

Original Article

Evaluation system of technique level for children aged 7 - 9 (who are engaged in dancesport)

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Published online: March 25, 2015

(Accepted for publication February 15, 2015)

DOI:10.7752/jpes.2015.01002;

Abstract

The lack of control for the components of technical preparedness among young dancers decreases the effectiveness of training process at the level of pre-basic training. The aim of the study is to improve the system of technical readiness evaluation of children aged 7 - 9 who are engaged in sport dance. Due to the factors analysis, certain criteria and ways for consideration the informative parameters of technical preparedness are substantiated. These parameters can determine the level of children's mastery in dancesport. The system of the technical preparedness evaluation for young dancers is developed.

Key words: dancesport, technique level, children aged 7 – 9, parameters, system of evaluation.

Introduction

Sports dances belong to the group of acyclic, complicated in coordination or technically aesthetic sport that requires dancers for fast and high-quality mastering a wide range of technical elements during the training process and perfect performance under the pressure of competitive activities (A. R. Galeev, 2008; H. Regazzoni, M. Rossi, A. Magione, 2001; A. Moor, 1968). Since the first competition category in dance sport is the category of Juvenile I (aged 8 – 9), this is the age period for the rational designing of the training process instructors should first take into account the indicators of technical readiness of children. Due to the fact that at this point the control criteria are not clearly defined in sports dances, and the evaluation of the skill level of dancing couples at sporting events is subjective and comparative in nature, there is a need to develop and pilot study of informative criteria of technical preparedness of young dancers.

During the long-term training of dancers the content and the structure of sports training vary according to the age characteristics and technical improvement of dance couples (I. A. Mikhailov, A. A. Kovalenko, 1999). The very process of training in dance clubs in Ukraine differs by diverse approaches to both the technique and its effectiveness evaluation. The authors found that to increase the level of technical skill in sports dance is possible only under the condition of optimal development of basic technical skills since forming the foundation for proper technical training of dancers at the early stages of long-term training has a positive effect on improving other components of the dancers training system (A. A. Kovalenko, 2001; S. Doughty, K. Francksen, M. Huxley, M. Leach, 2008).

However, the study of library resources has revealed that today in sports dances insufficient experiences on the improvement and control of technical preparedness of dancers occur (H. Regazzoni, M. Rossi, A. Magione, 2001). Technical training as a major component of the training process of dance couples did not receive sufficient consideration in methodological research.

The training process in sports dance is based on the exercising of certain technical elements and competitive combinations in general (M. Faina, 2005). Some sports dance experts suggest that during intensive technical training dancers are expected to gain an appropriate level of technical skills and establish the optimal level of technical preparedness that will be successfully implemented into competitive activity (Competition Rules). This approach can provide a somewhat stable performance technique of competitive compositions, however, cannot be an effective means of improving the technical preparedness of young dancers (E. Franklin, 2004; I. A. Mikhailov, A. A. Kovalenko, 1999). Development of some technique indices should be specific to competitive activity, age, experience and qualification of dancers, and preparation stage of training in the annual cycle and long-term training in the system as a whole (S. Doughty, K. Francksen, M. Huxley, M. Leach, 2008; S. A. Moseley, 2005).

One aspect of the solution to this problem may be technical readiness evaluation of children aged 7 - 9 who are engaged in sports dance, that, in turn, can become a basis for improving the training process at the stage of preliminary basic training in this sport (E. Franklin, 2004).

The aim of the study is to improve the system of technical readiness evaluation of children aged 7 - 9 who are engaged in sport dance.

Object of the study is technical training of dancers at the stage of preliminary basic training.

The purpose of the study is the evaluation of the technical preparedness level of young dancers at the stage of preliminary basic training.

Methodology

The methods and sources are as follows: theoretical analysis and synthesis, surveys, pedagogical observation, expert evaluation, methods of mathematical statistics.

Pedagogical observation was carried out at the dance club sport "Flamingo" (Lviv). The questionnaire was conducted to study the experience of coaches, dancers and judges as for the process of complex control on technical preparedness of children aged 7 - 9 engaged in dancing at the stage of prior basic training. Totally we interviewed 46 experts, all respondents with higher education and the work experience – 14 years. During the pedagogical observation we tested 40 young dancers aged 7 – 9.

