

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO DANCE SPORT TRAINING METHODS AT BEGINNERS' LEVEL, 6 TO 9 YEARS OLD

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### Abstract

**Premises.** As in these last years the dance sport became very popular in Romania thanks to the large number of specific clubs accepted in the family of the Romanian Federation of Dance Sport, the rivalry of these clubs grew stronger; each club looks for methods of progress, of obtaining good results in the domestic events and in the international ones afterwards.

The main objective of the study is the initiation into the dance sport and the debut in the first event of this kind. For the materialization of the notions specific to the training in dance sport, one considers that every two weeks one training session should be exclusively dedicated to the development of the other motor skills, without ignoring the development of the motor skills specific to the dance sport during all training sessions. This strategy will contribute to the improvement of the training methods in the dance sport at beginners' level.

**Research methods and procedures.** The study was carried out along two years (2002-2004), with juveniles, 6 to 9 years old, belonging to the „Pygmalion” Sports Club Association of Bucharest. With a number of 250 children, separated in several groups, the school year 2002-2003 included 34 weekly training cycles, 3 weekly cycles of pause and 54 hours of training.

As noticed during the first training sessions, the diversity and the playful character were the most obvious features of the work with children under school age. Given the age particularities, during the first four months it was considered necessary to review all the exercises already taught after every four sessions. Thus, one part of the program carried on the learning process, and the other part included the consolidation and the rehearsal of the dances prepared for the school festival.

During the five training sessions left until the school year end, the dances to be executed during the school festival were learned up. These children performed three dances out of the four dances they had learned; in the same time, this thing represented the final control event of the children members of the advanced dancers' group.

Thus, at the beginning of February a new training stage of the kindergarten best dancers started. There were 24 children (12 girls and 12 boys), separated in two groups of 6 couples, all of them belonging to the preparatory groups that enrolled in school in September. The unselected children carried on the planned program until the end of the school year. For a better materialization of the activity, at least two individual training sessions with the six couples supposed to have their debut at the first competition in November 2004 were held during the 7 days of training. Therefore, the couple who had a training session during the last interval was spared at the last training session. The individualization principle has been applied even since this age, in order to correct the execution mistakes and to supplement the training program above the tolerance threshold.

**Results.** The results of the study proved the efficiency of the specific means utilization within the dance sport training at juvenile level. Thus, 6 couples out of 12 had their debut in the first competition and were supposed to participate in the next event. Out of the first 6, three qualified for the semifinals, and the other ones for the quarterfinals, in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> place.

**Conclusions.** We consider that the research objective has been reached, and the planning (although succinctly introduced in this paper) has been formulated correctly, as it is based on all the principles of the sports training (the principle of the conscious and active training, of the multilateral training, specialization, individualization and progressive teaching), the training factors (physical, technical, psychical, etc.), the pedagogical principles “teaching-learning” (from simple to complex, from easy to difficult, from fragmented to whole, etc) and, equally important, the factual confirmation during the events.

In the final part of the work, we can point out that the utilization of a training session exclusively meant to develop the other motor skills every two weeks, without ignoring the development of the motor skills specific to the dance sport in any session, contributes to the improvement of the training methods in the juvenile level dance sport, fact confirmed by the results of the study.

**Key words:** dance sport, training, planning, selection.

## Introduction

The difficult situation of the whole Romanian sport of nowadays makes us understand the necessity of a better training of the young coaches, of the persons who deal with the preparation, selection and discovery of the young talents. Certainly it is not enough for a rapid and continuous recovery of the situation, but this is the easiest and safer thing as possible. The development of the centers for children and juniors, the creation of the proper infrastructure for the carrying out of the physical education activity within kindergartens, general schools and high schools lay the basis of the performance at regional, national, European and world level (Năstase V., 2002).

An important characteristic of the teaching processes achievement in any field is represented by the order and discipline proved by the specialists while organizing their work. In sport all results depend absolutely on the training planning, which in its turn depends on the competitions planning issued by the rightful bodies. Thus, depending on the announced competitive schedule, the coaches divide the yearly planning into a planning by stages (mezzo-cycles), which are divided into weekly planning (micro-cycles) in their turn, and the weekly planning is divided into lesson plans. (Achim Ș., 2002)

Therefore, the annual planning includes all the components of a calendar and/or competitive year, such as the establishment of the performance objectives, the calendar periodization, the determination of the number of training hours and recovery hours per week; the annual planning offers to the coach the possibility to choose the training methods depending on the competitive program, on the available time for training, on the athletes' age and training level, but on the intended goals too (Bompa, T., 2001).

