

Use of a specific preparation to achieve better performance in competition choreographies by dancers of Junior I category (aged 12–13 years)

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Abstract:

Purpose. The paper aims at proving the efficiency of the specific preparation methodology in the improvement of the quality indicators associated to the competition choreographies performed by the dancers Junior I. *Material.* Two groups of Junior I dancers (12-13 years old) were monitored during this research: the experimental group (12 subjects) and the control group (12 subjects). The quality of the technical and artistic performance was evaluated by scores from 0 to 10 points, using the Barrow and McGee test adapted for dance sport. A program of exercises related to the competition choreography was created for the experimental group dancers so as to analyze the effect of the specific preparation. *Results.* The Standard and Latin choreographies performing quality was assessed by comparing the technical and artistic results according to the methodology applied. The scores for the Standard dances were around the mean of 7.43 points in the control group and 8.78 points in the experimental group; there were significant differences between means at $p < 0.001$. As regards of the scores for the Latino dances, an average of 7.73 points was obtained for the control group and 8.62 points for the experimental one, with significant differences between averages at $p < 0.01$. *Conclusions.* The monitoring of the quality indicators of the artistic and technical execution of the competition choreographies made possible the assessment of the Standard and Latin dances in terms of quality. The specific preparation methodology used in the training sessions of the dancers contributed to the improvement of the segmental coordination capacity and speed of execution, the increase of the specific endurance, development of the major muscle groups strength, joints mobility and muscles elasticity.

Key Words: assessment, technical and artistic execution, quality indicators, methodology, junior athletes

Introduction

The complexity of the requirements specific to dance sport and the rapid development of the performances obtained in the large-scale competitions determine more and more often the specialists to involve interdisciplinary teams in the athletes' training. The finesse of reaching the mental balance, the difficulty of maintaining the adaptive processes and the recovery after effort, the accuracy of the technique and the spectacular choreographies require at least the interaction between psychologist, doctor, coach, methodologist etc. (Peris-Delcampo et al., 2019; Korobeynikov et al., 2020; Zahu et al., 2020; Yılmaz, 2021).

The difficulty level of the methodology of specific training in junior dancers is established based on the competitive choreography per couples. This level is determined by the double periodization of the workouts, the interconnection of the training elements and the definition of the competition objectives. One must also take into account the puberty influence on the performance behavior of the dancers, given their growth and development processes (Grigore et al., 2018; Ljubojević, 2020a, 2020b; Uspuriene et al., 2019).

A proper analysis of the dance sport training structure helps to include in the methodology of specific preparation the key elements necessary for the performance capacity and the excellent results achieved in competition (Aleksandrova, 2018; Egner, 2022).

This study intends to demonstrate that the specific preparation methodology used to make better the quality indicators of the competition choreographies performed by the dancers of Junior I category is very efficient.

Material and methods

The subjects of the research were 22 dancers of Junior I category (12-13 years), divided into two groups: experimental group and control group. The athletes had an experience of 4-5 years in dance sport practicing.

In order to streamline the quality of the competitive choreographies performing, a methodology for the specific preparation was created in the *Pas in doi* Sports Club of Bucharest during one competitive year. The preparation of the junior dancers was made with the help of highly experienced specialized teachers who had outstanding results in the dance sport of Romania.

Test for the evaluation of the technical and artistic quality of dance performing - it enables the evaluation of some qualitative features of the competition choreographies execution. This is a test adapted from the Barrow and McGee Test (1971), which was created for gymnastics. Given the similarities between dance and gymnastics and also the lack of objective tools for assessing the quality of dance, it is appropriate to apply this test. It involves the marks ranging between 0 and 10, according to the criteria as follows: body and segments control; dance steps and figures technique; collaboration of the two partners; movement flow; rhythm. The examiners evaluate each dance by giving marks and grades, taking into consideration the criteria mentioned above (Grigore et al., 2018): 10 points – *excellent*, 7-9 points – *good*, 4-6 points – *average*, 1-3 points – *poor* and 0 points – *failure*.

In this experiment, the athletes danced all the 10 dances; each one of their dances was evaluated separately and then a mean was calculated for both categories (Standard and Latin dances). Afterwards the statistical interpretation was made using the ranking system.

