AEROBIC DANCE AND AEROBIC STEP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract
As a last link of the schooling system, higher education offers the optimal environment that is able to intervene and actively influence the process of developing, preserving and revitalizing the biological potential of the vocation for movement among this category of young people in an organized way . Competitional aerobic gymnastics, as a means of physical education with a more recent appearance, encompasses a wide range of means, taken from basic gymnastics, acrobatic gymnastics, rhythmic gymnastics, other sports disciplines, classical and modern dance performed and adapted on a musical background, trains rhythms, amplitudes and different positions with manifestations in group or individual. The wide popularity which enjoys derives from the accessibility of the means used, especially by introducing into the international competition system two more categories, namely aerobic dance and aerobic step. Particularities of age, the technical requirements and the content of the competition exercises to these two categories are arguments for them to be used in aerobic gymnastics lessons in higher education as well as in university competitions. As a result, in higher education, aerobic and aerobic step category are accessible and efficiente forms of optimization of lessons with students, a means with multiple valences on the body and also for the development of specific university competitions at local and national level.
Key words: *students, aerobic gymnastics, competition*

Introduction

The specific requirements that the physical education should solve in higher education area, along with other scientific disciplines, have an important place in the complex and complete training of future specialists and also in the boost of human performance.

As a last link of the schooling system, higher education offers the optimal environment that is able to intervene and actively influence the process of developing, preserving and revitalizing the biological potential of the vocation for movement among this category of young people, [1] in an organized way .

The Physical Education and Sports discipline is present in the curricula of all higher education faculties and higher education specializations as a compulsory or optional class, which is recognized as part of the instructive-educational process of multilateral training of future specialists in all fields.

Gymnastics, being a sports discipline with tradition [2], it has evolved, "materializing in new forms of practicing it, and by the permanent enrichment of its contents, through the emergence of new exercises has led to the diversification of independent branches within this discipline, aerobics gymnastics being one of them. [1]. Thus, aerobics gymnastics is the most competitive young branch of gymnastics, with spectacular character. The means used being from the artistic, rhythmic, acrobatic gymnastics, sports dance, performed on a modern music.

Having regard to the upward trend of this branch, competitive aerobics gymnastics lies within both at performance level - by age and mass categories - by age categories, at school and university level, clubs, etc.

Aerobic gymnastics is a young discipline, that apear in our country since 1994. Aerobic gymnastics is a performance sport discipline consolidated by the International Gymnastics Federation, which managed, in a relatively short time, to attract more practitioners as well as a large public both nationally and internationally. Thus, since the First World Championships held in Paris in 1995, where a number 33 sport federations have participated, at present the number reached to 41 federations that have been present at the last 2016 World Championships in Incheon.

The popularity of this discipline is due to several aspects, namely, the objectives pursued, its characteristics and its tasks. Some of these aspects, relate to the organization and carrying out of competitions, placing on a scene of the competition space, these becoming real shows. Others, relate to the music used which is a modern, rhythmic and entertaining one, expressed

by the athletes through joy, easiness in execution and great charisma and last but not least, the spectacular technical elements of difficulty introduced among the aerobic steps and the dance moves.

According to the official website of the International Gymnastics Federation "Aerobic, which celebrated its 22th anniversary as a FIG discipline in 2017, has continued to evolve as a sport in recent years. The discipline is especially popular in Asia, where it is practiced by a number of university teams, as well as in Africa." [3]

We can define it according to the Code of Points, FIG 2017-2020, [4] that aerobic gymnastics "is the ability to perform continuous complex and high intensity aerobic movement patterns on music, which originates from traditional aerobic exercises: the routine must demonstrate continuous movement, flexibility, strength and the utilisation of the seven basic steps, with perfectly executed difficulty elements".

Aerobic gymnasts can compete in following classes: Aerobic Gymnastics in five categories: Individual Men's, Individual Women's, Mixed Pairs, Trio, Group (of 5 gymnasts), Aerobic Step (8 gymnasts) and Aerobic Dance (8 gymnasts). Each routine is evaluated by Artistic, Execution, Difficulty Judges and Chair Judges.

Relating to the judging system in aerobic performance gymnastics, "through the combined efforts of aerobic gymnastics specialists, it was constantly intended to improve the evaluation system in parallel with increasing the level of professional training of referees by organizing classes. Although aerobic gymnastics is not Olympic discipline, the Code of Points is being developed for 4 years and provides information on all aspects relating to this discipline." [5]. Each competition exercise is judged by referees on several brigades: Artistic, Performance, Difficulty and Chair.

Over the last few years, the Code of Points in Aerobic Gymnastics has made several changes as regards the status of this discipline, both in the content of exercises, evaluation criteria as well as by introducing other competition categories. These were made by International Gymnastics Federation in the intention to "include this sport among the Olympic Games' family and to conceive scoring criteria based objectivity, difficulty and spectacular vision. [6] and last but not least to popularize this discipline by introducing new categories, aerobic dance and aerobic step.

