

The Selection of Dancers Characteristics and Particularities

Oana-Alina Sofron and Corina Țifrea

ABSTRACT

DanceSport is part of the category of expressive sports, being in a continuous transformation and evolution, whose regulations are constantly adapting to society and to present times and offering a complex spectacle. For athletes – dancers to assert themselves on the dance floor, during competitions, many more elements and aspects are needed and not just their interest or desire to participate. Several mandatory conditions need to be considered, the first of which is staged selection, thus following the selection criteria of each stage. Given the diversity of forms that selection can take in expression sports (according to certain principles) and at the same time, taking stock of the most used terms in the field, we further set out certain models and classification criteria but also methods and forms of selection.

In order to materialize the aforementioned information and without claiming to be exhaustive, we affirm that the nature of the evidence and its specificity but also, the new ways to learn and improve the process must be considered.

In any sport, the selection is a long process that requires seriousness, perseverance, and exigency from all those who are involved, still, it is recommended to consider both the particularities of the sport and the particularities of each dancer.

Keywords: DanceSport, particularities, selection process, system of criteria.

Published Online: November 02, 2022

ISSN: 2796-0048

DOI: 10.24018/ejsport.2022.1.6.35

O.-A. Sofron*

National University of Physical Education and Sports, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Romania.

(e-mail: oanaalina.sofron@gmail.com)

C. Țifrea

National University of Physical Education and Sports, Faculty of Physical Education and Sport, Romania.

(e-mail: c_tifrea@yahoo.com)

**Corresponding Author*

I. INTRODUCTION

Selection is a long, organized, and repetitive process of detecting the innate availability of children / young people (Soraka & Sapezinskiene 2015) through the prism of a complex system of criteria (medical, biological, motor, psychological, social, and cultural), in order to practice and further specialize in a DanceSport discipline (Standard Dances, Latin Dances, Mixed – 10 Dances).

The selection model represents a vast structure that can be permanently adapted according to human morphological changes and also, psycho-functional changes (Mantell-Seidel, 2007). It has multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary characteristics, biological, pedagogical, mental, technical, social, and cultural. The model has a pronounced prospective character.

Sports selection is the activity of discovering and orienting young talents to sports considered “appropriate” to the highlighted skills or predictive qualities – likely to develop, and for many specialists, a challenge they refuse to accept (Alter, 1997).

The discovery of children with skills for practicing DanceSport must be made in accordance with certain selection models that belong to this sport of expression and must include strategies specific to this discipline.

In organizing and directing the training of future athletes – dancers will be considered both the performance requirements specific to each stage of the selection and the capacity and availability of those selected. This way, it will be possible to make a more accurate diagnosis of the possibilities of future athletes – dancers.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The discovery and guidance/ orientation regarding the potential talent (Mackrell, 2019) in the sports environment, resides in the complex activity carried out by various institutions and competent persons (teachers/ coaches) for different levels of training to promote the further development of the athlete.

From the point of view of the static conception, the specialists in the field have identified the following components:

- determinants of performance capacity;
- volitional availability;
- the socio-cultural environment that determines the athlete's availability;
- the real performances of the novice athlete/dancer.

From the point of view of the dynamic conception, the components are the following:

- active transformation process;
- guidance through trainings and competitions;
- a succession of correctly composed psycho-pedagogical processes.

Selection is a process of identification and evaluation with the highest possible degree of prediction of the qualities and skills necessary to practice a sport (high performance) process carried out according to medical-sports, somatic-physiological, biochemical, psycho-pedagogical and motor criteria (Roman, 2007).

Talent, in the sports field, is based on the principle that “talent is highlighted during a dynamic and laborious process and is oriented towards a certain specificity through random transpositions or through changes that take place in the whole personality” (Weineck, 1997).

The criteria, the tests and also the sports selection norms that are used in the beginning part, come together and form the selection model.

The most important aspect of the selection model is to decide and elaborate the structural and quality parameters of the specific model of a certain branch, a model that has as reference elements the characteristics of the athletes who practice certain disciplines. It must be borne in mind that the body of athletes is in full morphological, functional, motor, and mental development.