Thus: during the first period, the *preparatory* one, the stress is laid on the general physical training, the outlining of the technical directions and the creation of the favorable framework for the progressive development of the psychological factor needed to the participation in competitions. The first stage of the preparatory stage (aiming at the general physical development) lays the emphasis on the comprehensive development of the body. The second phase of the preparatory stage – the specific physical training – represents a passage to the pre-competitive period, the training sessions have a higher degree of

specificity. The competitive period represents the acme of the sports shape, so two sub-stages can be identified: the *pre-competitive sub-stage* and *competitive one*. After the competitive period, after efforts and stress, when the fatigue is already installed in the athlete's body and psychic as well, a passage to the next transition is needed. This stage facilitates the physical and psychical rest, the biological recovery but also the maintaining of the general physical training in case of a correct approach (Bompa, T., 2001).

*The goal of the study* is the highlighting of the training contents necessary for the initiation to the dance sport and for the debut in the first competition of this kind.

## Hypothesis of the paper

It was considered that one training session out of two should be dedicated, every two weeks, to the development of the other motor skills exclusively, without ignoring in any training session the development of the motor skills specific to the dance sport. Thus the training method in the dance sport for beginners' level will be improved.

## Organization and carrying out of the study

The study was carried out in two stages:

- 1<sup>st</sup> stage – the initiation period in the school year 2002-2003 with beginner children of 6 to 9 years old, with a number of 250 children distributed into several groups;

- 2<sup>nd</sup> stage- period of the school year 2003-2004 with a number of 24 children (12 girls and 12 boys), distributed in two groups of 6 couples each, all of them belonging to the preparatory groups that enrolled for school in September.

All children were selected from „Pygmalion” Sports Club Association of Bucharest.

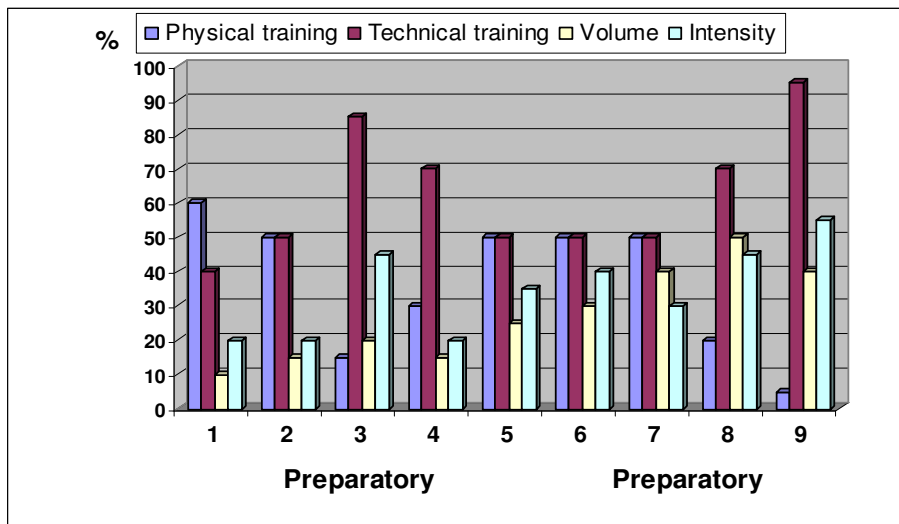
## Methods of research used:

- *Bibliographic study*- theoretical documentation of the paper;
- *Method of observation* – observation of the subjects' progress within the training sessions;
- *Video method* – used for recording different exercises on fitness machines;
- *Method of experimental study* – method in which the study hypotheses are confirmed or invalidated;
- *Method of graphical representation* – it contributed to a more efficient interpretation of the study results.

**Results of the study.** The school year 2002-2003 included 34 weekly cycles of training, 3 weekly cycles of pause and 54 hours of training.