Thus, the categories of aerobics dance and aerobics step were introduced for the first time in the competitive program, in 2011, at the Shenzhen Universiade and in the FIG Competition Program, at World Championships in Sofia, in 2012. In our country, the two categories were introduced for the first time, at the University National Championships of Aerobics Gymnastics, carried out in Bucharest in 2011.

Table 1: According to FIG - Dynamics of Federations' Participation, Competition and Age Expectations at the World Aerobic Gymnastics Championships [7]

Date	Location	Event	N° of feds	Teams	IM	IW	MXP	TRIO	GRP	AD	AS	No of gymnasts	Aver. age men	Aver. age women
1995	Paris (FRA)	WCh	33		28	28	19	21				157		
1996	Den Haag (NED)	WCh	36		21	32	21	19				152		
1997	Perth (AUS)	WCh	41		23	24	17	21				144		
1998	Catania (ITA)	WCh	35		39	28	31	28				213		
1999	Hannover (GER)	WCh	38		44	44	27	34				244		
2000	Riesa (GER)	WCh	37		38	43	29	29				226		
2002	Klapeida (LTU)	WCh	39		31	43	24	28	16			302		
2004	Sofia	WCh	32	10	52	48	34	33	19			361	23.7	22.8

	(BUL)													
2006	Nanjing (CHN)	WCh	33	10	45	48	29	28	17			232	24.0	23.7
2008	Ulm (GER)	WCh	34	9	36	68	27	35	21			271	24.0	22.1
2010	Rodez (FRA)	WCh	33	8	36	51	27	27	17			224	22.6	21.5
2012	Sofia (BUL)	WCh	42	12	40	59	32	33	16	10	11	321	23.2	22.6
2014	Cancun (MEX)	WCh	37	9	30	48	31	25	13	11	8	262	23.6	23.9
2016	Incheon (KOR)	WCh	41	11	42	54	31	25	16	13	10	301	22.98	22.48

Legend: IM – individual masculin, IW – individual woman, MP – mixed pairs, GRP – Group; AD – aerobic dance, AS – aerobic step.

The objectives of the competitive aerobics gymnastics are: motor improvement; improvement and development of motor skills specific to aerobic gymnastics; formation of a harmonious, aesthetic body; developement of cognitive, affective and motivational capacities; creating mood for performance (availability for effort, ambition, perseverance, tolerance to frustration [5]; promoting social integration.

Characteristics of competitional aerobic gymnastics are: it has a competitive character, which leads to the establishment of rankings by categories / contests and age; it is considered sport on stage; presents dynamic exercises with a range of continuous moves that have to demonstrate mobility and strength, coordination; exercises are characterized by originality, given the creativity of the athletes and coaches / teachers; rigorous training; it has individual and group character, addressing those with special skills.

Characteristics and general aspects of competition category - aerobic dance and aerobic step

Aerobic Dance: this category is characterized by Group choreography of 8 competitors, utilizing the Aerobic movements in Dance Style. The routine must include 32 to 64 counts of street dance, as a second style. The routine may include acrobatic and/or difficulty elements but they will not receive any value. [4]. The routine may include movements from other disciplines (without excessive use) well integrated into the choreography. Any kind of music can be used. Gymnasts must show the ability to reproduce the movements with the rhythm and style of the music and also strength, explosive power, flexibility and movements with perfect execution throughout the routine. The music structure and the melody must emphasize the idea of the choreography. The competitors must show an enthusiastic attitude during the whole routine, with genuine and pleasant facial expressions, reaching the audience with their originality and creativity, showing self-confidence, with a high quality of movements. [8]

Aerobic step – this category is characterized by Group choreography (eight competitors: male, female or mixed), utilizing the Aerobic basic steps and arm movement with equipment (Step), performing to the music. [9] The routine must use the Step (platform) to the maximum throughout the routine by stepping with Aerobic Basic Steps (Step-up/Step-down, V-step, Knee-Lift, Kick, Step touch, Tap-up/Tap-down, Turn Step, Over the Top, Lunge,etc.) throughout the routine in combination with arm movements. [4]

Table no 2: General requirements [4]

Categorie	Aerobic Dance	Aerobic Step
Participants	group of 8 competitors (males/females/mixed)	group of 8 competitors (males/females/mixed)
Time	1’20 ± 5”	1’20 ± 5”
Spatiu	10m x 10m	10m x 10m
Music	Any style of music	Any style of music
Lifts	1 lift optional and will not receive a value.	1 lift optional, no value will be given (Propelling in the lift is prohibited)

Equipment	-	Step (platform)
Dress code	Athletic Appearance. Leotard, Unitard and Two-piece leotard (Pants, long leggings, shorts and close fitting tops) are allowed. The underwear must not be seen. The attire can be different between the members but should be harmonized. Large (loose) clothes are not allowed. The competitor must wear supportive aerobic or sports shoes. Hair must be secured close to the head. Additional items (tubes, sticks, balls, etc.), and accessories (belts, braces, bands, etc.) are not allowed. Attire depicting war, violence or religious themes is forbidden. No sequins allowed for men.	