The method of expert evaluation was used to determine the technical readiness of children aged 7 – 9 engaged in sport dances during the evaluation of separate components of dance technique.

We invited 5 experts (2 trainers of the highest national category and 3 judges of the international category IDSF). The experts were asked to estimate the level of preparedness of each dancer in 8 events (4 – European and 4 – Latin American dances). The dancers' performance of every dance was estimated according to 5 common parameters: musicality; rhythm; balance (a stance in a pair); dance technique and dynamics (dance movements energy). Since the concordance rate in our study ranged from 0.89 – 0.95, a high degree of expert opinion consistency can be stated. To evaluate these parameters, we developed and specified point scale ratings for each parameter.

Explanation of each judicial criteria and ways of its evaluation:

"Musicality" – the ability to perform dance movements according to the nature and tempo of music. Musicality was determined according to the following criteria:

5 points – dance performance in full accordance with the nature and tempo of the music, a sense of musical passages etc.

4 points – dance performance in accordance with the nature and tempo of music, minor deviations from the musical accompaniment;

3 points – dance performance mostly in line with the music, noticeable movement deviations from the musical accompaniment;

2 points – significant deviations of dance movements from the music accompaniment;

1 point – dance performance without accordance to the musical accompaniment.

"Rhythm" – rhythmic line with the basic rhythm, the ability to transmit rhythm of dance movements, subtle sense of rhythmic patterns of pauses and accents of a dance. Rhythm was determined according to the following criteria:

5 points – the smooth performance of dance movements, subtle sense of rhythmic patterns of pauses and accents of a dance;

4 points – the smooth execution of dance movements, a slight deviation from the basic rhythmic patterns of a dance;

3 points – mostly rhythmic dance performance, significant deviations from the basic rhythmic patterns of a dance;

2 points – significant deviations of dance movements from the rhythmic patterns of a dance;

1 point – a complete discrepancy between a performance and rhythmic patterns of a dance.

"Balance" – the ability to maintain balance and correct body lines while dancing, proper transfer of body weight while performing dance pieces. The balance was determined by the following criteria:

5 points – permanent maintain balance while dancing, proper posture and the transfer body weight while performing dance steps;

4 points – balance maintaining while dancing, minor variations in posture while carrying the weight of the body while performing dance steps;

3 points – basic balance maintaining while dancing, visible posture faults while carrying the weight of the body while performing dance steps;

2 points – significant deviation from the equilibrium position during the performance of dance steps;

1 point – frequent complete loss of balance while performing dance steps.

"Technique" – the ability to transfer the shape and structure of the movements of dancing steps of each dance. Technique was defined according to the following criteria:

5 points – perfect reproduction of the form and structure of a dance;

4 points – reproduction of dance forms and structures with minor errors;

3 points – significant deviation when playing shape and structure of a dance;

2 points – significant deviation while reproducing shape and structure of a dance;

1 point – a complete discrepancy between shape and structure of a dance.

"Dance dynamics" – the ability to reproduce a significant amount of dance movements, energy movements, use a dance floor at most. Dance dynamics was determined according to the following criteria:

5 points – dance performance with a significant amount of dance movements and energy using the dance floor at most;

4 points – minor errors when performing dance movements on the floor, dance energy in the transition from step to step;

3 points – significant errors when performing dance movements on the floor, dance energy in the transition from step to step;

2 points – significant visible errors when performing dance movements on the floor, dance energy in the transition from step to step;

1 point – a large number of repetitions, dancing without the necessary progress.

Each expert was given a protocol, in which he independently, according to the developed criteria put an estimate to each dancer individually.

Results

To determine the technical readiness criteria that have the greatest impact on the achievement of high qualification in the chosen sport, the analysis of competition regulations in sports dances was carried out and qualified trainers were questioned, that allowed to choose the major indices out of their great variety. They are: musicality, rhythm, balance, technique and dance dynamic.

Studying the level of dancers' technical preparedness we tested 20 dance couples (40 children), and estimated dancing level of each individual dancer. The average index of technical readiness of children aged 7 – 9 in the European program according to expert estimates was 3.2 ± 0.4 points. The analysis of the data showed that the highest estimates were obtained according to the criteria of "musicality" (average 3.7 ± 0.3 points) and "rhythm" (average 3.6 ± 0.2 points; Fig. 1).

