to complete the dancers' training with appropriate means (Visan, 2002). Artistic training requires the use of choreographic, musical, expression means, thus stimulating the creativity and motor expressiveness (Robinson, 1982; Hugel, et al., 1999; Visan, 2005; Chirazi, 2021).

Musical preparation specific to the groups of beginners is part of the general training objectives at this age. Therefore, one aims at creating the general bases of rhythmicity and motor musicality (Macovei, Zahiu & Şulea, 2014).

*The purpose of the study* is to check the efficiency of a training program that ensures the optimal transition from the initiation stage to the initial specialization stage in 6-9-year-old children.

## **2. Material and method**

The research was carried out over a period of 4 months, namely from September to December 2019, with a group of 22 children, 11 girls and 11 boys, who practiced dancesport in the "Pas in doi" Sports Club of Bucharest.

The initial selection of these children was made at the age of 5-6 years. They have been training for almost 2 years and they are currently of 7 - 8 years old. It can be said that these children are at the end of the initiation stage in sports activity and are taking the first steps in the next stage of initial sports specialization (2 years). This stage aims to the participation in the first „Hobby" competitions with 4 dances (technical program): Slow waltz and Quickstep - Standard section; Cha-cha and Jive - Latin-American section. This training stage described in the paper represents the transition towards the initial sports specialization.

In the case of the preparatory exercises, the initiation in the basic technique of a dance and the acquisition of its basic content were achieved individually. Then the dance positions and posture were learned in couples; the assimilated basic content was repeated in various combinations and small choreographies adapted to this dance level.

### ***Control-evaluation tests:***

Test no. 1. *Evaluation criteria:* posture and artistic performance; coordination and motor memory.

Structure of 16 counts – modern dance, including dance steps, movements of the arms and torso, with different directions, plane, duration, amplitude; the movements must be performed respecting the aesthetic particularities. The demonstration was carried out twice, with musical accompaniment in 2/4-time, moderate tempo; afterwards, the subjects performed the established structure. If the subjects achieved a correct performance from the first attempt, they received the grade 10; from the second attempt - grade 8; from the third attempt – grade 6; from the fourth (or several) attempt - grade 4 (the grades were converted into points).

Test no. 2. *Evaluation criteria*: technically correct performance of cha-cha steps; correct posture of torso and arms; rhythmicity and motor musicality – benchmarks regarding rhythm and tempo; body expressiveness. A structure with specific basic steps and figures of the cha-cha Latin dance, with 32 counts, 4/4-time signature was taught. This structure was learned by the athletes and then danced individually. Scores ranging from 4 to 10 were given, according to the following scoring: 1 point for motor musicality; 1-2 points for correct technical performance; 1-2 points for good posture of torso and arms; 1 point for body expressiveness. The score obtained and converted into grades was added to the minimum grade of 4.

Test no. 3. *Evaluation criteria*: spatial-temporal orientation; balance; execution speed. A structure was created, including the following elements: turning around on the spot with sharp steps and bent knees; tucked forward rollover; 4 basic dance steps of Jive chasse; ending in balanced position on one foot (passe) maintained for 1 second. The chosen elements are different in aspect and dynamism. The subjects must cover the established route as quickly as possible while correctly performing the required movements and keeping within the limits of a 1-meter-wide corridor. Each dancer covered the route twice. The best time was taken into consideration (sec).

### 3. Results and Discussions

**Table 1** *Summary of the values of the calculated statistical indicators*

Statistical indicators	Test 1 (grades)		Test 2 (grades)		Test 3 (sec)	
	initial	final	initial	final	initial	final
<b>x</b>	5.36	8.18	5.72	8.68	12.18	10.63
<b>S</b>	1.3	1.2	0.9	1.03	1.49	1.48
<b>Cv (%)</b>	24.35	14.58	15.87	12.01	12.30	14.00
<b>t</b>	13.63		29.00		11.00	

These tests showed rather weak results of the research group. The results can be explained by the still reduced ability of the subjects to memorize and reproduce certain movements according to the technical-artistic requirements. At the final check, the recorded and statistically processed data highlight a better

evolution and progress of the experimental group. The arithmetic mean is 5.36 points and 5.72 points in the tests no. 1 and no. 2, where the evaluation was made in points-grades; in the case of the test no. 3, where the time needed to cover the route was measured, the mean was 12.18 sec.