Table no.1. Annual training plan, school year 2002-2003

Month	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
Competitive calendar	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None
Periods	Preparatory				Preparatory				
Stages/mezzo-cycle	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
Training place	Bucharest		Bucharest	Bucharest		Bucharest		Bucharest	
	Bucharest	Bucharest	Bucharest		Bucharest		Bucharest		
Share of training factors	P.Fz. 60% P.Th. 40%	P.Fz.50% P.Th.50%	P.Fz.15% P.Th. 85%	P.Fz.30% P.Th.70%	P.Fz.50% P.Th.50%	P.Fz.50% P.Th.50%	P.Fz.50% P.Th.50%	P.Fz.20% P.Th.80%	P.Fz.5% P.Th.95%
Control Trials			Festivals						Festivals
Medical Control									
Volume Share	10%	15%	20%	15%	25%	30%	40%	50%	40%
Intensity share	20%	20%	45%	20%	35%	40%	30%	45%	55%



Graph no.1. Share of training factors related to effort parameters

*Contents of the preparatory period methods– initiation training level:*

- Introduction to sports training, familiarization exercises with warm up and dance;
- Learning of the easiest movements of Cha-Cha-Cha: cha-cha-cha rhythm, without travel, a leg flexion, alternatively, on each count until the pupils understand. One shall dance on the instructor’s count firstly.
- Consolidation of the steps previously learnt for cha-cha-cha dance: the movement work is continued on cha-cha-cha music in double count, that means slowly. The training is carried on with the second figure, „Time-Step” respectively, the work of the previous figure on side travel on cha-cha -1 counts”;
- Learning of the constitutive elements of dance: this dance is designed to support the assimilation

process of movements on music. One shall choose a tune that the children like very much and shall continue teaching the movements of this dance.

We must keep in mind that these movements are very similar to the constitutive movements of the basic steps of cha-cha-cha, samba, jive dances. These are easy movements that offer the children freedom of expression and happiness subsequently, encouraging the motivation of the learning activity in this way.

As seen from the first training sessions, the diversity and playful character are the most obvious features of working with preschoolers. Beyond these features of the lesson plans that were applied in a proportion of 80-90%, the main problems faced during the first month of course resulted from the fact that children at a so early age have difficulties in remembering from one workout to another the informative volume dosed per each meeting.

Therefore during the first four months every four sessions were deemed necessary for the review of all exercises taught; the other five lesson plans were structured as follows: one part carried on the learning process and the other one aimed at a further enhancement and repetition of the dances prepared for the show.

We mention the fact that at the middle of the school year the level of the mobility, speed and strength development was cautiously and progressively planned in order to prevent the preschoolers' overstress.

The dances were taught within the training sessions, including the better assimilation of the steps already learnt, consistent with the work on slow tunes, the steps being executed in small choreographies. For all dances presented in the Christmas show were chosen songs with rhythm of Samba and Cha-cha-cha.

In the remaining 5 lessons until the end of the school year, the dances to be presented in the school festival were repeated again in the idea that the club too would hold its own show, with the athletes from the older and preparatory groups coming from several education institutions. These children performed three dances out of the four dances they had learned; in the same time, this show represented the final control trial in the passage to the next threshold of selection and progress.

Then we observed in particular how the athletes reacted in front of a numerous audience, in a very large hall, performing in a six lines formation, each line having 25 dancers. The children with real coordination skills, who proved to be mentally balanced, were taken into consideration.

This show, with representatives of the older couples, performance ones, was meant to create to the small athletes and to their parents the idea of belonging to a well structured organization, with results in competitions, with a training system and

discovery of great talents among skillful juveniles.

Training resumed on January 7, 2003, and the first four sessions have reviewed all the elements of dance taught in first half of the year. In parallel, the final selection was made, based on data collected over the first months of work with those who formed the advanced group. So in early February began a new stage of preparing the best children in kindergarten. They were in number 24 (12 girls and 12 boys), divided into two groups of 6 pairs, all part of the preparation groups that went to school in September.

In the children's process of **selection** was also taken into account their parents' agreement to continue dance sport after kindergarten period; therefore the children went to the training camp organized by the club during summer time.