III. ISSUES ADDRESSED

A. Methods

Various selection models are presented in the literature. We selected a certain model (O. Mahn, 1982) which considers factors that determine the talent of future athletes, considering that it is very close to the selection model for the discipline of DanceSport.

The model contains the following aspects:

- Predispositions of anthropometric nature: waist, weight, body structure, centre of gravity.
- Physical characteristics: aerobic/anaerobic endurance, static/dynamic force, speed of action and reaction, mobility.
- Motor-technical predispositions: balance, sense of rhythm, sense of space and time, ability to express, and possibilities of a musical nature.
- Learning ability: ease and speed of learning, observation, analysis, insight.
- Provisions for performance: availability for effort, ambition, perseverance, competitive spirit, tolerance, fair play, and acceptance of defeat.
- Cognitive abilities: concentration, motor intelligence, creativity, tactical possibilities.
- Affective factors: stress control ability, mental stability.
- Social factors: ability to cooperate, integrate, adapt, and relate.

The selection process is based on certain criteria that have been systematized by different researchers (Avramoff, 1982), as follows:

The medical-biological criteria refer to:

the state of health of the organism according to which it will be possible to develop the qualities and the specific motor baggage.

- the somatic aspect, which will highlight, also in the selection stage, the following:
- the existence of physical deficiencies or deformations at the level of the musculoskeletal system.
- the existence of serious deficiencies or diseases of the cardiovascular system, the respiratory system, or the renal system.

The anthropometric aspect is highlighted in the initial stage of the selection and refers to:

- hereditary characteristics, for example, genetic formulas for estimating the height of the adult, starting from the knowledge of the height of the parents (H_m = height of the mother; H_f = the height of the father, Height of the boy = $(H_m + H_f) \times 1,08/2$; Height of the girl = $(H_m + H_f) \times 0.923/2$ and stature: Father's stature + Mother's stature / 2 = Average).
- anthropometric dimensions (anthropometric examination).
- the level of motor qualities, in the initial selection, refers to a sense of balance, spatial-temporal orientation, coordination of movements, motor rhythmic sense, and motor memory.

The sphere of motor qualities is the main concern of the coach in order to obtain sports performance. The level of development of motor skills will be tested at each stage of selection.

According to the sport literature available, (Martinescu, 2000) the selection criteria are not very demanding, the body structure of sport dancers, in general, must be well proportioned, with a pleasant appearance, a correct posture, the cardio-respiratory system to be healthy, a well-functioning neuro-psychic system and a stress-resistant neuro-muscular system (neuro-muscular excitability, lasting concentration, distributive attention, sense of rhythm, sense of balance, kinaesthetic sense, spatial orientation - temporal), endurance and effort capacity to fit the mixed effort.

Regarding female dancers, the selection criteria aim at a normal appearance, normal indices between weight and height, and good mobility at the level of large joints (spine, coxo-femoral, scapulohumeral).

For male dancers, the selection criteria aim at reduced adipose tissue, lower limbs (harmoniously developed) longer than the torso, narrow pelvis, and good mobility at the hip and femur and at the spine.

The psychological criteria constitute the approach by which the knowledge of the psychological particularities of athletes is achieved (it is suitable for artistic/emotional aspects) and their correspondence with the clear requirements of the performance artistic- sports activity (Dragnea & Teodorescu, 2002) and are made by testing the following factors:

- emotional balance and affective factors.
- power of will.
- courage.
- attention.
- socio-cultural factors.

The methodological-pedagogical criteria refer to the obtaining of the sports classification, in accordance with the classification regulations (classification categories, technical categories, and age categories). These criteria are approached after the initial and secondary stages of selection.

The motor criteria are concerned with determining the motor level of athletes (children / young people), in the initial stage but especially in the following stages. There will be tests and control rules specific to each discipline, adapted to the particularities of each stage of the selection process. The content of this system of regulations will be differentiated according to the age and level of training of the sports candidate. Separate tests will be applied for beginner, advanced, and performance groups.