In **Test no. 1** – one can notice the insufficient preparation of the subjects regarding the *posture and artistic performance, coordination, motor memory*. Few subjects managed to reproduce the proposed structure from the second attempt; many children succeeded to reproduce it correctly only from the third attempt and some children did not manage even after 4 attempts, consequently obtaining a grade of 4. At the final testing, one can observe the clear progress of the group, with scores of 8 and 10 points proving that the modern dance structure was successfully done from the first or second attempt. This fact is also confirmed by the values of the statistical indicators. Thus, the value of the arithmetic mean is 8.18 points.

In **Test no. 2** – poor scores, converted into grades from 4 to 7, can be observed. The subjects are not familiar with the technique of cha-cha steps, they do not have a correct and adequate posture, they do not have bodily expression skills. There are also problems of musicality because of the lack of musical accompaniment of this kind during the training. It is understandable taking into account the fact that they have not approached the technical content of dancesport until now. There are also much better results in the final testing. The subjects went through a training program in which they learned the correct technique of the selected dance steps, performed to appropriate musical accompaniment that enabled them to learn how to count the music and fit the movements in the appropriate durations. The posture of arms and torso was improved, the character of the dance was clearer, which led to the improvement of the expressiveness. The arithmetic mean increased up to 8.68 points; scores between 7-10 points were obtained.

In **Test no. 3** – the time achieved by the subjects is quite high (12.14 sec), due to the lack of knowledge of jive steps, the poor *spatial-temporal orientation*, the difficulty in *maintaining a static position of balance* and in quickly performing some rotation elements from standing up position or at ground level. In the case of the final testing, better results were obtained in the sense that *the time allocated to the given structure decreased*. The group performed different exercises of rotation and balance specific to dance, combinations of steps that improved the *spatial-temporal orientation*, exercises that helped to learn the jive steps. All these had a good influence on the perception of dynamism in different movements and on the *increase of the performance speed*. The *arithmetic mean* dropped to 10.63 sec, as it was to be desired.

The carried-out analysis highlights the better results of the final check. This fact is confirmed by calculating the significance of the differences between the means. It was considered that the *differences were significant*, so it is possible to state, with a

probability of over 99.9%, that the posture, artistic performance, coordination and motor memory (test no. 1); technical performance, posture, musicality and expressiveness (test no. 2); spatial-temporal orientation, balance, performance speed (test no. 3) were improved at  $p < 0.001$ .

In order to concretize the notions specific to the training in dancesport, every two weeks a training session should be dedicated exclusively to the development of other motor skills, without ignoring the dancesport particular motor skills (Grigore et al., 2010). It is possible to improve the performance of the young dancers by diversifying the training programs (Uspuriene, Malinauskas & Sniras, 2019). The lack of control on the technical training components among young dancers decreases the effectiveness of the training process at the level of the pre-basic training (Osadtsiv et al., 2015). A study on the level of physical and technical training in 6-10-year-old children highlights the technical aspects (technical performance, musicality, artistic impression) and the fact that the average values in both boys and girls can be improved (Năstase, 2002a; Năstase, 2002b; Nanu, 2012). Identifying the features of the coordination abilities improvement in young athletes solves the main tasks of the dancesport initial training stage that is a sensitive period in the coordination sports (Horbenko & Lysenko, 2020). The effects of the proprioceptive training for the improvement of the agility skills in dance sport fitness conditioning were identified (Ljubojevic et al., 2020). Currently, the control criteria in dancesport were determined; the estimation of the qualification level of dance couples in the sports competitions has a subjective-comparative character (Osadtsiv et al., 2018).

#### **4. Conclusions**

Based on the theoretical data and the gained experience acquired, some directions to approach the dancesport training in a complex way at initiation groups level were analyzed. In this regard, it was highlighted the appropriate manner of transitioning from the initiation stage in sports activity to the initial sports specialization stage which aims at the participation in the first competitions of Hobby class.

It was also tried to make a modest contribution to the optimization of sports training during this very important period, namely the transition to the specific body technique and to the artistic expression of music and dance character.

The careful systematization of the training, namely a correct planning of the work sequences and methodical steps, as well as the use of a high number of means, influenced appropriately the transition to the initial specialization stage.

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