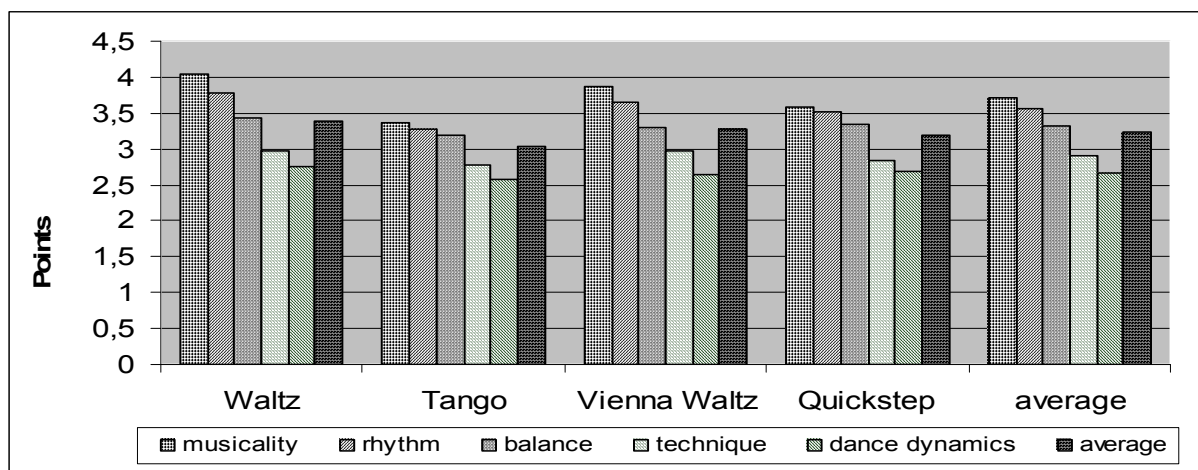


Fig. 1. The indices of the technical readiness of children aged 7 - 9 in European program of sports dances

Practically similar to the average were the estimates of the criterion "balance" – 3.3 ± 0.5 points. The lowest estimates were obtained by the criteria of "technique" (on average 2.9 ± 0.6 points) and "dance dynamics" (average 2.7 ± 0.7 points). When analyzing the results separately for the dances, in the European program children received the lowest estimates for the dance Tango (average 3.0 ± 0.3 points); close to the average indices were the estimates for the dance the Vienna Waltz (average 3.3 ± 0.5 points) and Quickstep (average 3.2 ± 0.4 points). The highest estimates in the European program, to the experts' opinions, were received by children dancing slow Waltz (average 3.4 ± 0.5 points). However, all the criteria that have been evaluated by experts, regardless of the type of dance in the European program were poor in children aged 7 – 9, as evidenced by the estimates from 2.7 to 3.7 points (Fig. 1).

The average index of technical readiness of children aged 7 – 9 in the Latin program as experts said was 3.3 ± 0.4 points. Analysis of the estimates shows that the highest estimates were obtained on such criteria as "musicality" (average 3.7 ± 0.3 points) and "rhythm" (average 3.6 ± 0.3 points; Fig. 2).