Table no 3: Requirements and evaluation criteria of routines based on artistic judges [4]

Artistic (max.10 pts)		**Aerobic Dance**	**Aerobic Step**
1. Composition (complex & original):	A. Music & Musicality – (max.2 pts)	Can be selected one or more linked / mixed songs very well without interruption; concordance between music, movement and expressiveness of competitors;For the second style, it is recommended to use a different music from the main theme in order to be recognizable as a different style	The style of the routine must harmonize with the idea of the music. The composition of the movements must harmonize with the music structure (rhythm, beats, accents, and phrase), and timing.
	B. Dance/Step Content – (max. 2pts)	In the Dance Content, dance movements are evaluated throughout the routine, including the 2nd style, care va fi obligatoriu street dance The dance content must have high correlations with the theme and the style of the music;	The number of Step sequences required is minimum of 8 sets, including consecutive 3 sets of 8-count (24-counts) stepping performed by allmembers without moving the Steps (platforms) and without changingfrom one step to another (each member in one step during 3x8 counts)
	C.General Content (max. 2 pts)	The general content of the routines are: Transitions/ Linking, Partnerships, Collaborations, Lift (if included), Other discipline moves (if included); The routine should include minimum of 4 movements (or set of movements) from General Content The competition area must be effectively used throughout the routine with well-balanced structure of the choreography.	The general content of the routines are: Transitions / Linking, Change of step from one step to another (Step transition), Partnership (Collaboration), Lift (if included) The routine should include minimum of 4 movements (or set of movements) from General Content.

	D. Space / Formation – (max. 2 pts)	All three levels (floor-work, standing, airborne) of the competition space must be used. Throughout the routine, different formations and different positions of the teammates must be shown.	The competition area must be used, with a balanced distance between the members of the group with or without the step by using: - Different formations - Change of positions between the members - Different distances between the members of the group (short vs. long distances) - Change of levels - Different orientation
2. Performance (max. 2 pts)	Artistry	Quality of the performance Originality/Creativity and expression Artistry is the ability of the competitor(s) to transform the composition from a well-structured routine into an artistic performance. Gymnasts must, therefore, demonstrate Musicality, Expression and Partnership in addition to the impeccable execution.	

Table no 4: Requirements and evaluation criteria of routines based on execution judges [4]

Execution	Aerobic Dance	Aerobic Step
The judging of Execution is based on the following:	A. Difficulty and Acrobatic Elements (if included) B. Choreography C. Synchronization	A. Choreography B. Synchronization
1. Technical skill (max. 7 pts)	Technical Skills of all movements including: Difficulty and Acrobatic Elements, Choreography (Dance content,Transitions, Links, Partnerships and Lifts).	Technical Skills of all movements including Choreography (AMP,Transitions, Links, Partnerships and Lift).
2. Synchronization (max.3pts.)	The ability to execute all movements as a unit	

Table no 5: Requirements and evaluation criteria of routines based on chair judges [4]

Chair	Aerobic Dance	Aerobic Step
Requirements	The routine may include movements from other disciplines (without excessive use) well integrated into the Choreography. Combination of acrobatic elements: Maximum of 2 acrobatic elements in combination (=set) may be performed but must perform at the same time. If the same or different combination is performed consecutively, it will be counted as 2 or more.	**Prohibited movements** Propelling the step(s) in the air and to the competitor(s). Violently handling the step on the floor Performing any difficulty / acrobatic element Jumping from the step to the other step. Prohibited elements and moves are listed in Aerobic Gymnastic FIG-COP 2017-2020

As it results from the above exposed summary of evaluation requirements and criteria (table 2,3,4) as a model/recommendation for the mass competitive aerobic gymnastics, the content of the contest exercises for the two contests, aerobics dance and aerobics step, may include a wide range of facilities, namely the specific means, which include the basic aerobic steps with their variants and their movements of arms and non-specific means taken from the basic gymnastics on which the formation and development of physical support is based on, from the acrobatic, rhythmic gymnastics, from classic and modern ballet, from sport dance and modern dance on which the

formation of artistic attitude and of expressivity in motion are based on.

The popularity that could be achieved among the students, lies in the accessibility of the means used, in the way of practicing it and, in particular, in the beneficial effects on body harmony, on the psychophysiological component that is achieved through the harmony between movement, rhythm and the methodical line that accompanies it.

Therefore, because of the average age of participation at the senior category, both nationally and internationally (table 1), the content of the exercises, the general objectives of this branch, its characteristics and pursued tasks, this discipline through the two competition tests may become very popular in the academic world, both at the level of the lessons from the basic classes with students in the 1st and 2nd year of study and at the level of training, with the students who can be selected from a wider range of sports branches, i.e. those with technical skills specific to artistic, rhythmic aerobics gymnastics, sport dance, modern dance (street dance, etc), the popular dance, ballet, with a view to train and to participate in various university competitions. Thus, aerobic gymnastics competitions can be organized both internally, at university level and externally, different cups, university championships on university centers as well as national centers.

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