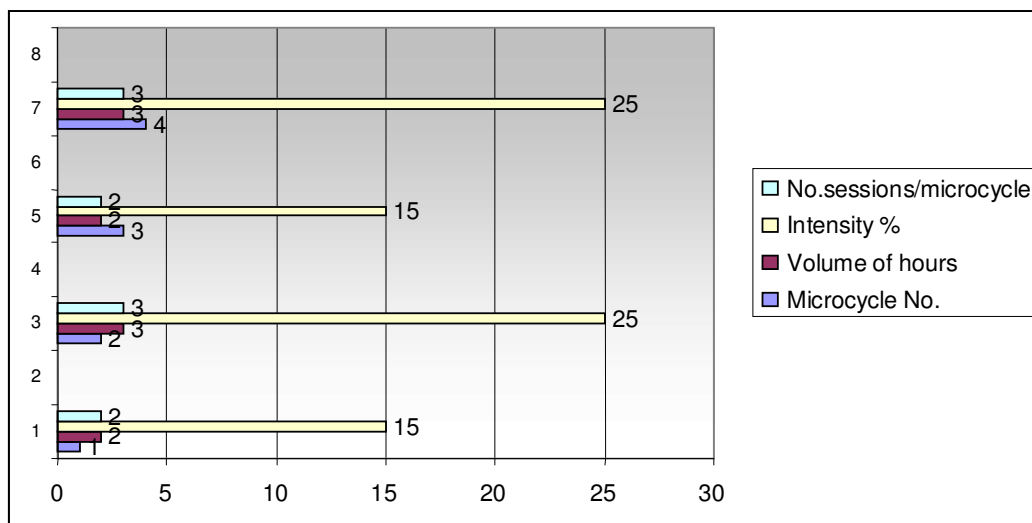
The children who were not selected continued however the scheduled program by the end of school. One of the advantages of this structure is that the children belonging to the large groups in 2003 entered the new year 2004 with a significant level of knowledge, and selection was started with a higher standard.

The two groups had two workouts per week, one hour each, before the end of school year, with only one week of holiday in April. Emphasis was placed on both the character of basic steps and new dance elements performance and on the multilateral development through games and relays organized after every four sessions. In that particular session both groups were reunited in a supplementary workout for that week. For example, we shall present a training mezzo-cycle in March, during the preparatory period: 02.03.2003-30.03.2003, actually 12 dancers (6 girls and 6 boys) of 6-7 years old (see table No.2 and graph no. 2).

Training goal: *acquiring the knowledge needed to the debut in the first dancing competition and the multilateral development.* Effectively 12 athletes (6 girls and 6 boys) aged 6-7 years.

Table no.2. Contents of training mezzo-cycle, preparatory period.

Micro-cycle no.	1		2		3		4	
Volume of hours	2		3		2		3	
Intensity %	15		25		15		25	
No. of sessions/micro-cycle	2		3		2		3	
Ratio of training factors	Physical	Technical	Physical	Technical	Physical	Technical	Physical	Technical
	30	70	60	40	40	60	70	30
Days of training	L	Mi	L	Mi V	L	Mi	L	Mi V
Character of means	Physical	X	X	X	X X	X	X	X X
	Technical	X	X	X	X	X	X	X



Graph no.2. Contents of training mezzo-cycle, preparatory period

Up to the middle of May, the dancers have learned elements organized in short choreographies (for Samba, Cha-cha-cha and Jive dances only) that they used during the show organized by the 4<sup>th</sup> district Town Hall on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, on the occasion of the Children's Day.

*Contents of technical training:*

- Samba dance: Stationary Samba Walks, Wisk to Left and Right;
- Cha-cha-cha dance: Time Step, Open and Close Basic Movement, Check from PP and CPP (New Zork), Spot Turn to Left and Right, Alemana.
- Jive dance: Basic in place, Change of place Right to Left, and Left to Right, Change of Hands Behind Back, Slow promenade Walks, American Spin.

- Slow Waltz dance: Close Changes Right and Left, Natural and Reverse Turn.

We mention that these choreographies are in conformity with the Regulation of the Dance Sport Federation regarding the figures accepted during the Hobby class events.

