

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS BY
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DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPECIFIC CAPACITY OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION
IN PERFORMANCE AEROBIC GYMNASTICS

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INTRODUCTION

Aerobics is a physical activity practiced everywhere, and it represents an excellent way of improving one's general physical condition.

The word "aerobics" was first used in 1875, when, following an analysis, the French doctor Pasteur, identified a bacterium which needed oxygen and gave it the name AEROBIC. In Greek, the word means "oxygen for life".

In 1960, Dr. Kenneth Cooper started to present some studies regarding aerobics, which is light and medium, to prevent cardiovascular disease. When he included the type of training based on the aerobic effort, improvements were made of the cardiovascular system, endurance and muscular strength.

Based on K. Cooper's inquiries, in 1970, J. Sorensen created a program called: "Aerobic Dance Training Programme". This type of training was performed on music, including modern dancing moves.

At the same time, in the United States of America, Phyllis C. Jacobson, developed a new training method called "Hooked on aerobic", obviously based on the previous methods.

Aerobic dance was very much developed starting the '70s by fitness trainer Jackie Sorenson, who combined walking and jogging in place exercises with dance moves and jumps, all performed on music.

The great impact happened in 1980, with Jane Fonda's interest and work in developing aerobic programs. She developed Aerobic Gymnastics programs, which she popularised through books and DVDs. These programs aimed at both

physical condition and appearance, achieved by losing weight, toning the muscles and enhancing cardiovascular endurance.

For an aerobic gymnastics program, one designs and chooses familiar exercises depending on a series of criteria, of which we mention:

- The segments and muscles involved in making the movement;
- Effort level (intensity, duration/number of minutes/of exercises in a class and class frequency);
- The gymnast's movement skills, and level thereof;
- The environment conditions existent and available;
- Sequence of exercise;
- Number of exercises included in the program;
- The range of exercises offered by the program.

MOTIVATION OF CHOOSING THE THEME

Starting from the performance requirements in Aerobic Gymnastics, I deemed that the enrichment of specific contents, the diversification of artistic training techniques and the gymnasts' awareness of their own motor expression and non-verbal communication may positively influence their conduct and, therefore, their results in a competition.

We believe that all this is based on studies and programs aiming at developing coordination, accuracy of execution and expressivity.

Romania is in the top list regarding hierarchy in Aerobic Gymnastics; the aspect of taking actions and new directions for action is permanently raised, to ensure superior performance in official competitions and, therefore, in keeping the country among the strongest ones as far as this sport is concerned.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PAPER AND THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The purpose of the research:

The purpose of the basic research was to highlight the evolution of artistic expression, of coreography exercises through the elements characteristic of the "Contact Improvisation" technique and the "Locking" dance style.

We considered that such means may ensure the renewal of artistic training contents, the success of highly original coreographic compositions and a higher score in competitions as far as the artistic part is concerned.

The objectives of the research:

Based on the performance requirements, we followed the development of the coordination, the accuracy of the execution and the expressiveness.

The objectives of the basic research were the following:

- Enhanced level of artistic expression of gymnasts from the group subject to analysis;
- Enlarged artistic training content in performance aerobic gymnastics;
- Diversification of gymnasts' artistic training means, following the implementation of the Contact Improvisation technique and the Locking dance style,
- Quality assurance of training and the optimisation of its programs' content by correlating the general artistic training activity with the artistic-characteristic one.

The research hypothesis

The research in the thesis part II started from the following hypotheses:

1. Enhanced awareness of emotions transmitted through posture or movement, coordination and space orientation – components of psychomotricity required of expressive motor expression, triggers also enhanced artistic execution of competition exercise elements;
2. The Contact Improvisation technique and the Locking dance style, whose level of complexity is high, may cause positive effects regarding the main components of artistic execution and motor communication;

Enhanced value of coreographies by implementing various contents of contemporary dance and street dance in the training program led to enhanced performances.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The research methods

The study of the specialized bibliography

This method allows the opportunity for research, for enhanced achievements as illustrated by the specialised literature, related to the paper theme. For this part of the thesis, research consisted in the search of practical guides, exercise programs which might be of use to our vision.

The observation method

Observation was used to monitor evolutions in each training lesson, the development of the ability to be aware of and assess one's own exercises.

It was systematically used in the following situations:

- Individual study;
- The viewing of recorded training lessons;
- Video analyses.

The psychopedagogical experiment method:

We aimed at verifying assumptions and establishing new relations between various phenomena.

This method was used to inculcate a deliberate amendment of the phenomenon, for the purpose of studying it under favourable conditions. The experiment aimed at verifying assumptions, and was also creative by defining implementation techniques and developing a system of means characteristic of contemporary dance and street dance, and of some control tests of relevance to the gymnasts' progress throughout the review time.

Evaluation methods

****Tests***

****Control examinations***

To collect data, the following tests and control examinations were applied: Matorin, non-verbal communication testing, control examination for the appraisal of rhythm and the intersegmenting coordination and technical tests.

The statistical-mathematical method:

Descriptive statistics was used for the quantitative and qualitative analyses of data acquired as a result of testing. The following software was used: Microsoft Office Excel to calculate the arithmetic mean, the median, the standard margin, standard error, amplitude and the variability coefficient, minimum and maximum values, the mean, the spread between mean values and the "IBM SPSS Statistics" (version 20.0) to calculate the Wilcoxon test, used to highlight the differences between the original and the final testing.

Stages of the research

Duration and place of the research

The time of performance of the basic research was March 2015 – November 2015.