In the discipline of DanceSport, there is a need to apply the system of selection criteria. It must be adapted to all the characteristics of this sport of expression and correlated with the current level of sports performance in the dance of a competitive nature (Grau, 2015).

It is necessary to design a set of tests and control rules, specific to the first stages of selection (initial and secondary stages) for future athletes - dancers.

Anthropometric measurements: height, weight, sole-shoe number, bust circumference, waist circumference, hip circumference, waist length, head circumference, waist-floor length, and wingspan.

Motor tests: repeating speed tests (Tapping, Touch the plates), static balance tests (Writing stylus, Oscillating platform, Platform with piezoelectric sensors)/dynamic (Bass, Kirkendal, Bruininks-Oseretschy), flexibility tests (general, specific, active, passive, mixed) and mobility (Schober, Condition and extension, Ober, Thomas), trunk lifts (abdominal crunches), coordination tests (Bruininks-Oseretschy-segmental coordination / upper limb coordination, Matorin- general coordination, laterality, ambidexterity), spatial & temporal orientation tests, long jump from the spot, hanging, movement tests: shuttle running / speed (starting from standing position) / endurance, tests regarding the rhythmic sense;

Both the criteria and the set of tests and norms from the initial stage will be adapted to both, the age and sex of dancers, considering the specifics of the activity (working in pairs).

The selection process requires organization forms that are appropriate to continuous and systematic work, determining the achievement of high sports performance.

The specific stages of selection (Grigore, 2001) are:

Stage I is that of the initial selection and has as tasks:

- Discovering children with special skills for that discipline.
- Formation of working groups following the selection.
- Achieving adequate physical, technical, tactical, artistic, and mental training for mastering the basic technical elements (figures/dance elements) and ensuring the general basis of the movements.

1st Phase:

- Visual examination of children by the coach in terms of morphology (normal physical development, proportionality of segments), medical control on functional aspects of the body: respiratory capacity, heart rate, and blood pressure (children with health problems will not be admitted).
- Research of hereditary, morpho-functional skills.

2nd Phase:

- General motor testing with the help of specific tests to detect the specific skills of the sports industry.
- Global assessment of children's personality after finding out the test results.

3rd Phase (following the initial selection):

- Organizing groups according to age, and sex, in order to carry out systematic training for 6-12 months of 2-4 workouts/week (in this phase will learn the basic technical elements – figures, elements, and work intense for general physical training with priority for "correct attire" and correct technical execution.

Thus, the initial selection has the following general characteristics: it is approached at the age of 4/5 years – 8/10 years depending on the dance style, very good health is necessary, school performance and social/motivational status, morpho-functional constitutional aspect, and general motor skills.

Stage II corresponds to the basic stage of sports specialization and includes:

- Harmonious physical development.
- Development of age-specific effort capacity.
- Development of motor capacity, moral, and will qualities.
- Improving the technical elements (for future participation in competitions).
- Artistic training.

We can summarize the fact that the secondary selection has the following general characteristics: puberty age categories, between 10-14 years, varying depending on the sport/dance style, but at a time period of 3-5 years distance to the first selection, the first evaluations sports (the degree of mastery of the dance elements/dance figures of a technical/tactical nature - basic, choreography and rhythm/tempo elements, orientation towards sports specialization, general motor performance capacity in the sports branch.

Stage III corresponds to the final selection and performance training for the improvement of sports skills, the tasks of the stage being:

- Increasing the level of motor quality.
- Improving the technical elements of great difficulty.
- Improving tactical and psychological training for participating in important competitions.

Creating and training future high-performance dancers is a bold and delicate project, an extremely complex operation.

In order to materialize the above and without claiming to be exhausted, the following elements must be taken into account:

- the nature of the criteria and the specificity of the sport.
- new ways to learn and improve the existing criteria/ tests.

This type of selection facilitates the formation of new training groups for future competitive stages, helping the team of instructors, coaches, choreographers, and specialists in this field, to examine the physical, technical, artistic, and mental training of sports dancers.