For the investigation of the effects of the training methodology in the dancers of the experimental group, a Module of exercises specific to the competition choreography was developed. The exercises help to perform the specific motor content:

1. Performing the Slow Waltz choreography with arms up, to develop the local muscular endurance. This exercise is planned in the basic training stage.

Dosage: 3x1min45, I=80%, p=2min.

Variants of practice:

- it can be used for all Standard dances;
- the task can be performed by the boy, while the girl hugs the boy or vice versa.

2. Performing the competition choreography for Quickstep to different songs, for increasing the specific endurance. It is planned in the basic training stage.

Dosage: 2x1min.45, I=70%, continuous practice, without pause

Variants of practice:

- practice conditions can be maintained for other dances as well;
- metal bracelets worn on the wrist joints can be used for developing the strength in muscular local endurance conditions, in which case the volume of practice decreases.

3. Performing the competition choreographies with a short pause between dances, smaller than the one regularly given in competition. The purpose is to increase the endurance in specific effort conditions. This exercise is planned in the basic training stage and at the beginning of the specific training stage.

Dosage : 1x5dances (5x1min.45sec.), I=90%, p=45sec.

Variants of practice:

- two sets of repetitions can be performed;
- performing all the 10 dances, with a longer pause between the two categories.

4. Performing the competition choreographies to songs with a longer duration than the regular one, for developing the specific endurance. It is planned in the basic training stage and at the beginning of the specific training stage.

Dosage: 3x2min Slow Waltz, I=90%, p=2min.

Variants of practice:

- one or more dances are practiced;
- execution restrictions may be imposed, which are meant to make more difficult the motor task related to the hold between partners or to the dance figures.

5. Performing dance figures with arms outstretched sideways and two balls held on the palms. It is planned during the preparatory period and the transition period.

Dosage : 1x20min., I=60-70%, p=30sec.

Practice variants:

- separately or in pairs; one of the two partners holds the balls while the other keeps the contact and is responsible for maintaining the connection between partners.

6. Performing traditional strength exercises for the development of the large groups of muscles (torso extensions from prone position; torso raises from supine position; swinging the lower limbs; squats; rope jumping; push-ups; gym-ball exercises). It is planned in the basic training stage, at the end of each training session.

Dosage: 3 sets x 6 exercises x 15 reps, I=70%, p=2min.

Variants of practice:

- it is performed in circuit, with execution in a line or in pairs.

7. Performing active and passive stretching exercises for increasing the joints mobility and muscle elasticity (torso bending from standing up or sitting down position; torso extensions from prone position; frontal and lateral split - *grand écart* - for the coxofemoral joint; swinging the lower limbs from sitting down or lying down position). These exercises are planned in the basic training stage, in each training session after warm-up or in the lessons specially designed for physical training.

Dosage: 20min, I=70%

Variants of practice:

- it is applied in the form of stretching procedure;
- it can be performed individually or with a partner who helps to increase the stretching.

8. Performing the Tango choreography while marking the rhythm throughout the dance, in order to develop the inner rhythm and the speed of execution. It is planned in the basic training stage and in the pre-competitive stage.

Dosage : 1x25min., I=75%, p=45sec.

Variants of practice:

- it is performed individually or with a partner;
- firstly, the dancers mark alone the rhythm of the choreography, with different tones of the voice (low voice, whispering, deep voice), secondly they dance with partner, without saying anything;
- it can be used for all dances.

9. Individual execution of Standard dances choreographies, in the same order as in competition, with incomplete pauses for recovery, with the aim of developing the specific endurance. It can be planned in the basic training stage and the pre-competitive stage.

Dosage: 1x5dances (5x1min.45sec.), I=80-90%, p=20sec.

Variants of practice:

- use of faster tempo music;
- reversing the direction of movement (line of dance) on the dance floor.

10. Performing choreographies of one's choice, with dance partners of the same gender or partners of lower dancing class, in order to increase the coordination capacity. It is planned in the basic training stage and in the transition period.

Dosage: 1x15-20min., I=60-75%, p=30sec.