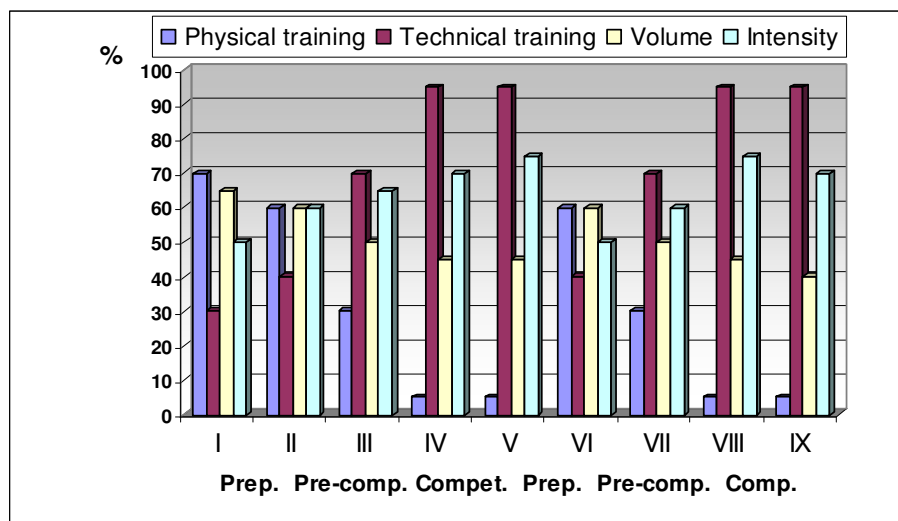
Since the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2004 up to the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2004 the children have received a holiday, after which they have entered into the following training program:

*The annual training plan* for beginner children of 6 to 9 years old within the „Pygmalion” Sport Club (as per table no.3 and graph no.3)

During the school year 2003-2004, the training was resumed on 1.08.2004, with a number of 12 couples of children of 6 to 7 years old.

Table no.3. Annual training plan, school year 2003-2004

Month	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5
Competitive calendar	None	None	None	Zonal Comp.	Zonal Comp.	None	None	Zonal Comp.	Zonal Comp.	Ref.
Periods	Preparatory		Precomp	Competitive		Preparatory		Competitive		Ref.
Stages/mezzo-cycle	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
Training place	Bucharest Sarata	Bucharest	Bucharest	Bucharest	Bucharest	Bucharest	Bucharest	Bucharest	Bucharest	Ref.
Share of training factors	P.Fz.70% P.Th.30%	P.Fz.60% P.Th.40%	P.Fz.30% P.Th.70%	P.Fz.5% P.Th.95%	P.Fz.5% P.Th.95%	P.Fz.60% P.Th.40%	P.Fz.30% P.Th.70%	P.Fz.5% P.Th.95%	P.Fz.5% P.Th.95%	Ref.
Control Trials										Ref.
Medical Control										Ref.
Volume Share	65%	60%	50%	45%	45%	60%	50%	45%	40%	Ref.
Intensity share	50%	60%	65%	70%	75%	50%	60%	75%	70%	Ref.



Graph no.3. Share of training factors related to effort parameters

Within the training sessions for multilateral development, for avoiding mental coercion to which athletes are submitted through the 4 workouts per day, it was suggested the idea that these training sessions were intended to recreation through various sports games, relays, running (using also childhood games like "Tag" - where he who was caught was obliged to execute a certain number of squats or push-ups - or that ball game where all stood in a circle and the person who caught the ball, besides having to recover it, also received a penalty from the other players' part).

For a better concretization of the activity, during the 7 days of training were executed at least two individual workouts with the six couples that were supposed to have their debut in the first event in November. So that the couple trained in the last period was spared during the last training session.

The *individualization* principle has been applied since that age in order to correct the execution mistakes and to supplement the training program over the tolerance level. Such training sessions are also the occasion of an objective assessment of athletes' skills by individual observation; thus the coach understands their needs and applies new ways of training suitable for each athlete. We believe that these lessons are necessary at this stage of learning, to correct any useless or incorrect movements, resulting from a poor neuromuscular coordination. By these individual classes the motor stability is reached in a faster way, with an appropriate coordination of nervous processes and a minimum consumption of energy.

#### Conclusions

The study results show the effectiveness of using specific means within the beginner dancers' training. Thus, out of the 12 couples, 6 of them made

their debut in the first competition and are supposed to participate in the next competition. Of the top 6, three couples have qualified for the semi-finals, and the other three were placed the 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> in the quarterfinals.

We consider that the objective of the research has been achieved and that the planning, although succinctly introduced in this paper, has been correctly formulated, because behind it are all sports training principles (awareness and active training principle, the multilateral training, the specialization, individualization, the progressive teaching), the training factors (physical, technical, psychical, etc.), the teaching-learning pedagogical principles (from simple to complex, from easy to difficult, from fragmented to whole, etc.) and, also important, the factual confirmation during competitions.

The every two weeks planning of a training session dedicated exclusively to the development of the other motor skills without ignoring, in all training sessions, the development of the motor skills specific to the dance sport helped to improve the methodology of training in dance sport at beginners' level.

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