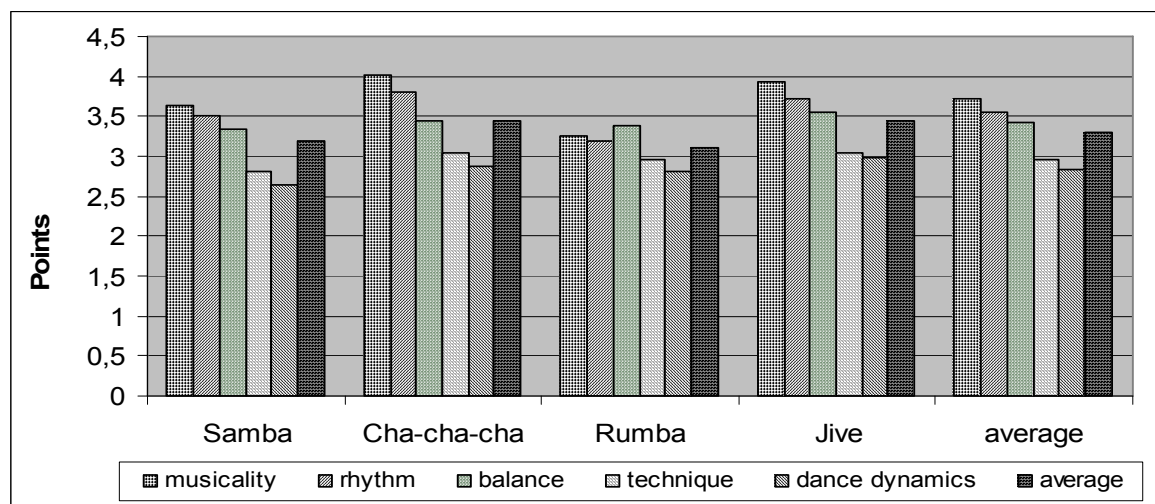


Fig. 2. The indices of the technical readiness of children aged 7 - 9 in Latin American program of sports dances

Slightly lower estimates were according to the criterion of "balance" – 3.4 ± 0.5 points. The lowest estimates were obtained by children with the criteria: "technique" (average 3.0 ± 0.6 points) and "dance dynamics" (average 2.8 ± 0.6 points). When analyzing the results separately for every dance in the Latin American program, children received the lowest estimates for the dance Rumba (average 3.1 ± 0.2 points); close to the average evaluation was a dance Samba (average 3.2 ± 0.4 points). The highest estimates in the Latin American program, according to experts, have been received by the children dancing Cha-cha-cha and Jive (average 3.4 ± 0.5 and 3.4 ± 0.4 points, respectively; Fig. 2).

Due to the fact that children of this age don't yet participate in a sufficient number of events that make it possible to monitor the status and dynamics of their skills, it can be assumed that the systematic evaluation of the technical training of dancers on the stage of preliminary basic training in the process of training or control employment, will not only make the necessary correctives to the process of preparation, but also substantially enhance its efficiency. All indices of technical preparedness of young dancers can be evaluated in the process of current and operational control at the stage of preliminary basic training, which will help identify promising young dancers, to predict the success of sports activities, not only for the immediate, but also in the distant future. In the evaluation of the various components of technical readiness of 40 children aged 7 - 9 engaged in sports dances, we obtained the data that allowed them to develop a system of evaluation according to the five-point scale. Based on the theory of scale development according to the properties of the normal distribution it was constructed a rating scale for each of the components studied. In accordance with the theory of grading standards and evaluation, poor performance include the following ones equal to from $x - 2\sigma$ to $x - 1\sigma$; below average - from $x - 1\sigma$ to $x - 0.5\sigma$; medium - from $x - 0.5\sigma$ to $x + 0.5\sigma$; above average - from $x + 0.5\sigma$ to $x + 1\sigma$; high - from $x + 1\sigma$ to $x + 2\sigma$.

The analysis of the data allowed developing the evaluation system of technical readiness of children aged 7 - 9 who are engaged in sport dances. Using the above scale of evaluation we can analyze the technical preparedness of young dancers (Table 1).

Table 1. The indices outcome of the technical preparedness of young dancers according to a standard evaluation system

Level	Musicality	Rhythm	Balance	Techniques	Dance Dynamics	TP level
low	2.9-3.3	2.8-3.2	2.4-2.9	1.7-2.4	1.4-2.1	11.3-13.9
below m	3.4-3.5	3.2-3.4	2.9-3.1	2.4-2.7	2.1-2.4	14.0-15.1
medium	3.5-3.9	3.4-3.8	3.1-3.6	2.7-3.2	2.4-3.1	15.1-17.6
above m	3.9-4.0	3.8-4.0	3.6-3.9	3.2-3.6	3.1-3.4	17.6-18.9
high	4.1-4.4	4.0-4.4	3.9-4.4	3.6-4.2	3.4-4.1	19.0-21.5
Xmin	2.9	2.5	2.2	2.2	1.2	10.3
Xmax	4.3	4.2	4.1	4.0	4.0	to 25