Variants of practice:

- imposing some restrictions related to the composition of the choreographies: basic figures, mostly figures to the right, mostly figures to the left.

Results

The performing quality of the competitive choreographies was evaluated according to the statistical indicators listed in Table no. 1:

Table no 1. *Performing quality of the competitive choreographies in the Junior I dancers (12-13 years), n=12*

No.	Parameters	Control group	Experimental group	t	P
		mean ±SEM	mean ±SEM		
1	Standard dances (pts)	7.46±0.282	8.82±0.172	4.261	<0.001
2	Latino dances (pts)	7.75±0.221	8.65±0.165	3.410	<0.01

Note: Critical values of the variable: n=24, f=22, t – 2.074 (p<0.05), t – 2.819 (p<0.01), t - 3.792 (p<0.001).

The marks that the coach gave for evaluating the indicators of quality in the Standard dances choreographies highlight a mean of 7.46 points in the control group and 8.82 points in the experimental group. Significant differences are noticed at p<0.001, as for the quality of the Standard choreographies performing, which proves that the methodology applied for the specific preparation in the experimental group is really efficient.

Regarding the Latin dances choreographies, a mean of 7.75 points is found out in the control group and 8.65 points in the experimental group. There are significant differences at p<0.01, demonstrating the high efficiency of the specific preparation methodology used for the dancers belonging to the experimental group.

Discussion

The structure and methodology particular to dance sport can be identified in the constitutive elements of the sports training which are approached in different ways and various weights along the preparatory, competitive and transitional periods. The value of the weights is influenced by the preparation strategy applied for the national competitions and by the specific stress complexity in the international competitions (Aleksandrova, 2018).

According to Năstase D.V. (2002, p. 35), in the case of the dance sport, the specific preparation involves the comprehensive use of the training, having in view: higher complexity and improvement of the choreographic composition and technique; better functional disposition and physiological capacity for effort; higher psychophysical adaptability to specific stimuli in workouts and competitions; development of meta-communication and passing from the interpretation automatisms to the expressive and conscious communication; awareness of the need for comprehensive training in order to achieve outstanding performances through theoretical and practical information (Grigore, 2018).

For the National Championship, the structure of the sports training methodology consisted of the following training elements: 32.85% technique; 24.12% physical fitness; 21.83% artistry; 13.72% psychology; 3.33% tactics; 1.66% theory. Full training has a share of 1.66%. The means of specific training for the international championships were distributed as follows: 25.84% technical training; 23.60% artistic training; 21.35% physical training. There was an increase of the share of psychological training (up to 15.73% respectively), of the theoretical and tactical training means - by 3.93% each, and of the share for the integral training, namely 4.49% (Grigore. et al., 2019).

The specific physical preparation methodology used in the experimental group, meant to develop the local muscular endurance, included the following exercises: the choreography for Slow Waltz executed with arms up; increased specific endurance in Quickstep by dancing it to different songs, with smaller pause between dances and longer songs than the regular ones; performing some dance figures with the arms outstretched sideways and two balls held on the palms; strength exercises for developing the large muscular groups; exercises for active and passive stretching, for the increase of the joints mobility and muscle elasticity; execution of the Tango while marking the rhythm of the choreography during the dance, in order to develop the inner rhythm and the speed of execution; individual performance of the Standard dances choreographies, in the same order used in competition, with incomplete recovery pauses; performing choreographies of your choice, with partners of the same gender or partners of a lower class of dance.

Conclusions

The methodology of the specific physical training for the experimental group dancers contributed to the increase of the main muscular groups' strength, the improvement of the specific endurance and the development of the joint's mobility and muscular elasticity, of the segmental coordination capacity and speed of execution by using a proper dosage of effort and practicing variants depending on the particularities of each choreographic execution.

The evaluation of the quality indicators defining the technical and artistic evolution of the dancers Junior I highlighted some aspects related to the quality of the competitive choreographies performing for Standard and Latin dances. Thus, there were found out a more rigorous control of body and segments, a superior technique of the dance steps and figures, a better rhythm and execution speed, an improved collaboration with the dance partner and an increased movement flow.

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