Basic research was carried out as part of the UNEFS (the Bucharest National University of Physical Education and Sports) Club, under the guidance of trainers Mezei M., Cioveie M.

It started from the results obtained after the preliminary study, which became points of reference both in the design, and in the development of the experimental intervention program and practical application as part of the psychopedagogical experiment, and for the planning of contests for the purpose of evaluating gymnasts and of obtaining research data.

Thus, two official contests (Cupa Cetății Deva/Deva City Cup and Cupa Iașului/Iași Cup) and two verification trainings (which I recorded as V1 / V2) were determined as testing to collect data.

After having analysed the scores acquired in contests and the contents of exercises from an artistic standpoint, in the first assessments (T1), we applied a program of testing general coordination and spatial orientation, the level of perception of emotions expressed through facial expression and pose, intersegment coordination and rhythm by way of a specially designed test. This test includes 16 dance beats comprising contemporary and street dance elements.

The aim was to apply a classical research scheme, including initial and final testing of gymnasts, at various time intervals (before and after completing the training program with contemporary and street dance elements).

I mention that, for the development of our training program, no changes were made in the initial design of training lessons made by the group trainers.

The week-time trainings continued as per the training plan, just like before, including, however, specific structures of aerobic gymnastics, the artistic part, with elements of difficulty, of specific physical training; during the trainings and the implementation of new elements, exercises which the sportspersons used as part of the Deva City Cup, the last official competition taken into account as part of our research, were again rearranged.

The group of subjects undergoing research

The research attending subjects are part of the UNEFS Sports Club Aerobic Gymnastics team, managed and trained by the following: Mariana Mezei (PhD Professor at the UNEFS Sports Club) and Cioveie Mădălina (PhD Professor at the UNEFS Sports Club and several times European and World Champion of Performance Aerobic Gymnastics).

I selected Andreea B as a special coach for "Contact Improvisation" and "Locking".

Gymnasts are aged between 9 and 13 years of age, and have sports experience ranging between 4 and 6 years.

Programs applied as part of the pedagogical experiment

The intervention program included in the pedagogical experiment (figure 26) comprised both programs for the learning of the *Contact improvisation* technique in Contemporary Dance, and of the Street Dance *Locking* style, and a combination thereof, as well as programs for the consolidation and development of the said (technique and style).

As part of our intervention for content-teaching, the fragmented-imitative method was utilised, which is widely used in gymnastics. Repetition was made based on counting in the case of learning programs, and with music background in the case of the others.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

At the end of the thesis, we believe that our efforts achieved their purpose. In support of our statement, we rely on the presented outcomes both in

terms of the preliminary study, and the basic research. Their analysis and interpretation highlighted opinions of specialists asked to express their opinion (preliminary study), who were then supported by data collected through testing, particularly by interpreted results.

Thus, following interpretation of results of the implementation of our program aimed at the diversification of artistic contents of coreographies for the contest and the enhancement of compositions in this regard, we can say that the progress registered in tested components *confirmed both hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 of the study.*

Based on the Wilcoxon test, carried out data analysis highlights significant differences between the two tests (initial and final) in statistic terms at the level of all assessed components: general coordination (the Matorin test), the expression of emotions through facial expression, expression of emotions by posture, accuracy of plan performance, the performance pace, meeting of movement times.

As far as initial testing is concerned, the initial tests of the “Verification 1 Training” and of the official contest were carried out at the beginning of the basic research, to see where we are from the artistic standpoint of Aerobic Gymnastics. Following this verification, some difficulties were found. Coreography was quite poor, as were the scenic presence and movement of competitors.

As far as final testing is concerned, given the performed verification training and the official contest, after the implementation of Contemporary Dance and Street Dance elements, significant improvements of coreography were noted in terms of the artistic part, particularly of the sportsperson’s scenic movement, of what they transmit on stage, their exercise fluidity, continuous movements. Although the specific structures of aerobic gymnastics moves remained the same, the use of contemporary dance and street dance elements led to improved coordination of movements of the lower limbs with the upper limbs, and to a better progress of scenic movement.

As far as the technical content, coreography and its components are concerned, I can say that at the end of our experiment, they were enhanced, supported by the results obtained in the considered official contests.

We believe that at the end of the preliminary study, conclusions were very positive and particularly useful for our direction in the design of the psychopedagogical experiment.

In addition to the fact that dance elements with increased difficulty were included in aerobic gymnastics, which led to a more compact and unitary composition of integral exercises, such elements not being noted as such, rather as transitions, partnerships, results improved by several tenths as far as the artistic part in competition circumstances is concerned. *We believe that hypothesis 3 of our research was confirmed.*

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

In the conclusions and perspectives, we are entitled to state that the hypotheses of our research were confirmed.

Implementation of such elements in the training of aerobic gymnasts led to improved appearance on stage of the sportsperson, improved scenic motion, improved artistic parts of the exercise, which leads us to the conclusion that part of the shortcomings found in the beginning of the data collection activity for launching the practical application program as part of the experiment, were greatly removed.

Therefore, the desire to do something “differently” than before also delighted sportspersons and coaches alike, who were very receptive to all that happened in the training room.

By implementing the new elements of the selected Contact Improvisation technique and of the Locking style, gymnasts were stimulated and succeeded in expressing themselves differently with the help of these new elements, in understanding that there are also other kinds of moves which they can recreate and even succeed doing so with elegance, perform ample movements and produce joy on stage, by completing the most important contest for 11 to 13 year-old sportspersons among the first places.

We believe that through such elements included at quite early ages, sportspersons are allowed a greater opportunity to achieve successful expression on stage and to achieve higher performance in official contests.