As the result of five experts' evaluation the average musicality in the group was 3.7 ± 0.4 points (Table 1). Using the scale of standards and evaluation, it was determined that the low level of musicality (2.9 - 3.3 points) was typical for 15.0 % of children; level that is below the average (3.4 - 3.5 points) was featured 6 children, that was as well 15.0 % of the total; average level (3.5 - 3.9 points) was recorded in 14 children, accounting for 35.0 %; level above the average (3.9 - 4.0 points) was observed in 8 children (20.0 %); high (4.1 - 4.4 points)

was observed in 6 children (15.0 % of all the dancers who participated in the study). Thus, the analysis of the level of musicality in children aged 7 – 9 who are engaged in sports dancing, shows that most children have an average level of this quality. You can see that musicality is best developed at age 7 - 9, so trainers should pay particular attention to both the purposeful development, and the need for regular monitoring of the dynamics of this ability during the training.

According to the study of the components of technical readiness of children aged 7 - 9 who were engaged in sports dancing, the average rhythm in the group was 3.6 ± 0.6 points (Table 1). Two dancers showed a very low level of rhythm with a score < 2.8 points. The group with low level of rhythm (2.8 – 3.2 points) consisted of 8 athletes (20.0 %) of the total number of children who participated in the study; level below the average (3.2 – 3.4 points) was recorded in 4 dancers, representing (10.0 %); average (3.4 – 3.8 points) was observed in 14 children (35.0 %); level above the average (3.8 – 4.0 points) was recorded in 10 dancers (25.0 %) and high (4.0 – 4.4 points) was observed in 4 dancers (10.0 %). The study indicates a low level of young dancers' skill development, in addition, a significant divergence of indices in the group ($V = 23.5$ %) was observed. These data can be explained by insufficient coaches' work dealt with development of this ability in children aged 7 – 9, and the lack of proper control.

Analysis of the obtained data of the components of the technical readiness of children aged 7 – 9 reveals that the average balance indexes in the group were 3.4 ± 0.5 points (Table 1). The group with low levels of balance (2.4 – 2.9 points) included 5 dancers, representing 12.5 % of all children, with 4 dancers showed a very low level of this index (< 2.4 points). The group with below average level (2.9 – 3.1 points) included 4 children, accounting for 10.0 %; average (3.1 – 3.6 points) was observed in 20 dancers, which is 50.0 %; level above the average (3.6 - 3.9 points) was recorded in 6 children (15.0 %) and high (3.9 – 4.4 points) was observed in 5 dancers (12.5 % of all children). The majority of children aged 7 – 9 who participated in the research, balance component was on average (50.0 %), indicating a satisfactory level of this index in young dancers. In addition, minor deviations between the groups ($V = 14.7$ %) indicate similarity in the group as for this index.

According to the results of the study the average dance performance technique in the group was 3.0 ± 0.6 points (Table 1). The group with low level of technique (1.7 – 2.4 points) included six dancers, representing 15.0 % of the total, while three dancers showed a very low level with a score of < 1.7 points; The group with below average level (2.4 – 2.7 points) also included 6 children (15.0 %); average (2.7 – 3.2 points) as for this index was observed in 8 dancers, which is 20.0 %; above average level (3.2 – 3.6 points) was observed in 16 children (40.0 %) and high (3.6 – 4.2 points) was observed in 4 dancers (10.0 % of all children). In the majority of children aged 7 – 9, who participated in the research, the development of performance technique, under experts' evaluation was above average (40.0 %), indicating a sufficient level of this index in young dancers at this stage of preparation. However, systematic monitoring of its dynamics will allow coaches to identify drawbacks in performing of various dance techniques. Technique skills training process is corrected according to the results. The dance dynamics was determined in pairs. Analysis of the technical readiness data of children aged 7 - 9 reveals that the average index of dance dynamics in the group was 2.8 ± 0.7 points (Table 1).