The final selection has the following general characteristics: national/international level, marks the transition to performance sports, the criterion of the value of sports performance (Bayraktar, 2019), specific motor and behavioural performances (tests), general and specific preparation for performance training, personality assessment.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In any sport, the selection is a long process and requires seriousness, perseverance, and exigency of those who perform it, but it is recommended to consider both the particularities of the sport and the particularities of each dancer.

The diagnosis of skills must be correlated with both the particularity of the chronological age and the particularity of the biological age, in accordance with the processes of growth and to the development of the human body.

It is not mandatory for a child/ adolescent/ young person to become a high-class performer, but it is vital for the young generation to be included in programs that can facilitate the development of those who have real sports skills and then find enough motivation to practice it, at the level of achieving one's own greatness.

Sports training, in competitive DanceSport, adapts to the specifics of the discipline (it is a couple/ a team of two activities), a very important aspect that determines the structure of the stages and methods of selection and also of the training.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Both authors contributed equally to this study and should be considered as main authors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest, financial or any other type of relationship.

REFERENCES

- Ansorge, C. & Scheer, J. (1988). International bias detected in judging gymnastic competition at the 1984 Olympic games. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 59(2), 100-107.
- Alter, J. B. (1997). Why dance students pursue dance: Studies of dance students from 1953 to 1993. *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Pp. 70-89.
- Aujla, I. J., Nordin-Bates, S. M., Redding, E., & Jobbins, V. (2014). Developing talent among young dancers: Findings from the UK Centers for Advanced Training. *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, Vol. 5, Pp. 15-30.
- Avramoff, E. (1982). *Sports medicine problems in gymnastics*. Bucharest, Publishing house: Sport-Tourism.
- Bayraktar, S. (2019). *Leadership on and off the Dance Floor: "Six Levels of Connection" Framework*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2019.100746>
- Bijster, F. (2012). Changing the name of judge, <http://www.wdced.com>- accessed la 7.09.2022.
- Bettle, N., Bettle, O., Neumärker, U. & Neumärker, K.-J. (1998). Adolescent ballet school students: Their quest for body weight change. *Psychopathology*.
- Bettle, N., Bettle, O., Neumärker, U. & Neumärker, K.-J. (2001). Body image and self-esteem in adolescent ballet dancers. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*.
- Dragnea, A. & Bota, A. (1999). *Theory of motor activities*, Bucharest, Publishing house: Didactică și Pedagogică RA.
- Dragnea, A., Mate-Teodorescu, S. (2002). *Theory of sport*, Bucharest, Publishing house: FEST.
- Dragnea, A., Bota, A., Teodorescu, S., Stănescu, M., Șerbănoiu, Ș. & Tudor, V. (2006). *Physical education and sports – Theory and teaching*, Bucharest, Publishing house: FEST.
- Durand-Bush, N. & Salmela, J.H. (2001). The development of talent in sport. In: R.N. Singer, H.A. Hausenblas and C. Janelle, eds. *Handbook of Sport Psychology*, 2nd. ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Epuran, M., Holdevici, I. & Tonița, F. (2001). *Performance sports psychology – theory and practice*. Bucharest, Publishing house: FEST.
- Grau, A. (2015). Why people dance – evolution, sociality and dance. *Dance, Movement & Spiritualities*, 2, (3), 232-250 (22). Intellect, https://doi.org/10.1386/dmas.2.3.233_1.
- Grigore, V. (2002). *Artistic training in performance gymnastics*, Publishing house: Bucharest.
- Nieminen, P. (1998). Motives for dancing among Finnish folk dancers, competitive ballroom dancers, ballet dancers and modern dancers. *European Journal of Physical Education*.
- Press, C. & Warburton, E. (2007). Creativity Research in Dance. In: L. Bresler, ed. *International Handbook of Research in Arts Education*, vol. 16. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Redding, E., Nordin-Bates, S. M., & Walker, I. J. (2011). *Passion, pathways and potential in dance: An interdisciplinary longitudinal study into dance talent development*, London: Trinity Laban.
- Soraka, A. & Sapezinskiene, L. (2015). Research Methodology for Education Through Partner DanceSport. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 1976-1982. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.314.