The group with low level of dance dynamics (1.4 – 2.1 points) included six dancers, representing 15.0 % of all children; the group with below average level (2.1 – 2.4 points) also included 6 children (15.0 %); average (2.4 – 3.1 points) was observed in 14 dancers, which is 35.0 %; level above average (3.1 – 3.4 points) was observed in 10 children (25.0 %) and high (3.4 – 4.1 points) was observed in 4 dancers (10.0 % of all children). According to this index, the dancers received the lowest scores indicating a lack of development of dance dynamics among dance couples aged 7 – 9. The obtained data give reason to believe that in the process of sports training of children in sports dances there was lack of attention to the purposeful development of certain components of their technical training. Besides, the lack of a control system for the level of development and the dynamics of indices is one of the main reasons for lack of effectiveness of the training process.

Discussion.

The efficiency of the process of dancers training is largely due to the use of appropriate variants of evaluating of the effectiveness of special motor actions that allows for feedback between a coach and a dancer, and on this basis to raise the level of management decisions in dancers training. These studies confirm the opinion of the experts who argue that the main problem of the current grading system of dancers' performance skills is that it still uses the principles of competitive referring instead of sports (A. A. Kovalenko, 2001). Unlike sports system, competition does not provide well-defined evaluation criteria expressed in coefficients, points and numerical values. Obviously, the main controversial question "what is ballroom dancing: sport or art?" is closely connected with the designing of a perfect system of performance evaluation of dancing couples (M. Faina, 2005). It is quite natural that the levels of dance skills in a long-term dancers training system are different. Therefore, dance couples going from class to class, from one age group to another, perfecting their skills will be influenced by various evaluation factors. In the category "Juveniles 1" at the previous stage of basic training, most judges pay attention to the musicality of dancing couples, dance rhythm, position in the pair, balance and technique of the dancers' foot (S. Dougherty, K. Francksen, M. Huxley, M. Leach, 2008). At the next phase of

training, dancing couples having reached a certain level do not allow errors that occurred at the previous stage. Therefore, their dances are evaluated by judges more strictly concerning technical movements and dynamics of a dance, individual style dancing, emotion and artistry, dance movements energy, and so on.

Another problematic aspect of dancing is that there are five basic internationally recognized criteria for sports dances judging (Competition Rules). But the evaluation of each judge is interpreted subjectively. Since the duration of each dance is about 1.5 minutes, then while performing the judge sees each couple just a few seconds. To consider each criterion in details during this time is practically impossible. Therefore, the judge usually focused on the overall impression from dancing couples and evaluates all factors in combination. In addition, the judge's evaluation can be influenced by the fact that some judges are especially interested in technique but others meanwhile in artistry, dance energy, balance, etc. Considering the expert evaluation and specificity of children training, we chose the following major criteria of technical preparedness of young dancers: "musicality", "rhythm", "balance", "technique", "dance dynamics". Based on these criteria it is possible to simplify the process and algorithms of training and objectify the evaluation of technical preparedness of young dancers, motivate the foundation for improving of skills in sports dances.

Conclusions

Technique occupies an important place in ensuring of the effectiveness of dancers' competitive activity at the stage of preliminary basic training. Analysis of the library resources revealed that the current technique training as a key component of the training process of dancing couples has not been sufficient from the scientific point of view.

Analysis of the dancing competition rules and questioning of leading coaches allowed choosing the major indices of young dancers' technical preparedness among of a wide range. They were the following criteria: "musicality", "rhythm", "balance", "technique", "dance dynamics".

The average rate of technical readiness of children aged 7 - 9 in the European program according to expert estimates was 3.2 ± 0.4 points; in the Latin program – 3.3 ± 0.4 points. Analysis of the data showed that the highest scores were obtained according to the criteria of "musicality" (3.7 ± 0.4 points) and "rhythm" (3.6 ± 0.6 points). Similar to the average was "balance" criterion evaluation – 3.4 ± 0.5 points, the lowest - for the criterion "technique" (3.0 ± 0.6 points) and "dance dynamics" (2.8 ± 0.7 points). All technical readiness criteria that have been evaluated by experts, regardless of the type of dance programs were for children aged 7 – 9 mainly on inadequate level and required the systematic improvement and control.

As a result, the main criteria for determining the technical readiness of children aged 7 – 9 engaged in dancing at the stage of prior basic training, were obtained, which allowed developing an evaluating system on a base of a five point scale. Designed system of evaluation can be used in the process of long-term, current and operational control at the stage of preliminary basic training, which will enable to identify promising young dancers, to predict the success of their sports activities not only for the present but also in perspective.

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